

# Phil's Forum 8/30/06 "How Toys Teach Part 1"

Former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson once said, "*All television is educational television. The question is what is it teaching?*"

The same could be said about toys. All toys teach. Every single one of them. Without exception.

The question is what are they teaching?

The **Great Toys** teach important life skills such as Communication, Cooperation, Problem Solving, Planning & Strategy, Logical Thinking, and Cause & Effect.

Don't believe me?

Let's take an easy example – **Dolls**.

When your daughter plays with a doll, what does she do? She talks to the doll and gives the doll a voice with which to reply (*communication*). She invites other friends & their dolls to play with her (*communication & cooperation*). She sets up tea parties, setting tables, figuring out who sits where and what the schedule of events will be (*planning & strategy*). She plays out scenes where her doll is sick and needs her help (*problem solving*). She mimics roles of responsibility by being "responsible" for her baby and has to think through her actions and how they affect her doll (*logical thinking*). If she has a doll that cries she's also learning *cause & effect*.

Dolls are just one example of what we call **Role Play Toys** that includes action figures, wooden trains, kitchens, dress-up clothes, puppets, and themed playsets like Imaginext & Playmobil.

Along with encouraging children to use their *imagination*, **Role Play Toys** are great teachers of Communication, Cooperation, and Planning & Strategy - skills we use in our everyday lives.

Here's another example – **Lego**

When your child opens his first Lego set he immediately builds the model that the set is designed to make (*following directions = logical thinking*). If he screws up along the way he has to figure out how to get back on track (*problem solving*). Eventually he decides to build something new with the pieces he has (*planning & strategy*), making changes along the way (*problem solving again*). When he is done, he often has a model that moves or has other actions (*cause & effect*), or a **Role Play Toy** that incorporates all the skills discussed previously.

Lego is just one of the many **Construction Toys** on the market including K'Nex, Erector Sets, Gears, Marble Mazes, Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys, Wooden Blocks and Magnets.

Along with encouraging children to use their *imagination*, **Construction Toys** are great teachers of Planning & Strategy, Problem Solving, Logical Thinking, Math Skills, and Cause & Effect.

Is it any wonder that seven of [Phil's Top Ten Toys](#) are either **Role Play Toys** or **Construction Toys**? (Wooden Blocks, Dolls, Puppets, Dress-up Clothes, Lego, Playmobil, and Wooden Trains.)

Just for fun, the other three items on **Phil's Top Ten Toys** list are **Story Books** (Communication, Logical Thinking), **Play Doh** (Planning & Strategy, Cause & Effect), and **Klutz Press Books** (Cause & Effect, Logical Thinking, Planning & Strategy, Communication)

Yes, my friends, toys do teach.

What are your kids learning?

Happy Shopping!

**-Phil Wrzesinski**

PS Next week we'll talk about some of the good and bad "hidden lessons" in toys.