



Australian  
Competition &  
Consumer  
Commission

# Safe toys for kids



## **Safe toys for kids**

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ISBN 1 920702 86 5

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Published by the ACCC Publishing Unit 12/05.

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## **Acknowledgments**

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# Introduction

Toys are an important part of childhood, helping children learn and develop, as well as entertaining them. Unfortunately, some toys can be dangerous. Poorly constructed toys or toys that are inappropriate for your child's age and level of development can lead to tragic results.

This book is a guide to help you select safe toys for your child. There are many types of toys on the market, so it isn't possible to comment on them all individually. This book covers the more common toys available and indicates some of the hazards for kids.

**Safety and age appropriateness are important considerations when selecting a toy for your child.**

When selecting toys for your child, keep these key safety rules in mind:

- Read labels and packaging. Look for and follow the age recommendations and instructions about proper assembly, use and supervision.
- Toys that have small parts, or small objects such as coins, batteries and nails should not be given to children under three years of age.
- Jewellery should not be given to children under three years of age.
- Choose sturdy and well made toys that can stand up to being bitten, tugged, sucked, jumped on and thrown around without falling apart.
- Check for sharp edges or rough surfaces that could injure your child.
- Ensure paint and fillings are non-toxic.

# Play safe

Carefully selecting toys is not enough—supervising your child's play and providing them with a safe area to play in can be the best ways to protect your child from harm. It is always best to explain and demonstrate to your child the correct and safe use of a toy when first giving it to them. You can improve the safety of the play area in your home by:

- removing and immediately discarding packaging before giving a toy to a small child
- ensuring older children's toys are out of reach of younger children
- checking toys for breakage or potential hazards such as a loose part that could be a choking hazard
- never giving uninflated balloons to small children and removing burst balloons from their play area as they can cause choking
- removing 'dead' batteries in toys, as they can leak poisons or liquid that can damage skin or eyes.

## Making your own toys

Consider the appropriateness of the toy for your child's age and developmental level. Make the toy safe for use by:

- using non-toxic paints, glue and other finishes, and always washing fabrics to remove any toxic coating
- ensuring the materials used are not flammable—especially doll's hair, clothing and accessories.

It is also important that the toy is well made and sturdy enough to withstand playtime activity. Therefore:

- seams should be strong so that the filling can't escape
- all small pieces should be securely fastened to the toy so they cannot be easily pulled off and become a choking danger
- wooden toys should be sanded smooth with no sharp edges, and preferably made from soft wood that is unlikely to splinter.



### Liquid in toys

Toys that contain liquid include rolling balls, doll baby bottles, children's tumblers, necklaces, pens, paperweights, key chains and liquid timers.

If the liquid is not identified on a label as safe and you suspect that it could be a harmful chemical substance, the toy could be dangerous for your child if they bite into or puncture it.

### Discard the toy if the content leaks.

### Noisy toys

Be wary of toys that make loud noises as they can harm your child's hearing. Babies are more sensitive to loud noises than older children. Be particularly careful of toys that make a loud noise when held close to their ear such as toy telephones with a speaker in the earpiece.

Impulsive sounds like that from a cap gun or noise from a continuous siren can also be a hearing hazard for your child.

### Storing toys safely

Toy boxes are useful for storing toys and helping keep bedrooms tidy, but they can be dangerous. Young children have died from being struck by a heavy toy box lid as they peered inside the toy box. Some children have also been trapped inside toy boxes and been unable to lift the lid. If your toy box has a heavy lid, think about removing it for the safety of your child.

If you are considering buying a toy box:

- look for one without a lid—if you choose a toy box with a lid, the lid should be lightweight and removable
- if there is a lock on a toy box lid, make sure it is easy for a child to open from the inside
- make sure the toy box has ventilation holes to prevent a child suffocating should they climb inside and the lid closes
- make sure the toy box lid has rubber or other stoppers that allow a gap of 12 mm or more when the lid is closed so that small fingers can't be crushed, and to help provide ventilation.

# Toys for kids up to three years

Children under three-years old often place toys in their mouth to explore them by sucking and chewing on them. Children in this age group are especially vulnerable to choking on small objects.

**Keep small objects out of the reach of young children and always supervise their play time.**

Toys suitable for children aged up to three years must comply with the mandatory Trade Practices Act safety standard 'Toys for children up to and including 36 months of age'. This means that, by law, toys suitable for ages up to 36 months (not just those marked as such) must not contain any parts and must not produce any small parts during normal use that could fit inside a 35 mm film

canister, as they may be a choking hazard. Any object that is small enough to fit inside a 35 mm film canister could choke or be swallowed or inhaled by a child under three-years old.

Examples of the toys suitable for children under three years of age are:

- toys to be grasped, shaken or rattled by small hands
- simple action toys for surprise or identifying sounds or pictures
- toys, including books, for recognising basic letters and numbers
- toys for sorting large shapes that do not need finger dexterity.

# Baby toys

## Before you buy

### Rattles and teethers

- Rattles and teethers must be large enough that babies can't fit them completely into their mouths as this would be a choking hazard. Small ends (such as the rattle handle) must not fit into a 50 x 35 mm hole, or if round must not fit into a 43 mm diameter hole.
- Never tie a teether or dummy around a baby's neck as it could strangle them.
- Rattles and other hand-held noise-producing toys should not be noisier than a loud conversation in a room.

### Toys on a string or elastic cord

- When a toy is attached to a string, the free length of the string should be shorter than 300 mm so that the string is not a strangulation hazard.

- When a toy has an elastic cord to be attached across a cradle, cot or pram, the maximum stretched length of the elastic should be no more than 750 mm, and the length of the elastic when relaxed should be no greater than 560 mm. The elastic may be enclosed in a tube.

The toy should display this warning label:

**WARNING:** This toy should be removed from the cradle, cot, playpen, pram, stroller etc. when the child is able to sit up unaided, because there is a possibility that the child could fall forward onto the toy in a way that would cause a restriction to breathing.

### Self retracting pull-strings

- The last 50 mm of any pull-string on toys for children younger than 18 months should stay outside the toy when the string is fully retracted so the child's fingers do not get caught.

### Detachable parts

- The detachable parts of toys intended for small children should not be small enough to be poked into the mouth, nose or ears. Smaller parts like eyes and buttons must be firmly attached to the toy.

### Battery operated toys

- Mobiles, musical toys and night lights for children should have any batteries securely enclosed—the battery casing should only be able to be opened with a specific tool.

### Mains operated toys and appliances

- Toys that operate on mains electricity, or appliances like night lights connected to the power supply by flexible electric cords, should be completely sealed or enclosed at the point where the power enters the toys.



# Stuffed toys

Stuffed toys like teddy bears and cuddly dolls may seem harmless, but their eyes, nose, hair, buttons or attached jewellery are often small enough to choke small children. Check that all small parts and attachments cannot be easily removed.

## Before you buy

- The filling of stuffed toys should be clean and free of objects or substances that may be harmful to a child.
- If possible, feel the toy for any sharp objects.
- Toys made from foam such as bath blocks may pose a choking danger if a child bites pieces off it. Foam toys are not recommended for children under three years.
- Only buy bean-bag style toys if you are sure the seams or material will not tear to allow the beans to escape. Polystyrene beads can be particularly hazardous as young children might inhale them.
- Seams should be securely sewn. If seams are sewn with a synthetic material like nylon thread, check the ends of the thread are secure.
- Check that all parts and small attachments like hair, jewellery and eyes cannot be easily removed from the toy.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Never let a child younger than three play with toys that have small parts that could separate and cause choking.
- ✓ Resew any split seams or dispose of the toy.
- ✓ Check toys regularly to make sure any accessories or small parts remain securely attached.

# Building blocks

Brightly coloured toy building blocks and nesting cubes can provide young children with creative and constructive play as they stack and knock down their creations. Beware of sets containing small parts that could choke your child.



## Before you buy

- Check that paints and lacquers are non-toxic. Look for a label on a painted toy specifying that the paints are non-toxic.
- Make sure plastic pieces are durable and not brittle. When brittle plastic breaks it can form sharp jagged edges or points that can cut.
- Select wooden items that are smoothly finished and made from soft wood that is unlikely to splinter when chewed.

## Safety at home

- ✓ Demonstrate the safe use of building sets to your child.

# Push-pull toys

Push-pull toys are ideal for young children when they start to take an active interest in exploring their surroundings and become more mobile. Toys that can be pushed or pulled along include items attached to a cord or a rigid handle such as a walking trolley with blocks or a toy stroller.

## Before you buy

### Pull strings

- If your child is 18 months or younger, ensure the pull string is shorter than 22 cm. Strings longer than this can tangle and form a loop or noose, and be a strangulation danger.
- For children aged 18 months to 36 months, cords that are longer than 22 cm should not have beads or other attachments that could tangle to form a loop or noose.
- Any string or cord attached to a toy should be at least 1.5 mm thick to avoid being a cutting danger for your child.

### Solid handles

- Push-along or pull-along toys with rigid handles should have protective covers firmly attached to the ends of the handle so that the exposed ends can't cut or stab an infant.
- Removal or loss of a cover should not reveal a sharp point or edge, and the cover must not be small enough to choke a child.
- Crossbars on handles should be firmly attached to the bar leading from the toy. They should not be attached by nails, as an exposed nail could form a sharp cutting edge.

### Axles

- Axles should be properly attached to the toy and the wheels firmly attached to the axles. Removal of a wheel or an axle should not produce a dangerous sharp point.

# Dolls

Children may take an interest in dolls when they begin to play make-believe games. There are many types of dolls available and you should be careful to select a safe one that suits your child's age and development.



## Before you buy

### Limb attachment

- For children up to three years, ensure that the doll's limb or head if removable could not fit inside a 35 mm film canister so it isn't a choking danger.
- If limbs or heads can be pulled from the doll's body, they should not expose sharp wires inside the body or on the end of the limb or head. Attachment with rubber bands is acceptable if the point of attachment on the limb and/or body is not a sharp screw, nail or hook that will cut fingers poked into the gap.

### Construction material

- Plastic should be soft and flexible, as brittle plastics can break and form sharp fragments and dangerous small parts.
- Wooden dolls should have smoothly finished surfaces, free of splinters. They should not contain joining nails or screws and the joins should be firmly glued.

### Eyes and buttons

- Small parts such as eyes and buttons should be securely fixed to the doll or its clothes so they cannot be easily removed by pulling, chewing or washing. Eyes and buttons should be made from non-toxic materials.

### Pins

- Nappies, liners and other clothes designed to be removed from the doll should be secured with velcro, clips or other safe fastening systems, not pins.

### Handbags and purses

- Decorations, like glitter, sequins or jewellery, on handbags, purses and other fashion accessories should be firmly attached.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Do not give small metal figures to young children. These figures are usually collectors' items and not for children—they may contain or be coated with toxic elements.
- ✗ Do not give children dolls that have exposed and dangerous sharp edges or points.
- ✓ Regularly check the doll's clothing for bows, ribbons or other adornments that may become loose, as young children could choke on them.
- ✓ Remove any pins attached to the doll's clothes.

# Toy trains, cars and miniature vehicles



Vehicle toys appeal to children of all ages but some, such as kits that require assembly and detailed models with small parts, are unsuitable for young children.

## Before you buy

### Construction

- Choose toy vehicles that are strong and durable, preferably with large parts.
- Any small parts like internal fittings or mouldings including windows, dashboards and steering wheels, should be fixed firmly so they cannot be removed by a child.

### Edges should be smooth

- Wooden vehicles should have smooth surfaces free of splinters. If vehicles are not made from a single piece of wood, the separate pieces should be firmly joined together. Glued sections fitted together with dowelling are preferable to using nails or screws that could cut or scratch if the toy breaks apart.
- Plastic vehicles should be moulded in one piece and the plastic should be strong enough to withstand rough treatment. The plastic should also be flexible enough not to form sharp or jagged sections if it breaks.
- Metal vehicles should have no sharp edges or corners. Individual parts should be firmly attached, preferably by secure rivets or welding.

### Wheels and tyres

- Wheels and tyres should be firmly attached to the vehicle. They should not, if removed, expose sharp axle rods, rough metal or splintered wheel rims. Small tyres should not be easily removed from the wheels.

### Self-propelled vehicles

- These include models with inertia motors, wound by pushing the vehicle along the floor.
- The motor should be fully enclosed with no gaps where fingers or foreign objects can get caught.
- Hand-wound mechanisms, like those on the lifting and lowering mechanisms of cranes, should be enclosed or have gears that cannot trap fingers or catch on clothing.

### Dump trucks

- Trucks and other vehicles with tilting trays should be constructed so that fingers can't be caught in the tray when it closes. Pieces that open and close should have blunt or rounded edges so fingers aren't caught or cut if the tray closes on them.

### Self-retracting strings

- To ensure that the child's fingers do not get caught, check that the string does not retract too quickly and that it leaves at least 5 cm length outside the toy.

### Towing strings

- If the string or cord is longer than 22 cm, the toy should not have any slip knots or attachments that could form a loop, creating a strangulation hazard. Any string or cord on a pull-along toy for a child under three years should be at least 1.5 mm thick, so it is unlikely to cut a child.

### Sharp edges

- There should not be any sharp points or edges on vehicles that could stab or injure a person hit by the vehicle.

# Masks and helmets

Any toy that covers your child's face and is held in place by elastic or string ties must have adequate and unobstructed ventilation so that if the child collapses, faints or is injured while wearing the toy, they don't suffocate.



## Before you buy

- Check that any toy that encloses the whole head allows adequate and unobstructed ventilation.
- Check that the helmet can be easily removed by another person.

## Safety at home

- ✓ If masks are held in place by elastic, teach children not to 'snap' the mask against the wearer's face.

# Erasers and fridge magnets in food form

Erasers and refrigerator magnets that look like food are dangerous for children under three years. Some refrigerator magnets come in shapes that look like small fruits and berries, making them attractive to younger children who could mistake them for the real thing. If chewed they could splinter, and if swallowed the magnet could choke a child—or possibly be toxic.

Safety alert:

- Choking hazards—being small, they easily fit into a child's mouth but are still large enough to catch in the throat if swallowed.
- Some erasers may contain toxic material.
- Appearance or smell—the shape, colour and smell of scented erasers can make them attractive to small children who have trouble distinguishing them from real food.

**Keep erasers and fridge magnets out of reach of young children.**



# Balloons

Balloons are fun to have at parties, but when deflated or burst, they can choke or suffocate young children. Suffocation or choking can also occur if children suck the rubber into their mouths to make bubbles.

## Balloon-blowing kits

Balloon-blowing kits usually comprise a tube of synthetic substance and a straw. By blowing through the straw into a plug of the synthetic substance it expands and forms a balloon.

A mandatory standard applies to all balloon-blowing kits and prohibits the use of benzene in the synthetic substance.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Never tie a rubber balloon onto the side of a cot or pram/ stroller.
- ✓ Keep balloons out of reach of young children.
- ✓ Ensure any strings attached to balloons are shorter than 22 cm so they are not a strangulation hazard.
- ✓ Dispose of any burst balloons.



# Kites

Kites are a constant source of fun, skill and wonder for young children, but unfortunately they can deliver an electric shock if they touch power lines.

The Australian Standard for Children's Toys states:

- Kites may not contain any metallised material that measures more than 25 cm in any one direction.
- Kites should be labelled with the following notice:

**WARNING: Do not use near overhead power lines**

- The line to the kite must not contain any metallic material, for example, a wire or wire-cored rope cannot be used to control the kite.
- The reason for restricting metallised plastic materials in kites is not only to avoid electric shock to the user, but also to prevent shorting of power supply if the kite touches two or more power lines.



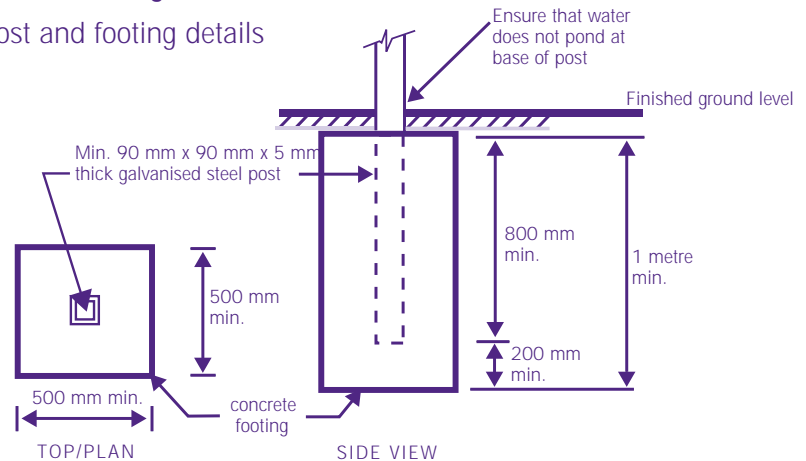
# Basketball rings and backboards

Basketball is a popular sport for children and teenagers, and many homes have a basketball ring and backboard installed on a brick wall on their garage or above a door. These installations can be dangerous for children as basketball rings installed on home exteriors may not be able to support a player's weight. Fatal and serious injuries have occurred from falling debris such as bricks and guttering after a player held onto the basketball ring and the structure collapsed on top of them.

**Ideally, a basketball ring and backboard should be fixed to a 'hot dip' galvanised steel post.**

## Safe installation of basketball rings

### Post and footing details



## Before you buy

Under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*, new basketball rings and backboards are required to carry the following warnings:

→ Accompanying the product at the time of sale:

**WARNING: IMPROPER INSTALLATION OR SWINGING ON THE RING MAY CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH**



→ Permanently fixed to the backboard:

**WARNING: SWINGING ON THE RING MAY CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH**

## Safety at home

- ✗ Do not fix a basketball ring and backboard to brickwork unless assessed as safe by a suitably qualified person.
- ✗ Do not use a basketball ring and backboard mounted on brickwork unless assessed as safe by a suitably qualified person.

- ✓ Remove unsafe basketball rings and backboards.
- ✓ Ideally, fix the basketball ring and backboard to a 'hot dip' galvanised steel post. Hot dipped galvanised steel has a longer life than ordinary galvanised steel, which helps to resist rusting at ground level.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions when attaching the basketball ring to the backboard, and the backboard to the post.
- ✓ Regularly check the structural soundness of any wall or post that a basketball ring and backboard is attached to.
- ✓ Consult a structural engineer if you have any doubt about the safety or stability of the installation.
- ✓ Warn children to never hang or swing on the basketball ring.

# Bows and arrows

Not recommended

These projectile toys are associated with many injuries to children. Children playing with bows and arrows should always be supervised and should be warned not to fire at or near others.



## Before you buy

The shafts of arrows or similar toys should either have:

- a permanently attached protective tip
- a blunted front end to which a protective tip can be attached.

Protective tips should:

- be firmly attached to the shaft
- not form a dangerous sharp edge or point.

Preferably, choose a bow that cannot launch improvised projectiles such as pencils or other items that could be fashioned into a dangerous 'arrow'.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Never allow children to play with adult darts.
- ✓ Always supervise children playing with bows and arrows and tell them not to fire at or near people or animals.
- ✓ Keep souvenir bows, arrows and spears out of young children's reach.

# Toy guns and pistols

Toy guns can be dangerous, particularly if they have been adapted to fire 'modified' missiles such as pens, pins or ball bearings. A toy gun should have a barrel plug or be designed to prevent the use of such missiles. Children should always be supervised when using toy guns and should never be allowed to fire them close to another person's face.



**Always supervise children playing with toy guns and tell them to never fire a toy gun near a person's face.**

## Before you buy

### Spark guns

- Check that sparks stay inside the gun when operated. Avoid guns that discharge sparks or tiny hot particles, which could hit eyes and cause injury.

### Roll caps

- These are small strips of rolled paper with tiny dots of explosive powder spaced along their length. They unroll as the caps are fired by a trigger-operated hammer and lever mechanism.
- Avoid guns that discharge the cap near the outside of the gun and from which material from the fired cap may be thrown off into the face of the user or anyone standing nearby.

### Ring caps

- These are tiny plastic percussion caps containing explosive material, most commonly made in a circular moulding, that are contained and fired in a revolving cylinder inside the gun.
- Beware of any ring cap guns that have hollow short plastic barrels or plugs in the end of hollow non-metal barrels. This design, combined with rapid and repeated firing of caps, may cause hollow plastic barrels to flare-up or possibly catch fire. To avoid this problem, buy either metal toy guns or those with solid barrels. Be aware of where a cap gun with a solid barrel will emit its blast so that injuries from its emissions can be avoided.

### Cork guns

- Toy guns that shoot corks from the barrel often use a compressed air system for firing. Each cork should be securely attached to the gun by a strong cord.

### Water pistols and water guns

- A water pistol with a range of only a metre or two is not considered dangerous, provided only water is used. Water guns or cannons that work on manual compression and have a range of 10 metres or more can be dangerous.

## Safety at home

- ✗ High pressure water guns must not be fired at close range to another person as the high compression stream of water from the gun can cause serious eye or ear injuries.
- ✗ Cap guns should not be fired near the face, eyes or ears.
- ✓ Make sure children understand the safe use instructions supplied with toy guns.

### WARNING: DART GUN BAN IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, the supply of dart gun sets, with or without a target, consisting of a firing gun and small suction-tipped darts is banned, as the darts are a choking hazard.

# Flying planes

Because toy planes may not fly where intended, and uncontrolled flight paths may cause problems, a child's competence and level of responsibility should be the deciding factors in buying this type of toy. Propellers should be designed in the form of a ring to reduce the risk of injury.



## Before you buy

### Inertia motor planes

Inertia motor planes operate when the motor is wound by pushing the plane's wheels along a surface. The propeller spins when the plane is released or a bar or button is pushed. Be careful that:

- the propeller has no sharp edges or sharp points
- the motor mechanism is enclosed so that fingers cannot be inserted into the working parts.

### Key-wound motors

The same hazards mentioned for inertia motor planes apply to planes with key-wound motors. You should also check that:

- there is less than 5 mm between the key and the toy so that fingers cannot be caught
- the wings of the key do not have holes greater than 5 mm diameter, as larger holes can trap fingers when the key is spinning.

### Control-line planes

The greatest danger with these planes is the speed of the spinning propeller and the speed of the plane itself. Fly such planes well clear of other people.

### Radio-controlled planes

Unlike wire-controlled planes, radio-controlled planes are not limited by the length of the controlling wire and need a large clear area for safe operation. These planes should only be operated under adult supervision.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Never fly control-line planes near overhead power lines.
- ✗ Control-line planes and radio-controlled planes could pose a serious risk to other people and should not be used without adult supervision.

- ✓ Always operate radio-controlled planes within a clear line of sight.
- ✓ Be especially careful when operating mechanically launched planes. These can be more dangerous than hand-launched ones because their flight direction can be uncontrollable and inaccurate and they travel with more force and speed.

# Chemistry sets

While most dangerous chemicals have been excluded from chemistry sets, a normally harmless chemical or a mixture of harmless chemicals in inexperienced hands can be dangerous. Chemistry set packaging should have a warning label that clearly describes the nature of any potential hazards that may result from the set's contents.

Consider the age of the child who will use the set before you buy it—some potentially dangerous items like Bunsen burners are essential to the proper functioning of chemistry sets and will be included.



## Before you buy

- Check for a warning label that meets the requirements of the Australian standard. This could include 'poisonous chemicals' or 'gas burner included'.
- Check the contents of the kit—some include burners for heating chemicals. These may be operated by gas or methylated spirits.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Keep burners out of the reach of younger children and only allow older children to use them under supervision.
- ✗ Chemistry sets should never be left in reach of younger children.
- ✓ A responsible adult should always be supervising experiments and the use of chemicals.
- ✓ Be aware that spirit or fumes from spirit burners could be inhaled or swallowed, affecting a child's breathing—and if spilled, the spirits can cause fires.

# Water toys

When you buy toys for use in water, remember that they are not life saving devices. Life saving devices are covered by specific Australian standards as personal flotation devices and are not covered by this safety checklist.

The Consumer Product Safety Standard for Children's Flotation Toys and Swimming Aids covers flotation toys used by children younger than 15. The standard defines a flotation toy as a device that provides buoyancy but is not attached to the body. It includes things like rings, inflatable arm bands, kick boards and small inflatable toy boats. The standard requires that these goods must pass a series of performance tests and must be marked:

**WARNING: Use only under competent supervision**



## Before you buy

### Inflatable arm bands and rings

- Inflatable arm bands, generally worn on the child's upper arms, and inflatable rings worn around the waist, must be marked with a warning notice.
- The sole purpose of inflatable rings is to keep a child on the water's surface. A child who goes under the water wearing an inflatable ring may return to the surface in an unsafe position, such as feet first.

### Kickboards

- Kickboards help children develop their kicking technique and gain confidence in the water and should also be marked with the safety warning.

### Floating pillows and lilos

- Inflatable pillows, air mattresses or lilos provide a way to rest or play on the water, but are not intended to be life saving devices.

### Face masks and goggles

- Swimming goggles have a separate lens for each eye, and are not designed for underwater diving.
- Face masks have one large lens covering eyes and nose and are designed for underwater diving. A mask that is too small will be uncomfortable, and one that is too large may not seal and could allow water to enter.

### Flippers

- Flippers improve the power of a swimmer's kick, but are not flotation aids.
- You should also consider where the flippers will be used—flippers held in place by a strap around the heel do not usually have a base that covers the heel and the sole of the foot, and are not recommended for use on rough surfaces like rocks or coral.

## Safety in the pool

- ✗ Kickboards, floaties, floating pillows or lilos should not be used without adult supervision. They are not designed as life saving devices.
- ✗ Do not rely on inflatable arm bands and inflatable rings to keep a child afloat—they may be slow in returning a child to the water's surface or may return the wearer to the surface in an unsafe position.

- ✓ All water play should be competently supervised.
- ✓ Consider using a mix of aids to help a child learn to swim as prolonged wearing of blow-up arm bands or rings can cause chafing.
- ✓ Buy the correct size and style of product for your child's use.

# Ride-on toys

Kids love wheeled toys but these can be dangerous. The most common injuries associated with wheels are falls—and over half of these are caused by irregular riding surfaces.

This section includes pedal cars and sit-on toys like cars and trucks that are propelled by the child pushing along the ground with their legs and feet.

**A ride-on toy should be stable and not tip in any direction on a slope when the child is sitting on it.**

## Before you buy

### Steering wheels

- Column-mounted steering wheels should not be easy to remove. An exposed steering wheel shaft could spear the rider.
- The steering wheel should be made from a material strong enough to resist the impact of a child in an accident. If the steering wheel shatters it could expose the shaft and spear the child.

### Wheels and wheel rims

- Wheels and wheel rims, especially plastic or wooden ones, should be strong enough not to collapse or disintegrate under normal riding conditions. They should be able to withstand shocks such as hitting kerbs, large stones or other irregular surfaces.

### Seats

- Seats should be made from a material that is not likely to split, crack or shatter on impact and place the rider at risk of being speared by the exposed seat post. All seats and surfaces, including those underneath the seat, should be smooth so they can't cut fingers.

### Handlebars/grips

- Check that the handlebar is not loose.
- If the handlebars are raised, check the supporting stem is inserted far enough down the shaft for it to be stable.
- Handlebar ends should be covered and the handgrips secure. Exposed handlebar ends can severely injure a child in a fall.
- The shaft supporting the handlebars should be strong enough to resist an impact during an accident.
- When seated, the rider's arms should be slightly bent when holding the handgrips and the child's knees should not hit the handlebar.

### Support between front and back wheels

- The support or frame between the front and back wheels should not bend or break under likely stress.

### Pedal-operated toys

- The rods connecting the pedals to the driving wheels should be firmly connected at all joints. The joints should not be sloppy or able to be disconnected, as a disconnected rod could spear upwards or dig into the ground and tip the toy.
- It should not be possible for a child's foot to become tangled in the connecting rods or the pedals. Feet should not be able to be trapped under any part of the toy when it is moving (check the pedals at their lowest position).
- Pedal toys operated by a sprocket and a chain or belt drive should have guards to prevent fingers and toes or clothing from getting caught.

# Pavement cycles

A pavement cycle can be used as a training bicycle for your child but is not designed for use on the road. The addition of training wheels gives the bike extra stability as they learn to ride and gain confidence to steer the bike and use the brakes.

## Safety when riding

✗ Pavement cycles should not be ridden on the road.

- ✓ Teach your child how to use the bicycle brakes. Foot operated brakes are preferable for this development stage of your child.
- ✓ Provide a safe environment for your child to learn to use the bike. A safe environment means keeping the child away from traffic, pedestrians, steep slopes and uneven ground.
- ✓ Ensure your child wears appropriate safety equipment, such as a helmet, when riding.

## Before you buy

- Select the right size cycle for your child's size. A quick test for selecting the right size cycle is to place your child on the cycle and check that their arms are slightly bent when holding the handgrips, and that their knees won't hit the handlebar when pedalling.
- Ensure that the drive chain mechanism is covered with a guard to prevent fingers being trapped.
- Ensure the handlebar is firmly fitted. If the handle bars are raised, check the supporting stem is inserted far enough down the shaft that it's stable.
- The handlebar ends should be covered and the handgrips secure. Exposed handlebar ends can severely injure a child in a fall.
- The seat should be smooth, with no sharp edges underneath it, so it won't cut fingers.
- The material used for the seat should be in good condition and not showing signs of wear such as splitting, cracking or shattering. If the seat detaches on impact the exposed seat post could injure your child.

# Rocking horses

Rocking horses have been a popular nursery toy for many years. However, they can still pose injury risks to their riders.

## Before you buy

- The rockers should be long enough and shaped so that the rocking horse will not tip over forwards or backwards under vigorous use.
- The rockers should be far enough apart (or wide enough) to prevent the horse from tipping over sideways, especially when the child is mounting the horse from the side.
- Saddles should be firmly fixed or glued to the horse. They should not be nailed in place, as exposed nails could form a dangerous sharp point.
- Stirrups should be firmly attached to the saddle or the horse and be adjustable.



# Trampolines

Trampolines provide children with a great way to develop balance and coordination skills, but they also cause many injuries. When children fall they hit the side of the trampoline, the ground or some other object near the trampoline. They can also have their skin pinched by the springs.

## Before you buy

- Look for a trampoline that meets AS4989-2003, a voluntary Australian standard that requires the frame to have padding.
- Ensure that the area around the trampoline (ideally 2 metres wide on all sides) is free from hazards like walls, play equipment or garden furniture.
- Ideally, an area of 2 metres all around the trampoline should be a thick layer of soft, impact-absorbing material (for example pine bark, woodchip or sand). This should be raked regularly to reduce its compacting.

- Ideally, the jumping surface should be as close to the ground level as possible, so there is less distance to fall. Consider how the trampoline might be positioned to minimise the height above the ground.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Keep toddlers away from the trampoline while it is being used and ensure they do not go underneath it.
- ✗ High-risk skills like somersaults should only be taught by trained professionals and should be performed under supervision.
- ✓ Buy safety pads to completely cover the steel frame and springs if your trampoline does not have them. Safety pads should be a contrasting colour to the mat.
- ✓ Only one child at a time should be allowed on the trampoline.
- ✓ Teach your child to jump in the centre of the mat and to climb, not jump, off the trampoline.
- ✓ Regularly check that the trampoline is in good condition; make sure that the mat does not have holes, the springs are intact and securely attached at both ends, the frame is not bent, and the leg braces are securely locked.
- ✓ Supervise children at all times.

# Cubby houses and tents

It is important that cubby houses are located in places that can be supervised by an adult, not on building sites or isolated areas away from the safety of home.



## Before you buy

- If the cubby house has doors a child must be able to easily open them from the inside. This will stop the child from being trapped inside.
- The gap at the hinged side of the doors should be at least 12 mm, so that a child's fingers will not be caught or crushed in the gap.
- Cubby houses and tents must have adequate ventilation holes in their covers, walls or doors. Some of the ventilation openings should remain unblocked when the cubby or tent is placed against a wall.

## Safety at home

- ✗ Never allow children to play with unused refrigerators or freezers because children have been known to become trapped inside and suffocate.

# Consumer product standards

There are thousands of voluntary Australian standards on a broad range of goods including nursery furniture and equipment for babies but only a few of these product standards are mandatory (compulsory by law).

## Voluntary standards

A voluntary standard is a published document that sets out specifications and procedures to ensure that a material, product, method or service is fit for its purpose and consistently performs the way it was intended.

Standards are usually formulated in response to demands from the community and are developed by committees representing a range of community, government and industry interests.

Australian standards are written by Standards Australia, an independent, non-government organisation whose primary role is to prepare voluntary standards.

Suppliers sometimes choose to have an independent certifying authority examine their processes and certify their product's compliance with certain standards. Such certifying authorities may authorise the use of proprietary certification marks. Undertaking such certification schemes is at the discretion of the supplier and

is not a requirement contained in any standard. However, it may give consumers some added confidence of a suppliers' ongoing commitment to conforming with particular standards.

## Mandatory standards

Voluntary Australian standards are often used as the basis for mandatory standards under the Trade Practices Act. There are two types of mandatory product standards: safety standards and information standards.

**Safety standards** are declared when products are likely to be hazardous. They require that goods comply with particular performance, composition, contents, design, construction, finish, labelling or packaging rules.

**Information standards** are introduced if harm to consumers is possible in the absence of information about a product. They require prescribed information to be given to consumers when they buy certain goods.

## Enforcing mandatory standards

The ACCC is responsible for enforcing mandatory consumer product safety and information standards, and bans of unsafe goods declared under the Trade Practices Act. A state or territory may have its own product safety standards.

Because preventing injury is better than cure, the ACCC attaches great importance to promoting compliance with the safety provisions as well as to remedial enforcement action.

The ACCC often seeks the immediate withdrawal of defective goods from sale and recall of the goods. Other remedies include injunctions, damages, a requirement for corrective advertising and various ancillary orders such as court enforceable undertakings to ensure future compliance.

Supplying goods that do not comply with a mandatory standard is an offence under the Trade Practices Act and may result in fines of up to \$1.1 million for corporations and \$220 000 for individuals.

*For information about state and territory laws contact the relevant consumer affairs or fair trading agency (see contacts at the end of this book).*

## Product recalls

A substantial number of products are recalled each year because of safety defects. The ACCC operates the Product Recalls Australia website, and advises manufacturers and suppliers on how to conduct a voluntary product recall. The website [www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au) lists recalled products.

Information on mandatory standards and bans can be obtained from ACCC offices.

Updates on product safety standards are available from the ACCC website: [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au) or by calling the ACCC Infocentre on **1300 302 502**.

Baby bath aids	must carry a warning, visible when the child is in the bath aid, that it is not a safety device, that the baby should be kept in arms reach and that the baby should not be left in the care of children
Baby walkers	to minimise the risk of injury by falling down stairs or tipping over—must carry a safety warning label
Balloon-blowing kits	must not contain benzene
Basketball ring and backboard	must have a warning notice accompanying the product at the time of sale indicating that improper installation or swinging on the ring may cause serious injury and death; a warning label must also be permanently fixed to the backboard
Bean bags	must carry a label warning of the choking hazard and any openings must be child-resistant
Bicycle helmets	performance and safety requirements
Bunk beds	to prevent falls and entrapment dangers
Child restraints for motor vehicles	performance and other safety requirements for baby capsules, child seats and other restraints

Children's nightwear and limited daywear having reduced fire hazard	applies to garments sized 00 to 14
Cots for household use	to prevent entrapment hazards
Disposable cigarette lighters	safe use and child resistance requirements
Elastic luggage straps	stretch tie-down straps and cords, including octopus straps, must carry a label warning of eye injury if over-stretched
Exercise cycles	moving parts and other entrapment hazards to be isolated by guards, plus specifications for the integrity of the seat
Flotation toys and swimming aids for children	some performance requirements and a system of marking to alert users to the correct use to avoid drowning
Paper patterns for children's nightwear	must carry a label advising of the flammability of certain nightwear designs and fabrics
Pedal bicycles	performance and safety requirements
Sunglasses and fashion spectacles	performance, safety and labelling requirements
Toys for children up to 36 months	toys suitable for ages up to 36 months (not just those marked as such) must not contain any small parts which may be a choking hazard, not produce any small parts when put through a range of tests which simulate normal use and abuse

## Banned unsafe goods (pertaining to children)

When a ban is introduced, the goods are banned from supply for a temporary period of 18 months, after which the ban is either revoked or made permanent. This is done by publishing a consumer protection notice in the *Commonwealth Gazette*.

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Mini-cup jellies (containing konjac)	at least 15 people have died worldwide from choking on mini-cup jellies containing konjac (also known as glucomannan, conjac, konnyaku, konjonac, taro powder and yam flour) and having a height or width of less than or equal to 45 mm. This product does not readily dissolve
Candles with wicks containing lead	burning of lead in confined spaces may pose a health hazard
Children's dart gun sets	the darts represent a choking hazard if they lodge in the throat

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## Mandatory toy standard for children up to and including 36 months

Toys for children 36 months and under are defined as toys manufactured, designed, labelled or marketed as playthings for children in this age group, e.g. rattles and dummies.

Labelling a toy 'not suitable for children under three years' does not necessarily exclude it from compliance with the mandatory standard. Unless exempted, any toy reasonably regarded as suitable for a child three years and under must comply with the standard.

### Requirements

The mandatory standard requires that toys for children up to 36 months be free of any small parts that may pose an ingestion or inhalation hazard. As a general guide, anything smaller than a golf ball or that fits into a 35 mm film canister would fail the 'small part' test (see the diagrams at the end of this section).

A toy therefore **MUST NOT**:

- be a small part in its own right
- contain small detachable components
- break into small pieces during use or reasonably foreseeable abuse.

The mandatory standard does **NOT** regard toy components made from the following as ingestion or inhalation hazards:

- fibre filling material, such as polyester monofilament
- components or parts consisting of paper, fabric, yarn, fuzz, fluff, elastic or string.

### Exclusions

The following items are examples of products excluded from compliance with the standard:

- balloons
- marbles
- tapes and compact discs
- books
- crayons
- chalk
- pencils and pens
- paints
- paint brushes
- clay
- plasticine and playdough
- flotation aid toys
- bicycles with a wheelbase greater than 640 mm
- toys that are made wholly from highly porous material (for example cheesecloth)
- playground equipment for parks, schools and domestic use and goods supplied wholly or partially unassembled, provided that the goods are constructed correctly according to the instructions
- foam toys, provided they are labelled with the following warning:

**WARNING:  
NOT SUITABLE FOR  
CHILDREN UNDER  
3 YEARS AS FOAM  
PIECES MAY BREAK OFF  
AND CAUSE A CHOKING  
HAZARD**

# Contacts

## Consumer affairs and fair trading agencies

### Commonwealth

Australian Competition and  
Consumer Commission  
Infocentre: 1300 302 502  
[www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au)

### Australian Capital Territory

Office of Fair Trading  
02 6207 0400  
[www.fairtrading.act.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.act.gov.au)

### New South Wales

Office of Fair Trading  
13 32 20  
[www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

### Northern Territory

Consumer and Business Affairs  
08 8999 1999  
1800 019 319  
[www.caba.nt.gov.au](http://www.caba.nt.gov.au)

### Queensland

Office of Fair Trading  
1300 658 030  
[www.consumer.qld.gov.au](http://www.consumer.qld.gov.au)

### South Australia

Office of Consumer and Business Affairs  
08 8152 0732  
[www.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au)

### Tasmania

Office of Consumer Affairs and  
Fair Trading  
1300 654 499  
[www.consumer.tas.gov.au](http://www.consumer.tas.gov.au)

### Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria  
1300 558 181  
[www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

### Western Australia

Department of Consumer and  
Employment Protection  
1300 304 054  
[www.docep.wa.gov.au](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au)

## Standards Australia

Voluntary Australian standards can be  
bought from Standards Australia

1300 654 646

[www.standards.com.au](http://www.standards.com.au)