

Mom's Moment: Toy Gift Guide

Written by Nadine Bubeck

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This is one of my favorite posts of the year. Why? Because I'm a toy hoarder. I love anything that will sway my boys away from the TV and stimulate their mind, body and creative spirit. I love toys that serve purpose, as well as entertain; stuff that challenges their brain, makes them think, problem solve and more. This, in addition to toys that get them active, moving and having FUN. Really, that's all I want.

So here it goes. My favorite kid finds for the 2016 holiday season. All items have been received and reviewed by my boys, courtesy of these amazingly generous brands and companies.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Little Tikes Tree House Swing Set

This [outdoor playground](#) is ideal for any backyard- big or small. Equipped with two swings, a climbing wall, slide and lookout tree, kids ages 3-10 will have a blast burning energy and exercising their imagination. Easy to clean, sturdy and high quality. Gift your yard with this playful structure; your kids will thank you. A "complete" playground without a hefty price-tag (and without sacrificing quality). My kids give it an A+. [littletikes.com](#)

Schwinn Burnout Smart Start Bike

Ride in style. Go back to the basics with the trusted [Schwinn brand](#) for first "big boy" bikes. The Boys 16-inch Smart Start is an A-list ride to get little guys started on their cycling journey. Available for girls too, each Schwinn is built with a child's proportions in mind; smaller grips, close-knit pedals, and an angled seat for little bodies. Safe and sturdy for kids ages 4-8 with removable training wheels. Plus, you can't go wrong with a limited lifetime warranty. [schwinnsmartstart.com](#)

Step2 Whisper Ride Cruiser

For under \$60, you're getting the best "beep beep" around. (That's all my son says these days.) It's totally cute, available in [pink or blue](#), and features smooth quiet ride wheels. There is even a push handle for parents equipped with a cup holder (and the car has one too- for sippy cups). There is storage under the hood, in addition to a seat belt. A no-brainer present for your car-loving toddler. [step2.com](#)

Mobo Mity

This ergonomic three-wheeled cruiser showcases a unique design for children 2-5 years old. The rear-wheel steering system provides little riders with quality you can trust- a comfortable seat, chainless chassis, never-flat tires and a sturdy, adjustable frame that grows with your child. Mastering the [Mobo](#) plays an integral role in the development of your toddler's motor skills, muscle strength, and hand-eye coordination. While promoting healthy exercise, the Mobo Mity delivers a fun riding experience coupled with increased physical activity. Recommend for ages 2-5 and under \$100. [mobocruiser.com](#)

The California Cruiser

This super suave [scooter](#) is ideal for kids and tweens. I love it because it has a black-and-tan beachy look, making for stylish scooting. It has an oversized deck, multiple foot positions and traction for safe riding. An integrated deck brake makes stopping simple and cruiser geometry handlebars come with two-bolt clamp. There's also an integrated folding mechanism making for easy transport. [pulsescooters.com](#)

INDOOR CREATIVE PLAY

Step2 Grand Luxe Kitchen

This [Toys "R" Us exclusive](#) modern kid's kitchen features the most luxurious amenities and décor. It includes a deluxe refrigerator, oversized oven, stove-top controls, a trendy backsplash, granite-style countertops, a 78-piece accessory set and more. It encourages creative play, keeping your mini chefs entertained for hours. You'll wish this play kitchen was yours in real life. [toysrus.com](#)

Fort Boards

These are sooooo cool. With 20 square feet of stackable building "blocks," kids can build life-sized forts and structures to explore. The pieces are highly durable and can be used inside or outside. (They're also easily stored.) Plenty of colors to choose from, but we opted for grey, ideal for building Star Wars related things. (I have a house-full of Star Wars fans.) These sets allow kids to get creative, creating things like the

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Millennium Falcon, Deathstar or AT-AT Walker. [Fort Boards](#) fosters imagination. An A+ gift! [fortboards.com](#)

Step2 Great Creations Art Center

This is an easel on steroids. The [Step2 Great Creations Art Center](#) is the ultimate hub for your little Picasso. Kids can sit atop the molded-in bench as multiple kids can call dibs on the double-sided easel (featuring a white board and chalkboard). With 360° of play, there's something for everyone to do (which is essential for siblings). Comes with ample storage space for crayons, paints, markers and more in the art caddy, and molded-in trays for books. This Toys 'R' Us exclusive is ideal for kids 3 and up. [step2.com](#)

Craft EZ Oven

This [EZ Oven](#) is for boys and girls, letting kids choose between four different types of crafts. With easy to read instructions, little artists can craft and bake with the push of the project-assigned color-coded button! And it's totally safe- the oven doesn't open until the temperature is cool, even when it's unplugged. Ideal for ages 8+. I say yes to anything that encourages creativity! [made4ustudio.com](#)

Shape Mags

My toddler's latest obsession. It's the modern twist on building blocks. These magnetic tile building sets give your kids the freedom to get creative- building towers, castles and beyond. SO good for fine motor skills, and keeps them happily entertained and stimulated. I rarely brag about a particular toy, but this is something I really truly love. I prefer gifting my kids with things that keep them occupied, fueling their creative juices. Worth it for the holidays and easily found on [Amazon](#).

Props in a Bag

This is really cute. These ready-to-rock costume bags are fab for imaginary play. Forget the cliché princess- kids, including boys, can let their imagination run wild with a variety of sets stocked with costumes, accessories, props and a scenic backdrop. You can choose between the Camper, the Construction Worker, the Magician and the Superhero. The entire family can literally participate in the production, and with the use of the [Props in a Box](#) app, videos can be custom edited with special effects to enhance every performance. Under \$30. [propsinabox.com](#)

Eco Dough

What kid doesn't like to sculpt play dough...and what baby doesn't try to eat it?! This is pure, all-natural sculpting dough colored with dyes from beets, spinach, paprika, carrots, purple sweet potato, red cabbage, blueberries and tomatoes. Lasts a long time (maintain the moistness with adding water) and sure to entertain for hours. Did someone say stocking stuffer?! Available at: [roseandrex.com](#)

RAD READS

I always gift my boys a book for every single holiday. I'll take any excuse to read them a story, as nothing makes me happier than watching them become little readers (my oldest sleeps with his books, in addition to his stuffed animals). I even dedicate each book with a little message and the year so their library can grow with memories of books from mom.

My oldest is starting to grow out of the 10-page board books, so this year, I sought something with a little more substance. Enter [Quarto Knows](#), a publishing company featuring high-quality books that are both exquisite in design and detailed in content. I have never seen such beautiful atlas books with illustrations and descriptions that even I found enduring.

Here are my picks from Quarto, should you want to peruse:

- [The 50 States: Fun Facts](#)
- [ABC Yoga](#)
- [The Hello Atlas](#)
- [Atlas of Animal Adventures](#)
- [Poetry for Kids: Emily Dickinson](#)

I'm also a big fan of [Candlewick](#). You can tell that this company hones in on quality. You know that bunny book- *Guess How Much I Love You?* Well, they came out with a pop-up version for winter and it's sooo cute. I also got a gorgeous hardback book of Mother Goose nursery rhymes. Seriously, it's stunning, and brought me back to my childhood.

Think outside the box when buying books this year. Don't go for the norm. Do your research and treat book buying as you would shopping for toys. Take the time to gift your kids with the love of reading. For more options, visit: [candlewick.com](#)

FOR LOUNGING

Pillow Pals

The most snuggly stuffed animal pillow "things" you'll ever cuddle. I have a soft spot for stuffed animals, so I couldn't resist checking out [My Pillow Pets](#). This company makes adorable plush toys in pillow design, and they are ADORABLE. Available in so many options (Disney, animals, and more). I got my oldest the Olaf pillow and it rolls up to make for easy transporting (great for travel). And I got my youngest the jumbo Mickey Mouse- consider it a dog bed for people. This oversized amazingly comfortable Mickey pillow is soft and snuggly. I've been known

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to fall asleep on it. All items are nicely priced. mypillowpets.com

Janiebee - Personalized Nap Mats for Preschoolers

The most glorified sleeping bag ever. Janiebee nap mats are both beautiful and comfortable. Little ones can snuggle into their incredibly soft, luxe nap mat at school, on vacation, or lounging in front of the TV. Made with gorgeous details, including a fabric tie closure and an extra thick minky pillowcase, [Janiebee NapMats](http://JaniebeeNapMats.com) offer children a clean and cozy place to rest. There's a bevy of bright prints and designs for both boys and girls, and personalization/customization is available. Made in the USA with quality fabric, stitching and care. Machine washable and dryer safe. janiebee.com

Nadine Bubeck is a TV personality, [author](#), [blogger](#), [fashion designer](#) and blessed boy mama.