

2009 Children's Holiday Gift Guide

Compiled by Janice Hands

If you're looking for children's gift suggestions beyond the lists your kids have provided you, you've come to the right place. A host of the latest in children's toys, books, and electronics is described below. Take a moment to look them over, and select something totally new and unexpected for the lucky youngsters in your life.

Be sure to scroll down and check out the helpful sidebars, including "Ways to Save" for the word on websites that will help save you bucks, "Every Child is Special" for tips on shopping for a child with special needs, and "Smart Holiday Spending" full of shopping advice from Consolidated Credit Counseling Services, Inc.

Have a great holiday!

Suggestions are arranged by category. Within the categories, items are arranged according to age, youngest to oldest. Suggested ages were not available for all products; when provided, they have been included. Prices listed are manufacturers' suggested retail prices, provided several months prior to the publication of this guide. Baltimore's Child cannot be responsible for price or availability changes.

Looking Forward to the Holidays

Your youngster's Veggie Tales friends Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber present a new holiday video, *Saint Nicholas: A Story of Joyful Giving*. When little Laura Carrot's stocking is in danger of coming up empty, Bob tells her the story of a little boy named Nicholas who made a discovery in Bethlehem and found the true joy of giving to others. Ages 2-5. \$14.93. Wherever DVDs are sold, amazon.com.

Your tiny tot will enjoy his or her introduction to Chanukah with *A Chanukah Present for Me!* by Lily Karr. The book, dressed up like a wrapped gift box, features a simple story filled with the most popular Chanukah icons and traditions. Ages 3-under. \$6.99. store.scholastic.com.

Celebrate the eight-day holiday with this **Chanukah set**, perfect for little hands and big ones, too. The colorful, 31-piece wooden set contains a menorah, nine candles with removable flames, six gelt, one dreidel, two latkes, a pan, spatula, and canvas storage bag. Ages 3-up. \$35.95. Sensational Beginnings, 800-444-2147, www.sb-kids.com.

Your child will enjoy counting the days until Christmas with this **magnetic Advent calendar**. Constructed of wood and fitted with hanging hooks, the calendar holds a door for each day that conceals a magnetic character piece to be placed in the metal manger scene. Ages 3-up. \$49.99. Constructive Playthings Toys. 800-832-0572, www.constplay.com.

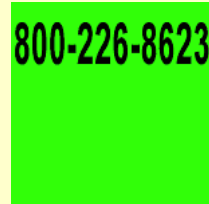
Little ones are encouraged to touch **A Child's First Wooden Nativity** and learn about the very first Christmas. The nativity set features a sturdy stable and 14 colorful all-wood pieces, including the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the wise men, and more. They'll enjoy arranging and re-arranging the scene throughout the holiday season. Ages 3-up. \$29.95. Young Explorers, 800-239-7577, youngexplorers.com.

Anticipate the excitement of the holidays with *I SPY Christmas* by Jean Marzollo, a Scholastic puzzle book. The book features rhyming riddles inviting your child to locate hidden objects—clocks, nickels, frogs, and more—among its photographic pages filled with holiday delights. Ages 4-8. \$13.95. store.scholastic.com.

Gather your youngsters around you and introduce them to what Kwanzaa is all about with *The Sound of Kwanzaa* by Dimetrea Tokunbo. The book features lively verse and colorful illustrations to help your children discover the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Ages 4-8. \$16.99. store.scholastic.com.

Baby and Toddler

Eric Carle's beloved picture book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Kids Preferred presents **developmental play pals** for little ones based on Carle's characters—a caterpillar, of course, as well as a butterfly, ladybug, lion, penguin, and elephant. These soft toys each feature at least four actions—a crinkle, a jingle, a teether, or a squeak. Each includes a clip to keep them nearby on baby's crib or play yard. Ages newborn-up. \$15 each. www.kidspreferred.com.



who reside there. \$40. Accessory sets include a TV room, baby's room, and mom and dad's room. \$11. each. Ages 2-up. Toys R Us, Target, amazon.com.

One doll is great, but triplets can triple the fun! The **Teeny Triplets Dress-Up Set** features three magnetic wooden dolls, and 54 pieces of clothing and accessories to mix and match for hours of fun. Set includes a vinyl tote bag for kids on the go. Ages 3-up. \$9.95. The Lakeside Collection, 847-444-3150, www.lakeside.com.

If your young lady is looking for a new friend or two this holiday season, **Best Friends Club, Ink. dolls, Kaitlin** and **Calista**, are waiting to be discovered by her. These are 18-inch dolls that look and dress just like her real-life friends. They come with extra outfits and some cool accessories. Ages 6-up. \$29.99 each. Toys R Us, target.com, amazon.com.

All Booked Up!

More than just colorful books, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Store's **Puzzle Books** feature eight 16-piece jigsaw puzzles portraying child-friendly works found in the Museum. The text encourages children to notice details about the artworks as they have fun "puzzling." Choose from *Puzzling Places*, *Puzzling People*, *Puzzling Cats*, or *Puzzling Beasts*. \$15.95 each. Purchase the set of four for \$49.95. Ages 3-up. 800-468-7386, store.metmuseum.org.

There's nothing like a pop-up book to bring stories alive. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Store presents **A Pop-Up Book of Nursery Rhymes** by Matthew Reinhart, featuring all your child's favorite characters, springing to life from its imaginative pages. Ages 3-up. \$26.99. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Store, 800-468-7386, store.metmuseum.org.

Kids discover the beauty of the written word with one or all of these beautifully illustrated classic **Poetry for Young People** books. *American Poetry* features a collection of 26 verses from Ralph Waldo Emerson, Maya Angelou, and others. *Animal Poems* introduce the poetry of John Keats, Walt Whitman, and others. *The Seasons* shows children the wonder of nature with poetry by Emily Dickinson, William Wordsworth, and others. Hardcover, 48 pages each. Ages 6-up. \$14.95 each; set of three \$34.95. MindWare catalog. 800-999-0398, www.mindware.com.

Billed as "410 pages of silliness," the **Klutz Encyclopedia of Immaturity** will provide the whole family with lots of giggles. It contains hundreds of crazy tricks and silly ideas, including how to "bounce a doughnut, make grass squeak." Ages 8-up. \$19.95. Young Explorers, 800-239-7577, youngexplorers.com.

A 300-year-old giant oak tree in her Cambridge Maryland backyard and the neighborhood children's interest in it inspired author K. S. Brooks to write **The Mighty Oak and Me**. This is truly a primer on trees, especially the oak, our national tree. The book is full of lively discussion about the parts of the tree, its propagation, the animals that inhabit it, and seasonal changes. Dozens of photographs illustrate the text. For each purchase this holiday season, a donation will be made to the Arbor Day Foundation to support the planting of a tree in our nation's forests. Elementary age. \$14.95. www.themightyoakandme.com, amazon.com.

My Heritage Book gives your child a window into his or her own unique heritage. This personalized children's book contains information about the countries his ancestors came from and some of the traditions they brought to America. You may choose up to four countries to highlight. The original, hand-painted illustrations greatly enhance the copy. A family tree for you or your child to complete is included at the end. Sign on to their website to "page through" a sample copy. All ages. \$39.95. 866-383-7833, www.myheritagebook.com.