Orthophonie VoxLingue Speech and Language

Printable list

Gift list for grandparents: toys that get a toddler talking, 12 months to 3

No toy teaches a child to talk. A toy helps when it gives an adult and a child something to do together. The best gift is a simple toy, and someone who sits down to play with it.

Ideas by age (toy types, no brands)

12 to 18 months	blocks, balls, picture books, nesting and sorting toys, simple puzzles, push and pull toys, modelling clay, crayons
18 to 24 months	play kitchen or picnic set, shopping cart, dolls, smaller blocks, toy instruments, thick wooden puzzles, train set, ball
2 to 3 years	dress-up clothes, doll house, small household objects for pretend play, building sets, toys with keys and doors, first board and memory games, story books, art supplies, sports toys

The bands are about toys, not about what a child should be able to do. A toddler who talks little often enjoys the band before: choose for what they enjoy. Toy types published by Kimberly Martins, speech-language pathologist.

A good gift

- [ ] Needs a person to work
- [ ] Can be played many ways
- [ ] Is quiet, or the sound goes off
- [ ] Invites pretend play

Can stay at the store

- × Toys that talk, ask questions or narrate the play
- × AI or chatbot toys: the Canadian Paediatric Society doesn't recommend them for children
- × Small parts before age 3, button batteries
- × A toy that's too loud: if you have to raise your voice, it is

How to give it and play

1. **Sit on the floor**, at their level, and let them choose.
2. **Name what they do**, in a few words: **“Ball!”**
3. **The word, a pause, then the toy**, even if they say nothing: **“Here's the ball.”** Never “say it” before giving.

One or two gifts are plenty

Fewer toys at a time, more play. After the holidays, put some away in a clear box and rotate them: a toy that comes back is like new. Play in your own language: the toy doesn't choose the language, people do.

A toy doesn't replace the person who plays

If the child has few words for their age, **in Québec, contact the CLSC or ask the doctor** (Agir tôt, free, under 7). At the same time, if you can: a private assessment or parent coaching. In Ontario: the Preschool Speech and Language Program, no doctor's referral needed.

Sources: Kimberly Martins, article on play development and toys series; Naître et grandir (2014, 2024, in French); INSPQ (2026, in French); CHU Sainte-Justine (2019, in French); Canadian Paediatric Society (2025); Health Canada; Montreal Children's Hospital; Québec.ca, Agir tôt program. **General information: this list does not replace an assessment.**