

[Did She Say "Play Quotient?"](#)

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PARENTING

Did She Say "Play Quotient?"

Childrens' recreation is more than mere fun and diversion

Your daughter just turned one. She's getting inquisitive, but is still fragile. What's the prescription? Ask Dr. Toy! "She needs warm, nurturing play experiences from the whole family," says Stevanne Auerbach, Ph.D--also known as Dr. Toy--in her outstanding new book, *Dr. Toy's Smart Play: How to Raise a Child with a High PQ (Play Quotient)* (272 pages, St. Martins Griffin). Provide soft stimulation, she says, from music, colors, voice and rocking. Use toys for short periods. "You are your baby's biggest toy--that relationship is the crucial bond."

We all know about IQ, but what's PQ, or Play Quotient? "Parents think play is trivial, but it isn't," Dr. Toy told *Hinduism Today*. "When kids use verbal or physical expression, they draw on their own inner core, develop imagination, creativity, interact with others, figure things out, meet challenges." For the developing mind, learning to play is paramount. That's what Auerbach has conveyed for three decades as a former teacher, mother and now grandmother.

Dr. Toy's philosophy gets practical in *Smart Play*. Specific advice on which toys to buy and what games to play lets you

empower your child's development each year, depending on her maturity. For example, between age two and three, baby is "mobile, curious, active and into everything," Dr. Toy relates. "She's intensely interested in her surroundings, acquiring knowledge rapidly and is excited about exploring everything.

"She has many questions. The twos, like the teens, require on your part extraordinarily loving patience, gentle firmness and consistency." Dr. Toy suggests the child play with blackboard and chalk, bubble pipes, household objects, musical instruments, puppets, wagons and wooden beads at this age.

Knowing many parents today push kids through intense academic regimens with little time for anything else, Dr. Toy's diagnosis is firm. "Pressuring kids into structure, you may think it's right, but they get over-programmed and something gets lost in the process. They need relaxation to stay balanced. If we want well-rounded kids who know how to adapt, take turns, share, they must play. If you want competitive kids who push others aside, then over-structure them."

Dr. Toy didn't play around gathering this know-how. Hundreds of hours were spent observing thousands of children at play and talking with parents, grandparents and teachers. Smart Play teaches how to be your child's Play Tutor, how play can strengthen maturity and the pros and cons of gender-specific toys. You'll find guidance for the gifted and special-needs child, how to evaluate toy safety and craft supplies to always have on hand. Dr. Toy's 100 Best Children's Products are there--also listed on her popular website (www.drtoy.com) with photos and links to the company websites. Get smart! Don't let this

unusual book slip by.

ST MARTINS GRIFFIN, 175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10010 USA. WEBSITE ORDERING: www.DRTOY.COM.
DR. TOY E-MAIL: drtoy@drtoy.com

Sidebar:Toys:Rating Those Playthings

Dr. Toy's tips on picking amusements for kids

Here are some basic questions to ask yourself before purchasing a toy or other children's product, excerpted from Dr. Toy's Smart Play:

* Is the toy safe? Are there any potential hazards? Is the product too small? Any sharp edges or loose ties? Is it non-toxic? Durable? Will it take rough treatment?

* Is it fun? A toy or children's product is supposed to entertain the child. It should amuse, delight, excite and be enjoyable.

* Is the product appropriate? Is it significant now? Does it fit the child's age, skills and abilities? Will it hold his interest?

* Is the product well designed? Is it easy to use? Does it look good? Feel good?

* Does the product have multiple uses?

* Is the product durable? Children play hard and subject toys to abuse and wear.

* Will the product increase the child's creativity? Right products can expand his imagination in art, crafts, hobbies, language, reading, music and drama.

* Will the toy frustrate or challenge the child? Does it offer something new to learn, to practice, or to try? Will the child know how to use the product? Or will it be too difficult to use without

adult assistance?

* Will the toy help a child express emotions, experience concern for others, practice positive social interaction?

* Does the toy help expand positive self-esteem, values, understanding and cultural awareness? Does it offer practice in skill-building? Hand/eye coordination? Fine and large motor skills? Communication?

* Can the toy be cleaned and reused?