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Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2011). *Newsroom*. 1070.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom/1070>

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Georgia Southern University Professor Offers Tips on Holiday Shopping For Youngsters

DECEMBER 13, 2011

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It is tempting to reach for the latest gadget when shopping for kids this time of year, but a Georgia Southern University professor says the simpler the toy the better when buying for young children.

Georgia Southern child and family development professor Jerri Kropp has three guidelines to help you make sure you're buying a gift that will encourage a young child's development.

- Batteries aren't necessary.

Generally speaking, any toy that includes batteries won't encourage much creativity in children, because those toys are what Kropp calls "closed." Unlike balls and blocks, battery-operated toys generally serve one purpose, causing youngsters to grow bored.

"In general, toys with batteries do one thing. A child will get tired with that very quickly. You hear parents all the time talk about how their children are more interested in the box and the bows than the toy itself, and I think that's because there's more you can do with the box," Kropp said. "I think it's really important for children to use their creativity and their imagination, and that doesn't happen very much with the battery-operated toys."

- It's never too early to read.

There is one gift that is perfect for any newborn, teenager or adult – a book. Infants like to chew, so find picture books made of material that can stand up to some roughhousing or even a trip to the bathtub. As children get older, start looking for picture books with a few words, and get into chapter books when children start attending school. Most importantly, use books to spend time with children.

"Hopefully, the book comes with a person to read it to them," said Kropp. "When a child is too young to read it, they'll have a parent to read it to them. That is just so important for interaction, for developing relationships, and even when a child gets old enough to read, it's important to continue reading together. It's such a nice way to spend time together. I believe that we should read to babies every single day of their lives, starting from day one."

- Shop for the child, not for yourself.

Just because a toy looks like fun to a grownup doesn't necessarily mean a child will enjoy it. More importantly, videos, electronics and battery-operated toys keep children from using their imagination.

"I think a lot of parents are drawn to high-tech toys because they think those toys will help make their child smarter," said Kropp. "The American Academy of Pediatrics says, 'No TV at all for children under 2,' so if you're purchasing video tapes, that violates that rule. Select toys that encourage social interaction, problem solving and creativity."

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"O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree..." 🎄🎵#TBT to circa 1964, when a tree in front of the Williams Center was decorated for the holidays.



12h

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