

# CONNECTIONS

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## Holiday Toy Buying Ideas

With the winter holidays fast approaching, many parents are wondering what to get their children. If a child's work is play, children need good toys, just as we need good tools to do our work well. Good toys need not be expensive and children don't need many. Buying wisely for your child's ages and managing how toys are displayed/kept in between playtime are keys. Here are a few suggestions:

For children under the age of 1 year: rattles of assorted textures, board books, simple cause and effect toys using large buttons or levers, bath toys, music tapes, medium size ball. Avoid toys with letters and numbers but instead get ones that name objects or their sounds.

For children 1 - 1 1/2 years: simple in/out toys such as shape sorter, pegs, 3-4 piece puzzles, crayons, doll or stuffed animal or truck to begin 1-step pretend play, blocks, a ride on toy. Continue to focus on naming objects or sounds versus letters and numbers on toys.

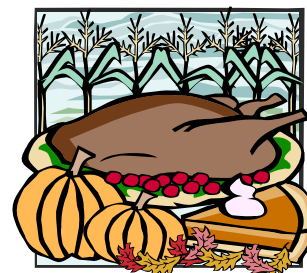
For children 1 1/2 - 2 1/2 years: a table and chair set, some type of pretend play set such as a farm or doll house, duplo blocks, 4-8 piece puzzles, around 2 years children are ready for more "art" activities so paint and playdoh.

For 2 1/2 - 5 years: Expanding creativity calls for more props for pretend play such as dress-up clothes, more detailed

train pieces or trucks and more pieces to add onto block or Lego sets (i.e. get a set of farm animals to use with the wooden blocks to make your own farm). Simple board games and sports equipment such as a tricycle or basketball hoop. More art supplies including scissors, stickers, objects for gluing collages.

Consider limiting the use of electronic toys in these ages to maximize a child's open-ended learning potential from a toy. Children learn most concepts from interaction with adults within their daily routine such as by counting the stairs as you walk up/down them each time rather than by pushing a button that says a random number or letter. The age level listed on many toys is typically a good indicator of the multiple skill levels needed to safely use the toy.

Low shelves where items can be stored within reach of young children and organized in small manageable sized containers are the best way to store a child's toys. Toy boxes should only be used for large single piece items such as balls and trucks. Rotate toys kept out on the shelves periodically to keep children from being overwhelmed by too many choices and to help keep children interested. An old toy stored away for a month or two becomes new when it is reintroduced back on the shelf.



**November is Family Literacy Month!**  
**It's never too early to start raising a better reader; look inside for 10 easy tips**

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*Published by Maggie Ollerhead & Joan F. MacDonald*

## Community Partnerships for Children



### 10 Ways to Raise a Reader

- \* Read to your child every day. It's never too early to start—even newborns respond to hearing you read.
- \* Continue reading together even after your child learns to read. Older children still enjoy listening to others read.
- \* Make stories come alive for your child when you read. Be animated and use different voices.
- \* Be patient—let your child read aloud at his or her own pace. Offer help only when needed.
- \* Discuss what you read together. Ask questions, and listen attentively to your child's answers.
- \* Make reading time special. Cuddle up in a quiet, comfortable spot.
- \* Take along your child's favorite book wherever you go—it helps waiting time go faster.
- \* Take your child to the library often and check out a variety of reading material.
- \* Be a role-model. By seeing how much you enjoy reading, your child will learn that it's a great source of fun.
- \* Encourage your child to read at least 15 minutes a day either to themselves, with you or to a younger sibling.

### From the CPC Coordinator's Desk.....

By Maggie Ollerhead - [mollerhead@town.hull.ma.us](mailto:mollerhead@town.hull.ma.us)

Please join us at the next parent education workshop "Back to Basics" with Jeanine Fitzgerald, on Tuesday, November 6, 2007 at 7:00 PM in the Hull High School Exhibition Room.

Check your preschooler's backpack for information on the next Pajama Story Hour. Also, check the Town of Hull website at [www.town.hull.ma.us](http://www.town.hull.ma.us) for all future Community Partnership for Children, Hull Family Network and Quality Full Day Kindergarten parent workshops and events. Just click on School Calendar on the homepage of the website. To see past newsletters or to check other CPC or HFN information, click on Hull Schools and scroll down.

### Helping Children Learn to Handle Life's Disappointments



No life is completely free of disappointment and this is a lesson your child will have to learn. Far better that he learn it from you now, than in a crueler way later on. How? By realizing you do not have to - nor should you - gratify your child's every wish.

Your child will learn to handle disappointment if you:

- ◆ **Limit the "wants."** Your primary responsibility as a parent is to tend to your child's needs. These include physical needs—food, clothing and shelter—as well as emotional needs—love, caring and understanding. Your child will try to shift your attention to his wants at any opportunity. But, remember, it's okay to say, "That looks like a really cool building block set. But you just had your birthday and we won't be buying more toys now."
- ◆ **Stand Firm.** When you have a good reason for saying no, don't give in. Make this clear. "I will not change my mind. I know you want the block set, but the answer is still no."
- ◆ **Have empathy.** "I know you want to stay at the playground, but we have to go now. I gave you a warning 5 minutes ago that it would be time to go soon."

From Early Childhood Parents Make the Difference October 2007

**"Role modeling is the most basic responsibility of parents. Parents are handing life's scripts to their children, scripts that in all likelihood will be acted out for the rest of the children's lives."**

—Stephen R. Covey, Author, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*

## Hull Family Network

### Note from the HFN Coordinator:

Joan F. MacDonald, [jmacdonald@town.hull.ma.us](mailto:jmacdonald@town.hull.ma.us)

Although it seems as if the cold season started early this year, I would like to remind everyone of our group policies on illness. If your child has an unexplained rash, fever or diarrhea, they need to be free of that symptom for 24 hours of attending group. For children who seem okay but who's noses are running extensively or coughing frequently, please stay home as well as young children are not good at covering their mouths or using tissues to reduce the spread of virus germs. Please try to remember to call us when you will be missing playgroup. We do have families waiting to attend playgroup and could ask you to give your spot up if you have 2 unexcused absences. We do understand that things come up on your playgroup days and you may miss playgroup occasionally.

I hope everyone enjoys their Thanksgiving holiday surrounded by those they love most.



If heating bills or other holiday expenses are difficult to manage, consider speaking to Sandi Grauds, the town's outreach coordinator at (781)-925-8122 or Wellspring at (781)-925-3211 regarding heating assistance or other resources.

## Preparing Children for the Holidays



All children thrive on routines and structure. Once Thanksgiving rolls around though, most households begin to change and everything is different. There are relatives and friends who may be well loved (or not) by you, but who are strangers to your children. There are more outings and activities than usual. In addition, parents are often busier than usual, so they are less able to sit and play. It is no

wonder that children, especially younger ones, can be cranky, disruptive or just not their typical friendly selves.

Prepare children for what to expect prior to the holiday happenings. Explain what will happen and how you expect them to act during an activity. Being specific about behavior such as "At grandma's house you must sit at the table even if you are done eating" works better than an unclear "we must have good table manners."

If it is possible, let children be the ones who decided who to kiss/hug and who not to hug. Gently explain to visitors what is developmentally appropriate or particular to your child. Saying "nine month olds tend to cling to their parents" or "Johnny likes people who give him time to warm up first" can help reduce some hard feelings.

As parents, it is important for you to know what your children can tolerate based on their individual personalities and energy levels. If one child loves big events and parties, but the other one can't tolerate all the stimulation, try dividing the families for some events. Families can take 2 cars to an activity, with the plan that one parent will leave with one child when he is ready. Other options are to bring some quiet time activity that one child could do in a separate bedroom while the party is going on in the other rooms. It is better to attend a party for a half hour and leave with cheerful children than stay for the entire party and leave with overwhelmed, screaming children.

If an activity is at your home involve children in the planning and preparation. Put away special toys that will be hard for your child to share. Lastly, be glad for what goes well and continue to focus on your blessings.



# HULL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Check our website for additional  
events and information at  
[www.town.hull.ma.us](http://www.town.hull.ma.us)  
click on the Hull Schools link

This newsletter is a  
collaboration of  
Hull Family Network  
&  
Community Partnerships for  
Children

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Education and Care

## What is the Hull Family Network?

The Hull Family Network supports all parents and caregivers who have children prenatal through age three. Our goal is to help parents create and maintain a healthy family environment as well as to promote family well being through parent education and community support.

Funded by the Mass. Dept. of Early Education and Care through a grant to the Hull Public Schools, the Hull Family Network provides playgroups, parent education workshops, parent support groups, family activities, and information on parenting and community resources. By providing family recreational activities and playgroups, we hope to help parents build connections that will extend beyond the HFN Center and be a support to them. By providing parent education workshops, support groups, and having an extensive parenting lending library, we hope to help parents enhance their child-rearing skills.

Our programs are free to all residents of the town of Hull who are pregnant or have children through the age of three. Most of our programs are offered at our center which is located at 7 Hadassah Way. We are open Monday-Friday 8:30- 2:30, and Tuesday until 7:30 p.m.

## Pumpkin Candleholders

Light up the dinner table with these autumn-inspired candleholders.

Time needed:  
Under 1 Hour

### CRAFT MATERIALS:

Mini pumpkins  
Carving knife  
Small spoon  
Tapered candles



1. Cut the top off a mini pumpkin, making sure the hole is no bigger than a quarter.
2. Remove the seeds with a small spoon.
3. Stick a candle into the hole and enjoy dinner by candlelight.