

Toys “R” Us Guide Makes the Season Brighter for Children with Special Needs

By Paul DeMiglio | November 21, 2013

As we enter the holiday season, shoppers have the opportunity to turn to the *Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids* – an annual publication put out by Toys “R” Us. This valuable resource is designed to give parents, relatives, friends and professionals the information they need to make more educated choices about purchasing gifts for children with unique talents and abilities.

Gabby Douglas, a gold-medalist gymnast in the 2012 Olympics, is featured on this year’s edition and says the guide is “filled with everyday playthings, specially chosen to help kids build key skills, like creativity, language and critical thinking, reach new milestones and have fun at the same time.” Douglas is the most recent in a long line of celebrities and philanthropists who have appeared on the guide’s front cover, including Whoopi Goldberg, Eva Longoria and Maria Shriver.



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“We understand the joy of watching a child experience victories through the magic of play, whether they’re learning to catch and throw a ball, role-playing through dress-up or learning to count using an app on their very first tablet,” said Kerry Smith, Toys “R” Us spokesperson. “For nearly two decades, we have been providing parents and caregivers with product recommendations for children with special needs through the trusted *Toys“R”Us Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids*. This annual resource is filled with everyday playthings selected as appropriate in helping kids build critical skills and reach new milestones – all while having fun at the same time.”

The guide provides shoppers with specific questions to help ensure that their selections match the developmental needs of the children for whom they’re

shopping. Customers are encouraged to consider whether the toy fosters creativity and self-expression, if it provides a challenge without being frustrating, if it allows for adaptability to the child's needs, whether the toy reflects the child's interests and age, and much more.

The guide also shares numerous safety suggestions for parents and guardians so they can more effectively prevent accidental injuries and help children understand how to keep out of harm's way during playtime:

- Never leave a child unsupervised
- Read labels for ability
- Survey the play area
- Establish concrete rules
- Use visual warnings
- Review and repeat
- Prepare for off-site play dates
- [Click here for the full list](#)

The toys were evaluated and tested by the National Lekotek Center, a non-profit that examines toys' therapeutic qualities in aiding the development of children with physical, cognitive or developmental disabilities. A leader in the field with almost 30 years' experience, Lekotek studies and reviews hundreds of toys, selecting those that benefit children. This information is then sent to Toys "R" Us for placement in the guide. Toys are categorized according to various child development needs such as visual, auditory, social skills and motor skills, among others.

If you would like to know more about the guide and the company's philanthropic events, visit the new Toy Channel on YouTube, which includes an "R' News" section that features information about charitable contributions. The guide can be found in any Toys "R" Us store or can be viewed online [here](#).

Have you or someone you know ever used the *Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids*? Did it address your questions and make toy shopping for children with special needs easier? What challenges have you faced when purchasing toys for children with special needs, and what resources have you found helpful when making decisions?

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