



RENN

Regional Hubs for
Sustainability Strategies

Toys and gifts

The sustainable shopping basket:
Guide to environmentally conscious
and social consumption





Sustainable toys

The lion's share of toys sold in Germany is still manufactured under bad working conditions. Internationally accepted working and social standards play a secondary role when it comes to toy manufacturing, and workers and companies are under immense pressure to deliver on time, particularly in peak seasons. When toys are tested, they're regularly found to be loaded with toxic substances. Therefore, it's important to choose toys with care: Make sure to buy good quality, and check both the product's origin and its labeling.



IDENTIFYING HEALTHY TOYS

Toy cars and dolls can be riddled with plasticizers and heavy metals. If you purchase plastic toys, make sure that they're marked as "phthalate-free" or "PVC-free". All materials, coatings, varnishes and adhesives used for making toys should be free of toxins. Toys for toddlers in particular must be sweat-, bite- and saliva-proof. Avoid buying toys with an unpleasant or perfumed smell. Strong odors indicate that the toys may be harmful to human health. Test results are a good source of information regarding problematic substances in toys, such as tests carried out by Stiftung Warentest and Ökotest. The Stiftung Warentest foundation also assesses the entrepreneurial responsibility of toy manufacturers.

FAIR TOYS

When you buy new toys, make sure to make a sustainable purchase of fairly produced stuffed animals, cars and dolls. Trustworthy product labeling such as the fair-trade seal can help orient you. The "fair plays" campaign, by the charity MISEREOR and Werkstatt Ökonomie, promotes socially fair regulations with regard to toy production. You can find more tips and publications on the topic under www.fair-spielt.de. The project also maintains a current list of manufacturers who've subscribed to the campaign.



ORIGIN MATTERS

When choosing a toy, check its origin: The name and address of the manufacturer should be found on the packaging. Opt for regional products. They have clear benefits over products made in South East Asia, which have traveled long distances and have often been manufactured under bad working conditions. Cheap products in particular tend to go hand in hand with substandard raw materials and insufficient quality controls. It's therefore best to steer clear of them.

BUY SECOND HAND

Buy second-hand toys: This is advantageous because any gaseous pollutants they may have contained will have already evaporated. Stuffed animals, doll clothes and similar items should be washed twice before being given to a child to play with. Buying second hand or trading toys with other families also protects the environment and your wallet.

DURABLE AND LONG-LIVED

Durability and longevity are quality features in toys. Make sure to choose robust products that won't easily break. Building blocks, toy trains and animal figurines made of natural wood are durable toys that can be enjoyed for several generations. It's even better if the toys are made of wood from sustainable forestry, which is marked by the FSC seal.

LESS IS MORE

Always ask yourself if new toys are truly needed. Because in children's rooms, less is also more. It's better to buy fewer good-quality toys than multiple cheap ones. If children play with their favorite toy for years, they'll establish a stronger bond with it. They'll learn to treat cherished things with care instead of throwing out toys they've barely used.



MAKE YOUR OWN TOYS

Good toys should spur children's imagination and provide a connection to their own experience of the world. If you create toys together – such as dolls or stuffed animals – they may end up being more valued than commercial toys. Children can think up and create their own play worlds – with a little support from you if necessary. Or you can just give them the gift of a special time.

GIVE YOUR TIME

In many children's rooms, so many toys are piled up that they no longer fit onto shelves and into drawers. Playing, reading books and doing crafts together is more important for children than big piles of toys.

WHERE TO SHOP

If you want to buy new toys, it's best to shop at your local toy store. Online shopping leaves a bigger mark on the environment. Avoid individual orders as they create a lot of garbage. And if you can't avoid ordering online, make sure to be at home when the delivery is expected – additional miles for the delivery process cause carbon emissions and are a burden on the package service drivers.

SEALS FOR GOOD TOYS

The **FSC seal** marks wooden products, such as toys, that stem from sustainable forestry.



The **Blue Angel** stands for toys that are low in harmful substances and produced under socially fair conditions.



ÖKO-TEST marks ecologically tested toys and products.



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Check out www.nachhaltiger-warenkorb.de for important information about sustainable consumption as well as independent information about the various seals and product labels. You'll find information about food, travel and mobility, living and building, housekeeping and electronics, as well as fashion and cosmetics.

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