

# Happy Holidays!

## Quick Tips for Selecting Toys for Children with Special Needs

Have a child with special needs on your holiday gift-giving list? Here are some quick tips to help you choose exactly the right toy for that special little girl or boy!

1. **Consider sensory preferences.** In general, it's good to look for toys that engage a child's senses, such as touch, sound, sight, etc. But remember that loud sounds that delight one child can be distressing for another. Similarly, certain textures can be comforting to some children but unpleasant to others. The child's parents are the best source for identifying sensitivities and sensory preferences that can affect your gift selections.
2. **Nurture fine motor skills.** Like typical children, those with special needs can benefit from toys and activities that encourage them to use their fingers and hands in ways that build fine motor control. This can include building blocks (like wooden blocks and Legos), as well as arts and crafts, even simple musical instruments (like kazoos, drums or xylophones), and more.
3. **Build social skills.** While independent play is important, many children with developmental disabilities, especially autism, struggle to develop social relationships. Toys that promote social interaction, such as board and card games, can help children engage with others and practice communication skills.
4. **Make safe choices.** As with any child on your holiday gift list, it's important to ensure that the toys and games you choose make sense for the individual's size, strength and particular challenges. For example, consider the size of the toy and its various parts, as well as its durability.
5. **Check out the [Toys and Play](http://www.rcocdd.com/frc/ccfrc/resources/toys-and-play/) page on RCOC's website.** This page (<http://www.rcocdd.com/frc/ccfrc/resources/toys-and-play/>) features links to more than a dozen websites, articles and other resources devoted to helping parents and caregivers select toys and games that are appropriate for children with various developmental disabilities, including those intended to foster developmental progress.

For more tips, information and resources for children, parents can contact their RCOC Service Coordinator at (714) 796-5100 or stop by **Regional Center of Orange County's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center**, 1525 North Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana.