Holiday Gifts for school-age kids 2020



Holidays 2020 style: Oops. I must have been wearing my mask when I told your grandmother that you wanted a “new fur cat.” I think she heard “new fur hat.”

We’re bringing back our popular holiday gift guide based on ages and developmental stages. As always, we will concentrate on non electronic options, as well as pandemic-friendly ideas.

Kindergarten:

What’s happening: Kids at this age can hop up and down on one foot and they start having a better sense of time. They tell simple stories, can tell real from make-believe and can swing and climb.

Ideas: Clocks, calendars, and games that require some balance like Twister® are all hits. Games with simple rules such as checkers and puzzles with large pieces are developmentally within reach. They may enjoy reading books with very simple sentences on their own. Foster creativity with colored papers, crayons, markers, stickers, and water-color paints.

Younger elementary school (the little kids):

What's happening: This group is now more self sufficient. For instance eight year olds can perform self help skills such as tooth brushing entirely on their own. They start to understand quantities and therefore concepts such as money. They display more concern for others and understand team work.

Ideas: make every-day-living activities fun. For instance, give a basket of interesting scented shampoos, or an assortment of toothpastes with a toothbrush that plays a tune. Give wallets or piggy banks (hold on the Venmo account!). Basic sports equipment of any sort will be a hit. Label makers will also appeal to this age group since they have a greater sense of ownership. This age transitions from learning -to - read to reading-to-learn. In other words, they start to cull information from reading. Give age-appropriate non-fiction books about an area of interest to them.

Older elementary school (the big kids):

What's happening: Fine motor skills are quite developed and intricate arts and crafts such as weaving kits can be manipulated. They are more aware of their bodies as puberty approaches. As peer relationships become more complex, they also experience more peer pressure.

Ideas: If you are a long distance relative, research online some of the things you enjoyed doing as a kid and send out

ahead of time some materials such as a set of balloon animals or a deck of cards. Then give the gift of a lesson over Zoom on how to make crazy balloon critters or magic card tricks. No time to send anything out? Give the gift of how to make cat's cradle variants with random string or how to fold paper airplanes. Your nephew probably outgrew the bike from a couple years ago, so consider replacing it with a larger one. Age-appropriate books about historic figures can give kids ideas for role models. The big kids are also fans of joke and riddle books.

Middle school/Junior high (the tweens):

What's happening: With increased attention spans (30-40 minutes) they can work on activities for a longer period of time. They pay more attention to body image, looks, and clothes. Complex thought emerges and they can better express feelings verbally.

These kids can cook, really cook.

Ideas: These kids can cook, really cook. Just look at Chopped Junior. Get them the culinary tools you covet. Also, any building project, whether it's for a model of baby Yoda, or a back yard rocket, will be appreciated. Harmonicas, ukuleles, and keyboards can be self-taught online, are not very expensive, and can give tweens an artistic and emotional outlet. Tweens also value their privacy – consider a present of a journal with a lock or a doorbell for her room.

High School (the teens):

Whats happening: As teens gain more independence and responsibility, often they take on a job outside of the home. They continue to develop their capacity for caring, sharing and for deeper more intimate relationships.

Ideas: If you look at factors which build a teen into a resilient adult, you will see that adult involvement in a

child’s life is important. We know parents who jokingly say they renamed their teens “Door 1” and “Door 2,” since they spend more time talking to their kids’ bedroom doors than their kids. Create opportunities for one-on-one interaction by giving gifts such as a day of socially distanced shopping with their aunt, or two hours kayaking with their dad. Adolescence is the age of abstract thinking and self awareness– Google “room decorating led lights” or “wall decals” and find a plethora of inexpensive ways to jazz up their room or another room in the house.

Enjoy the holiday season!

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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Last Minute Holiday Gifts Ideas

We’re on Happy Healthy Kids!

12 Healthy Gift Ideas

Gift ideas by ages and stages



It's gift-giving season! Now that your families are another year older, it's time to update our sometimes-you-just-want-to-buy-something holiday gift idea list arranged by ages and developmental stages.

0-3 months: Babies this age have perfect hearing and enjoy looking at faces and objects with contrasting colors. Music, mobiles, and bright posters are some age appropriate gift ideas. Infants self-soothe themselves through sucking- if you can figure out what your nephew's favorite type of binkie is, wrap up a bunch-they are expensive and often mysteriously disappear.

3-6 months: Babies start to reach and grab at objects. They enjoy things big enough to hold onto and safe enough to put in their mouths- try bright colored teething rings and large plastic "keys." New cloth and vinyl books will likewise be appreciated; gnawed books don't make great hand-me-downs.

6-12 months: Around six months, babies begin to sit alone or sit propped. Intellectually, they begin to understand "cause and effect." Good choices of gifts include toys with large buttons that make things happen with light pressure. Toys which make sounds, play music, or cause Elmo to pop up will be a hit. For a nine-month-old old just starting to pull herself up to a standing position, a water or sand table will provide hours of entertainment in the upcoming year. Right now you can bring winter inside if you fill the water table with a mound of snow. Buy some inexpensive measuring cups and later in the

summer your toddler will enjoy standing outside splashing in the water.

12-18 months: This is the age kids learn to stand and walk. They enjoy things they can push while walking such as shopping carts or plastic lawn mowers. Include gifts which promote joint attention. Joint attention is the kind of attention a child shares with you during moments of mutual discovery. Joint attention starts at two months of age when you smile at your baby and your baby smiles back. Later, around 18 months, if you point at a dog in a book, she will look at the dog then look back at you and smile. Your child not only shows interest in the same object, but she acknowledges that you are both interested. Joint attention is thought to be important for social and emotional growth.

At 12 months your baby no longer needs to suck from a bottle or the breast for hydration. Although we don't believe mastery of a sippy cups is a necessary developmental milestone , Dr. Lai does admire the WOW cup because your child can drink from it like she does from a regular cup. Alternatively, you can give fun, colored actual traditional plastic cups, which difficult to break and encourage drinking from a real cup!

18-24 months: Although kids this age cannot pedal yet, they enjoy riding on toys such as "big wheels" "Fred Flintstone" style. Dexterous enough to drink out of a cup and use a spoon and fork, toddlers can always use another place setting. Toddlers are also able to manipulate shape sorters and toys where they put a plastic ball into the top and the ball goes down a short maze/slide. They also love containers to collect things, dump out, then collect again.

Yes, older toddlers are also dexterous enough to swipe an ipad, but be aware, electronics can be a double edged sword– the same device which plays karaoke music for your daddy-toddler sing-along can be transformed into a substitute parent. The other day, a toddler was frighted of my stethoscope in the office. Instead of smiling and demonstrating to her toddler how a stethoscope does not hurt, the mother repeatedly tried to give her toddler her phone and told the child to watch a video. Fast forward a few years, and the mother will wonder why her kid fixates on her phone and does not look up at the

family at the dinner table. Don’t train an addiction.

2-3 years: To encourage motor skills, offer tricycles, balls, bubbles, and boxes to crawl into and out of. Choose crayons over markers because crayons require a child to exert pressure and therefore develop hand strength. Dolls, cars, and sand boxes all foster imagination. Don’t forget those indestructible board books so kids can “read” to themselves. By now, the plastic squirting fish bath toys you bought your nephew when he was one are probably squirting out black specks of mold instead of water- get him a new set. Looking ahead, in the spring a three- year-old may start participating in team sports (although they often go the wrong way down the field) or in other classes such as dance or swimming lessons. Give your relatives the gift of a shin guards and soccer ball with a shirt. Offer to pay for swim lessons and package a gift certificate with a pair of goggles.

3-4 years: Now kids engage in elaborate imaginary play. They enjoy “dress up” clothes to create characters- super heroes, dancers, wizards, princesses, kings, queens, animals. Kids also enjoy props for their pretend play, such as plastic kitchen gadgets, magic wands, and building blocks. They become adept at pedaling tricycles or even riding small training-wheeled bikes. Other gift ideas include crayons, paint, markers, Play-doh®, or side-walk chalk. Children this age understand rules and turn-taking and can be taught simple card games such as “go fish,” “war,” and “matching.” Three-year-olds recognize colors but can’t read- so they can finally play the classic board game *Candyland*®, and they can rote count in order to play the sequential numbers game *Chutes and Ladders*®. Preschool kids now understand and execute the process of washing their hands independently… one problem… they can’t reach the faucets on the sink. A personalized, sturdy step stool will be appreciated for years.

5-year-olds: Since 5-year-olds can hop on one foot, games like Twister® will be fun. Kids this age start to understand time. In our world of digital clocks, get your nephew an analog clock with numbers and a minute hand… they are hard to come by. Five-year-olds also begin to understand charts– a calendar will also cause delight. They can

also work jigsaw puzzles with somewhat large pieces.

8-year-olds: Kids at this point should be able to perform self help skills such as teeth brushing. Help them out with stocking stuffers such as toothbrushes with timers. They also start to understand the value of money (here is one way to teach kids about money). The kids will appreciate gifts such as a wallet or piggy bank. Eight-year-olds engage in rough and tumble play and can play outdoor games with rules. Think balls, balls, balls- soccer balls, kickballs, baseballs, tennis balls, footballs. Basic sports equipment of any sort will be a hit. Label makers will also appeal to this age group since they start to have a greater sense of ownership.

10-year-olds: Fine motor skills are quite developed and intricate arts and crafts such as weaving kits can be manipulated. Give a "cake making set" (no, not the plastic oven with a light bulb) with tubes of frosting and cake mix to bake over the winter break. Buy two plastic recorders, one for you and one for your child, to play duets. The instrument is simple enough for ten-year-olds or forty-year-olds to learn on their own. Ten-year-olds value organization in their world and want to be more independent. Therefore, a watch makes a good gift at this age. And don't forget about books: reading skills are more advanced at this age. They can read chapter books or books about subjects of interest to them. In particular, kids at this age love a good joke or riddle book.

Tweens: Your child now has a longer attention span (30-40 minutes) so building projects such as K'nex® models will be of interest to her. She can now also understand directions for performing magic tricks or making animal balloons. This is a time when group identity becomes more important. Sleepovers and scouting trips are common at this age so sleeping bags and camping tents make great gifts. Tweens value their privacy – consider a present of a journal with a lock or a doorbell for her room.

Teens: If you look at factors which build a teen into a resilient adult, you will see that adult involvement in a child's life is important.
http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets

We know parents who jokingly say they renamed their teens “Door 1” and “Door 2,” since they spend more time talking to their kids’ bedroom doors than their kids. Create opportunities for one-on-one interaction by giving gifts such as a day of shopping with her aunt, tickets to a show with her uncle, or two hours at the rock climbing gym with dad.

Encourage physical activity. Sports equipment is always pricey for a teen to purchase- give the fancy sports bag he’s been eying or give a gym membership. A running watch is always appreciated or treat them to moisture wicking work-out clothes or a gift card to a sports equipment store.

Sleep! Who doesn’t need it, and teens often short change themselves on sleep and fall into poor sleep habits. Help a teen enjoy a comfortable night of rest and buy luxurious high thread count pillow cases, foam memory pillows, or even a new mattress. After all, it been nearly 20 years since you bought your teen a mattress and he probably wasn’t old enough at the time to tell you if he was comfortable. Since a teen often goes to bed later than you do, a remote light control will be appreciated by all.

Enjoy your holiday shopping!

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