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ARTS & LIFE

THE PLAIN DEALER



Jigsaw puzzles help young and old keep their minds sharp.

for our times

There's plenty to choose from this gift-giving season

Puzzlers
of all ages
love to work

Creative toys spark child's imagination

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Creative toys spark child's imagination

What is a creative toy? One that jump-starts a child's imagination, stretches the senses and is just plain fun. It can pop out of the toy box like a rabbit out of a hat or quietly simmer on the mind. It's one that a child returns to again and again. Here are 10 that could wiggle your child's brain. — *Jill Sell*

<p>1. 20Q Radica; age 8 and up; \$9.99; three AAA batteries</p>	<p>Think of something — anything — and this amazing hand-held "artificial intelligence" game will play the classic 20 Questions game. The little purple electronic device has an attitude, and if you answer fairly, it wins almost every time.</p>
<p>2. FunSlides Carpet Skates Sintec Co.; 5 to adult; \$9.99; one size fits all</p>	<p>Like socks on a hardwood floor. The adjustable skates have a friction-resistant plastic base and foam foot grip. They were invented by the company that makes slides that enable one person to move heavy furniture. Customers admitted they used the slides to skate on their carpets. You saw them at the Gravity Games in Cleveland this year.</p>
<p>3. Gnomads Tourist Adventure Figure Big Boing; 6 to adult; \$8</p>	<p>It's more what you do with the six Gnomads characters than what they are. Take your Gnomad to a football game, Disney World or a pizza shop. Kids (and adults) can share photos and adventures on the www.gnomads.net site, send postcards and more on a free-for-one-year home page (\$3.99 thereafter).</p>
<p>4. X4 Metal Detector Rover National Geographic & Uncle Milton; 6 and up; \$30 to \$37; four AA batteries</p>	<p>The yellow-and-black vehicle and its 5-foot remote cable crawls over sand, dirt or grass. Lights and sounds alert the user when treasures (coins, old spoons, jewelry, etc.) are found. It teaches kids about magnetic fields and also can be used as an ordinary play vehicle.</p>
<p>5. Cobra in Basket Puppet Folkmanis Inc.; 5 and up; \$35</p>	<p>The shiny-scaled snake with fangs and a red tongue from India rises out of its basket to terrify and delight everyone who sees it. The full-arm cobra puppet will sway and dance when operated from under the basket. Nobody makes better puppets than Folkmanis.</p>
<p>6. Space Sand DuneCraft; 3 and up; \$2.99 for 2 ounces or \$4.99 for 1 pound</p>	<p>The Chagrin Falls company offers "the closest thing to red sand from Mars." Ordinary sand is made hydrophobic — it won't bond with water. Kids can form stalagmites, castles or coral underwater in a glass or bowl and watch the sand magically dry out after it is removed from the water. Nontoxic and fascinating.</p>
<p>7. Trading Spaces Design and Redesign House B-Bel Inc.; 8 and up; \$79.99</p>	<p>Kids and parents can join the home-re-design craze on a manageable scale. Also, for anyone who wanted an expensive dollhouse and never had one. This two-story, 150-piece design house includes walls that can be stenciled, floors that can be painted and furniture that can be woven. The house, inspired by the TV show of the same name, can be re-decorated again and again.</p>
<p>8. Peek-A-Blocks Gobbler & Go Hippo Fisher-Price; 6 months-toddler; \$24.99</p>	<p>You get a lot of toy for the money — the hippo is a walker for a baby and then a ride-on when he or she grows a bit. As the hippo moves along, he gobbles up blocks that "disappear" in his stomach for storage.</p>
<p>9. Lip Critter Concert Kidz Delight; 12 months and up; \$19.99</p>	<p>Five characters each play an instrument when a child waves a conductor wand over their heads or gently presses down on their bodies. Kids can choose to play any number of instruments with high-quality sound at the same time. Includes 10 songs.</p>
<p>10. Animal Hospital Parents magazine; 2 and up; \$19.99; one AA battery</p>	<p>Veterinary play kits have been around for decades because kids love animals and playing doctor. But this kit is better than most. Pet doors have color- and shape-matching keys; instruments are big, easy to handle and safe; and the toy provides compassionate role-playing. (It also can help explain those scary trips to the pediatrician.)</p>



This cobra can dance, hiss and even talk — all depending on the creativity of the child controlling this puppet.