

Top toys of 2010



Ally Hurst, 11, makes a farm chicken out of Moon Dough, one of the kid-tested toys recommended by the Canadian Toy Association.

TANNIS TOOHEY/TORONTO STAR

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With any luck, that coveted toy your child writes to Santa about this year won't be an of-the-moment hot item that's flying off shelves and going on eBay for ten times the

suggested retail price.

The makers behind last year's coveted Zhu Zhu Pets, life-like robotic hamsters that find their way around the house bumping into walls and making little chirping noises, have come up with a new generation of fighting [Kung Zhu Pets](http://www.kungzhu.com) (Age 4+, www.kungzhu.com, \$13). These have appeal to collecting-savvy kids and those who are keen on battle play, but so far there haven't been any reports of parents scrapping over the last one at Toys 'R' Us.

Likewise, the country's main toy-testing programs didn't come up with one dominant kind of toy.

"There hasn't been a real theme in terms of a type of toy," says [Today's Parent](#) executive

editor Sandra Martin, who oversees the magazine's toy-testing program.

"Parents are looking for toys with lasting value and with some kind of thinking component," says Martin. "The majority of toys our testers pick are strongly weighted to the independent toy store, and have a little bit of an old-fashioned appeal."

One example is the [Honeybake Tea Set](#) (3+, Le Toy Van, www.gametrekk.ca, \$40), with sweet wooden teapot, cups and saucers all corralled on a handy tray.

The [Neighbourhood Toy Stores of Canada](#) (www.netscanada.org) picked plenty of old-school offerings for its [Gold Star Awards Winners](#) program, including the latest iteration of the Pogo Stick, around since 1920. The Foam Master Pogo Stick (9+, Borgfeldt, \$70) is foam-covered and has non-slip safety handles, footpads and rubber tip.

Toy expert Marcia MacQuarrie, who runs a testing program called [The Noise on Toys](#), also found that there was no one type of toy that was popular above all others, this year. But she did note that three different dolls made the cut with her testing families. "It's unique to have even one," says MacQuarrie, "but you often do see play patterns that become trends so maybe kids are getting back into doll play. We're seeing dolls now that have a wider appeal."

One such winner was the [Lalaloopsy Doll](#), (Age 4+, MGA Entertainment, \$30, www.lalaloopsy.com), whose innocent face will be a welcome sight for parents not ready for their little girls to play with Barbie or Bratz dolls.

Lovers of timeless Lego were also keen on the new Lego Games, which allow the whole family to get in on the Lego action. One of the favourites was the [Minotaurus](#) (Age 7+, LEGO, \$35, www.lego.com) which was popular for the way players physically move Lego pieces around to change the game board and block other players.

The [Canadian Toy Association](#) recommends the [Moon Dough Barn](#), which allows kids to have farm-yard fun with the seemingly magical moulding dough that never dries out. A word to the wise, though: This stuff is messy.

Speaking of avoiding mess, here's a writing tool that will impress even the least-crafty kid on your list and leave not a trace of glitter in its wake: The [Glow Crazy Distance Doodler](#) (Age 6+, www.kroegerinc.com, \$30) is a lightwand that allows kids to make glow-in-the-dark doodles on the walls that are simply "erased" when the lights are turned on.

The [LiteHawk Helicopter](#) (Age 8+, Borgfeldt, www.litehawk.ca, \$50) has a remote control with which kids can control its flight, turning it in every possible direction.

For a preschooler whose been delaying bedtime, try the Canadian-made bad-dream fighting stuffy, [Nightmare Nibbler](#) (Age 3+, www.nightmare nibbler.com, \$25). The website offers bedtime-assuring colouring sheets and poem.

Coming on the heels of the widely popular [LIKEaBIKE](#), [YBIKE](#) (Age 2-4, [ybikeusa.com](#), \$80), has burst on the scene with a pedal-less bike at a more accessible price range. These bikes give little kids much of the fun and mobility of riding a bike without the difficult coordination of pedaling. They teach balancing on a bike and are known to speed the acquisition of proper pedal biking later on. The YBIKE Extreme (\$90) is for kids Age 3+.

And how about a toy for the tiniest person on your list? Please babies and their hip parents with this [Sushi Set](#) of teething rattles (Age 3 mo+, Yellow Label Kids, [www.littlefootprintstoys.com](#), \$37) embroidered by Fair Trade Artisans in Bangladesh.