

Where are your Educational Toys?

We are frequently asked this question and are apt to answer, "Why, all of our toys are educational!" The truth is all toys are educational as is anything placed into the hands of a child. The more important questions to ask of a child's plaything: What does it teach? What behavior does it encourage? What thinking does it invite? What feelings does it nurture? What creativity does it inspire?

What's a "specialty" toy store and how are your toys all that different?

Because we know a child plays at our table, we take great care and give much thought in selecting only the most wholesome playthings. We believe a toy should engage a child in constructive play and so we shy away from toys that promote violence and destructive behavior. We believe the child, not the toy, should be in charge and prefer playthings that are primarily powered by the child's imagination. We know that a plaything is only as good as the time it holds a child's interest. It takes more than "eye appeal" to find a place on our shelves. It takes more than "educational merit." A toy to be worthy of our shelves must pass the "kid test". To be of ultimate benefit and educational value, playthings should entertain, engage, and expand the child.

What distinguishes independents?

We are knowledgeable about toys, but more importantly about the children that use them. We select product not on the basis of hype and advertising, but on intrinsic play value. In short, we are toy-savvy and kid-wise!

ASTRA is Leading the Way Through Play by providing quality products that help children have fun, achieve success and lead happy, healthy lives. The largest association for companies in toy and juvenile products, ASTRA brings retailers, manufacturers, and industry affiliates together to help deliver offerings that serve children's best interests. To learn more about ASTRA and to locate ASTRA retailers nationwide, log onto www.astratoy.org

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."
- Albert Einstein

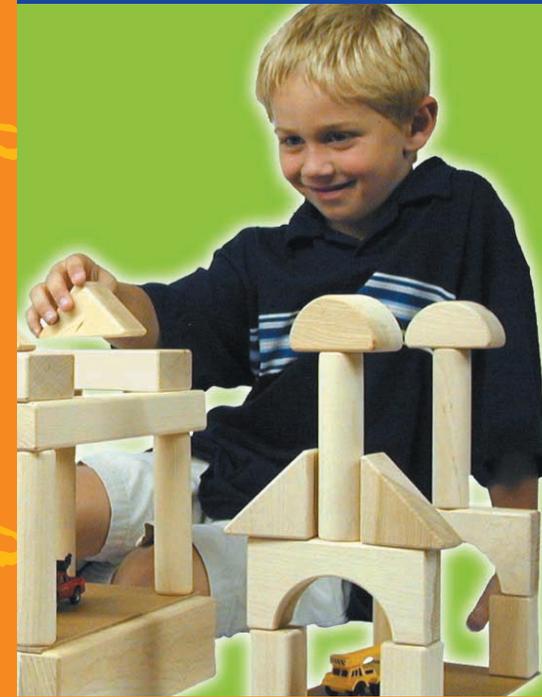
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LEARNING PLAY!



"Man is most nearly himself when he achieves the seriousness of a child at play."

Heraclitus, Greek philosopher

ASTRA

American Specialty Toy Retailing Association

Leading the way through play

Leading the way through play

LEARN TO PLAY... PLAY TO LEARN



Children don't think like adults.

It took a genius to discover this simple truth. Jean Piaget, a prominent Swiss philosopher and psychologist, was one of the first to take children's thinking seriously and may well be considered the Professor of Play. Through his studies of children in the early 1900's, he came to recognize that children learn step-by-step through experience and interaction with the world around them. In fact, Piaget's research discovered that the young mind is not capable of formal logic and abstract thinking until 11 or 12 years old. Up until then, children learn inductively through experimentation and testing – through hands-on play.

The child playing with blocks is

- Learning how to control small muscles and how to coordinate eyes and hands to stack and balance the blocks.
- Developing mathematical concepts by sorting the blocks by size and shape and figuring out what number of blocks are needed to fill a space.
- Experimenting with fundamental principles of physics, learning to predict cause-and-effect by discovering how high the blocks can be stacked before they fall.
- Gaining self-control, independence, and self-confidence.

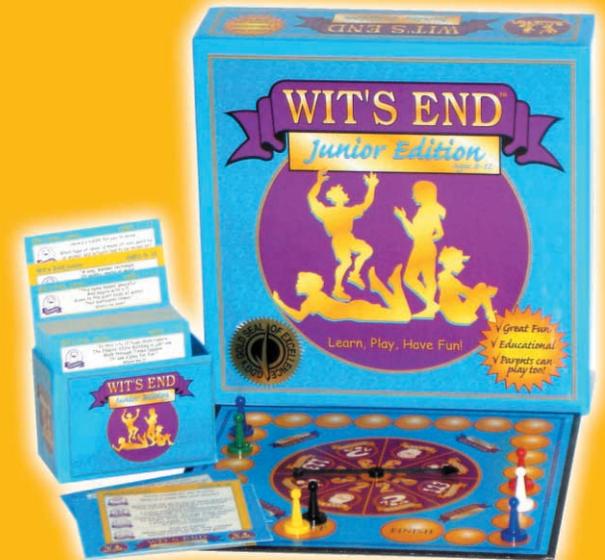
Piaget Stages of Development

Sensorimotor Stage: Birth to 2 years

The child at this stage uses senses and motor abilities to figure out the world. Squeeze the rubber ducky and it quacks. Drop the ball in the hole and it rolls down the chute all the way to the bottom. Through repetitive play, the young child learns how to keep in mind what's out of sight and how to cause a reaction.

Preoperational Stage: 2 to 6 years

During this stage the child acquires the ability to use symbols but still requires physical props and concrete situations to solve problems. A preschooler will line up 4 blocks and 4 more and then count up to 8. Then do it all over again using cookies or fingers.



Concrete Operations: 6-11 years

From physical experience, the school-age child learns to conceptualize. Now $4+4$ can be solved with numbers, not just with objects. Still the young student relies on experiment and discovery to hotwire the brain. Strategy games and brainteasers help children to begin thinking logically and lay the foundation for the acquisition of formal logic later on.