

## Toy Hall of Fame: Birth to 18 months

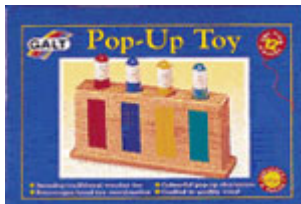


### Baby's First Blocks

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 7, [Fisher-Price](#)800-432-5437)

Here's a toy a mom can love—the object of the game is cleaning up! A sorting lid makes it easy for babies to drop the circles, squares, triangles, and stars into the canister, helping them learn about shapes and develop hand-eye coordination. Introduced in 1978, it was one of Fisher-Price's first toys designed specifically for infants. (Toy Hall of Fame 2005)

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### Pop-Up Toy

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 15, [Galt America](#))

A British school-teacher teamed up with toymaker Galt in 1966 to design this wooden treat: Press the smiley-face pegs and they'll bob up and down. It was introduced in elementary school classrooms to help encourage color recognition and hand-eye coordination, but moms saw the benefit for their babies, who could quickly progress from simply bouncing the primary-color pegs to removing and color-coding them. Six months after its debut, Galt put the toy on store shelves, where it's been a favorite, unchanged, ever since. (2004)

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### Snap-Lock Beads

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 4, [Fisher-Price](#)800-524-8697)

Babies' hands are far from nimble, but these oversize connectors make for easy child's play. An added benefit: Their size and vibrant colors make infants want to reach out and touch, perfect for enhancing hand-eye coordination. They've kept little ones occupied since 1957, and the new Brilliant Basics line adds rattling noises with a shake of each piece. (2003)

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### Whoozit

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 20, [Manhattan Toy](#)800-541-1345)

Have Whoozit, will travel. Initially marketed as a stroller or car toy, this colorful critter's appendages have enough diversions--including a squeaker, a rattle, and rings--to keep a baby as busy as her mom. Introduced in 1996, it's spawned an entire toy line: a smaller version

made of easy-to-clean Neoprene (to weather constant toting), activity books, a mobile, and more. (2002)  
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#### Birth to 18 months

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 40, [Tiny Love](#)800-846-9568)

Lie back, relax, and enjoy the sights! That was Israeli mom and toy-store owner Shoshi Oren's goal for babies when she invented this toy-bar-and-blanket combo in 1993. Infants love to hang out on the mat and gaze (or bat) at the detachable mirror, rattle, and musical flower overhead. Two newer styles: a black, white, and red version and a deluxe model with five toys on the arches and two on the mat. (2001)

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#### Twin Rattle

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 6, [Ambi](#), 800-704-8697)

What a pair! This delightful duo has worked side by side to charm youngsters since 1979. As the bright yellow, smiling faces rotate around each other, they produce a gentle, baby-pleasing rattle. (2000)

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#### First Keys

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 1.50, [The First Years](#)800-533-6708)

There's no better bang--or should we say clack--for the buck than this teething rattle. It's been a hit since 1940, thanks to bright colors, an easy-to-grasp design, and delightfully chewable keys that make a satisfying sound when they knock against each other. (1999)

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#### Infant Stim-Mobile

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 26, [Wimmer-Ferguson](#), 800-747-2454)

This high-contrast mobile was the brainchild of Ruth Wimmer in 1984, while she was director of therapeutic recreation at Children's Hospital, in Denver. The purpose: to entertain infants while developing their vision and encouraging them to reach out, which helps foster hand eye coordination. Legions of little peepers continue to focus in on the 10 rearrangeable black-and-white cards. (1998)

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### Gymfinity

(Suggested Retail Price: \$40, Today's Kids)

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Gymfinity has been paid many compliments. Copied repeatedly since its debut in 1991 — but still the best — this 2-in-1 activity center is the brainchild of Today's Kids, one of the oldest toy companies in the country. Black-and-white animal characters and colorful hanging shapes entertain newborns. As the baby grows, this gym transforms into a play center, complete with puzzle pieces, shape sorters, and moveable gears for toddlers to explore.

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### Chatter Telephone

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 20, Fisher-Price)

Since its debut in 1962, this smiling telephone has made its way into the hearts and homes of 26 million families. Far more intriguing than its real-world counterpart, the Chatter Telephone doubles as a manipulative for babies and a pulltoy for toddlers. When it's taken on a walk, its eyes roll up and down; when little fingers dial its numbers, it lets out a chirpy ring. And — somehow — every time that red receiver is picked up, there's a pretend friend on the line who's eager to chat. Over the years, the message rings loud and clear that this playful phone is pure fun. (1996)

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### Rock-A-Stack

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 5, Fisher-Price)

Infants are notoriously curious, but they aren't known for their strength (except for that of their vocal chords). Which is why these bright red, orange, yellow, green, and blue stacking rings are crafted from featherlight, smooth plastic. More than 40 million Rock-A-Stacks have been sold since the toy's debut in 1960. With such an impressive track record, the Rock-A-Stack deserves its place in toy history. (1995)

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### Skwish

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 15, Manhattan Toy Company)  
Canadian artist and inventor Tom Flemons didn't have babies in mind when he used tensegrity, a structural principle of nature, to design an 11-foot sculpture of logs and steel cables that jiggled when kids climbed on it. In 1987, Flemons scaled down his larger-than-life model and transformed it into the multidimensional toy that more than half a million infants love to squash, shake, bounce, rattle, roll, and squeeze. Crafted from solid birch and adorned with a silver jingly bell, this versatile plaything is constructed by workers who attend "Skwish School" for three days to study the distinctive, complex design. Babies keep it simple by just having a ball. (1994)

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### Stacking Cups

(Suggested Retail Price: \$ 6, Kiddiecraft)  
Babies have been stacking and sorting these brightly colored plastic cups since they were introduced by Kiddiecraft in England in 1936, and their design remains virtually unchanged since then. Nine-month-olds stack them up and knock them down, and put them to playful use in the tub; toddlers keep them handy for sandbox shenanigans and make-believe tea parties; and the embossed animals on the bottom work as stamps for older-kid crafts. Talk about versatility! (1993)

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## Toys of the Year: Birth to 18 months

### My Giant Floor Puzzle

(Suggested Retail Price: \$25, Alex)  
This play mat's tough enough to withstand drooling, chewing, and spills. But wait, there's more: One day your little explorer will figure out how the farm images (which are chunky cutout pieces) pop out of the mat and fit back in. Presto! He's mastered his first puzzle.

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### **Kushies Zolo Multisensory Activity Book**

(Suggested Retail Price: \$23, [Kushies Baby](#))

The cool colors, funky fabrics (from fringe to faux fur), and imaginative images in this hip, cat-themed book make it stand out from the pack. Also comes in a dog version.

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### **Learn & Groove Musical Table**

(Suggested Retail Price: \$40, [Leapfrog](#))

So many sounds to explore! Pressing the instrument buttons will set off jazzy tunes or a friendly voice naming colors, numbers, letters, and shapes, in English or Spanish. Mom-friendly feature: the volume switch, to keep those songs from getting stuck in your head.

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### **Baby Beach Band**

(Suggested Retail Price: \$23, [Infantino](#))

Your child's the conductor of an under-the-sea symphony with the help of five soft, googly-eyed critters that moonlight as instruments: a jingling lobster, fishy tambourine, and more. Four of the pieces fit inside the octopus drum for take-along play (and easy storage).

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### **Peek 'n' Play Discovery Dome**

(Suggested Retail Price: \$50, [Playskool](#))

This play hut has far more features than most, with its rattles, shape sorter, and ball chute. Your baby will love crawling through the front gate and ringing the doorbell; once he's inside, use the built-in puppet and the peekaboo flap to play with him. Bonus: The dome collapses shut for stashing.

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### **NooBoo Rattle**

(Suggested Retail Price: \$10, [Manhattan Toy](#))

Our littlest testers couldn't put this squishy toy down. With its clinking rings, tuggable tags, terry cloth tip, and eye-popping prints, it'll no doubt keep your kid mesmerized, too.

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#### **4-in-1 Ride On Car**

(Suggested Retail Price: \$75, [Chicco](#))

The grows-with-your-tot ride starts out as a sturdy rocker. With the footrests off, you or your baby can push it around. When she's ready, take off the armrests and she's riding solo. The "dashboard" makes fun car noises, and assembly's a snap (look, Ma, no tools!).

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