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**Safety of toys —**

**Part 8:  
Age determination guidelines**

*Sécurité des jouets —*

*Partie 8: Lignes directrices pour la détermination de l'âge*

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Published in Switzerland

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 181, *Safety of toys*.

ISO 8124 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Safety of toys*:

- *Part 1: Safety aspects related to mechanical and physical properties*
- *Part 2: Flammability*
- *Part 3: Migration of certain elements*
- *Part 4: Swings, slides and similar activity toys for indoor and outdoor family domestic use*
- *Part 5: Determination of total concentration of certain elements in toys*
- *Part 6: Certain phthalate esters in toys and children's products*
- *Part 7: Requirements and test methods for finger paints*
- *Part 8: Age determination guidelines* [Technical Report]

# Safety of toys —

## Part 8: Age determination guidelines

### 1 Scope

This Technical Report provides guidelines for the determination of the lowest age at which children start playing with toys in specific toy sub-categories and is primarily directed to manufacturers and agencies that evaluate the compliance of toys with safety standards.

This Technical Report can also be used as a reference to determine the appropriateness of toys by earliest age, for use by distributors, institutions, and organizations involved with child play, as well as by paediatric institutions, teachers, other professionals that use toys in their routine activities, and consumers.

The age at which children develop different abilities is unique for each individual child. These guidelines illustrate the age ranges during which a typical child has developed certain abilities.

Although age grading has safety implications, these guidelines are not intended to address specific safety requirements. Specific safety requirements for toys can be found in the toy safety standards in this International Standard (and in other regional toy safety standards and regulations). As an example, such standards will restrict the presence of small parts and small balls in toys intended for certain age groups, due to the choking hazard.

Information on how electronic toys and electronics in toys were considered in the development of these ages determination guidelines is given in [Annex B](#).

### 2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

#### 2.1

**age groups and aspects related to the motor and cognitive development and behaviour of children**  
age groups used in the analyses, as well as the aspects related to children's development

Note 1 to entry: Extracted from Reference [4].

#### 2.2

**toy categories and sub-categories**

sub-categories correspond to general types or groups of toys that children use that comprise the play category

Note 1 to entry: The following are the categories according to the purposes and functions:

- sensorimotor activities - first age;
- toys for physical activities;
- toys for intellectual activities;
- toys that reproduce the technical world;
- toys for the development of feelings and empathy;
- toys for creative activities;

- toys for social relationship.

Note 2 to entry: The toy sub-categories described herein were based on: the adaptation by Raquel Zumbano Altman for Brazil, on the original international classification provided by I.C.C.P. (International Council of Children Play) by André Michelet and the Centre National d'Information du Jouet (France), 1981, which classify toys according to their purposes, features, and functions. This same classification was undertaken at LABRIMP – Laboratório de brinquedos e materiais pedagógicos of FEUSP Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo, in 1997 by Prof. Dr. Tizuko Morchida Kishimoto, Raquel Z. Altman, and Roseli Aparecida Monaco.<sup>[1]</sup>

Note 3 to entry: In addition to the original classification, new sub-categories have been included. The review and inclusion of new sub-categories take into account the continued evolution of the toy market and was prepared by Angela Madeira (Brazil). See [Annex A](#).

## 2.3

### **gross motor skills**

activities of the large muscles of the body, related to functions of sustaining head positions, sitting, walking, and running

## 2.4

### **fine motor skills**

clenching motion activities of the hands, such as gripping, clasping, and pincer movements as well as fine movements used for drawing and writing

## 2.5

### **starting age**

first age at which it is appropriate for a child to play with a specific type of toy

Note 1 to entry: At very young ages, “play” can be considered the interaction between a caregiver and a child, where the caregiver is using the toy to entertain or get the attention of the child such as with a rattle. It is only after further development that the child can actually play with the toy.

Note 2 to entry: For the purposes of this guidance document, a range of starting ages is presented for various sub-categories of toys. The age range covers the first day of the lowest age and through the day prior to the highest age in the range. For example, a starting age range of 4 months to under 8 months would be from the day that the child becomes 4 months old until the end of the day prior to the child becoming 8 months old.

Note 3 to entry: When a starting age is mentioned for specific categories of toys, it doesn't mean that all the toys belonging to that category must be classified as suitable for that age. Number of pieces, dimensions, level of detail and realism, special functions of the specific toy may change/increase the intended age.

## 3 Guidelines

### 3.1 Children with starting ages birth to under 4 months

#### 3.1.1 Aspects related to the motor and cognitive development, and behaviour of children with starting ages birth to under 4 months

Usually, the following development and behaviour can be observed in children with starting ages birth to under 4 months.

- Do not yet have the motor abilities required to play with toys; they are only used as objects for exploration and entertainment rather than for play.
- Do not yet have the ability to interact with books due to the lack of physical, cognitive, and visual abilities required for this activity.
- Are attracted by multi-sensory elements and are able to recognize the parents; have sucking and breastfeeding reflex, but are unable to sit up by themselves; have abrupt, uncontrolled, and limited motions. They touch, grab, hold, press, and shake anything in their hands unaware of the strength in their arms.

- Around 3 months, they are capable of grabbing (reflex grasp) and holding objects (whether suspended or not). They detect, explore, and feel objects with their hands and mouth.
- The learning process occurs through the senses and reflexes by assimilating reactions to stimuli and repetitive motion.
- The auditory system is functioning at the time of birth, but it needs neurological maturation and sensory experiences for the hearing functions to develop fully. Children demonstrate a lot of sensitivity to ambient sounds due to their immaturity and lack of experience. From birth, children begin to react to sounds and human speech. By around 2 months, most babies get quiet when they hear familiar voices. By 3 months, they locate and respond to sounds and make vocalizations that could be related to sensations associated with bathing and eating.
- They turn the head towards a sound and are attracted by objects that emit sounds that are known to them as being a part of their routine.
- Vision development is progressive. At birth, the eye focus of the child is best at about 20 cm. After 1 month, children are able to focus on objects up to 30 cm away, and by 3 months they can see some meters ahead. Visual acuity upon birth is 2,5 % to 5 %, and improves to near 20 % up to the third month.
- Are attracted by bright colours such as yellow and red although they cannot clearly distinguish between them. At the age of 2 months, the primary colour receptors are developed and they can distinguish between contrasts and the primary colours blue, red, and yellow.

### 3.1.2 Recommended toy sub-categories

The following toy subcategories in Table 1 are recommended for this age group.

**Table 1 — Sub-categories of toys for children from birth to under 4 months of age**

Sub-category	Starting age	Description and examples of appropriate toys
1.01	0 mo+	<b>Rattles and rings</b>
1.03	0 mo+	<b>Mobiles, with or without sound</b> – toys with miscellaneous figures and shapes to be mounted above the crib out of the reach of the child
1.47	0 mo+	<b>Musical boxes</b> – toys to be mounted on or near a crib with handle or button for adult activation
1.04	2 mo+	<b>Crib gyms and playmats</b> – mats with simple play features or activities; may include overhead structures that may have dangling objects intended for the child to reach, grasp, or hit
1.13	2 mo+	<b>Simple dolls and animals</b> – soft-stuffed dolls and animals made of fabric or plush with or without clothes and fixed details which cannot be removed
1.05	3 mo+	<b>Cradle and playpen toys</b> – balls, characters attached to cribs, strollers, or enclosures
1.09	3 mo+	<b>Squeeze toys</b> – constructed of soft material, with or without internal rattle or noise feature
1.25	3 mo+	<b>Cloth and similar soft material balls and geometric forms</b>

## 3.2 Children with starting ages 4 months to under 8 months

### 3.2.1 Aspects related to the motor and cognitive development, and behaviour of children with starting ages 4 months to under 8 months

Usually, the following development and behaviour can be observed in children with starting ages 4 months to under 8 months.

- Are attracted by multi-sensory elements and have increasing interest in the environment surrounding them. Are in the oral phase and teeth begin to appear. Have natural involuntary motions. The learning process still occurs through the senses, especially the mouth, and reflexes, by assimilating reactions to stimuli and repetitive motions.
- Continue with hearing development and already use their visual and motor abilities to play with other people. Are capable of interacting with toys and objects. Begin to be aware of the existence and permanence of objects (objects continue to exist even when out of sight). Imitate simple motions and gestures.
- Are perfectly capable of locating sounds. Engage in vocal games that emphasize repetition of a same syllable like “mamama”, “papapa”, from 4 months on. Start interacting with the adult to develop language games with the child in which words are spoken in a repetitive way. Enjoy songs and sounds. From 4 to 6 months, they are more sensitive to sounds, and react to changes in voice tones and sounds.
- Use the limbs to move, rolling onto their sides, launching themselves forwards and backwards. Have greater ability to position themselves on the floor to play, start sitting by themselves, and crawling between 5 and 6 months.
- Have low gross and fine motor coordination, as well as involuntary motions of the limbs. The fine motor coordination of hands is still developing. Grab objects with the palm of hands (primitive grasping). Grab strongly, extend the palm of their hand to reach objects, and are capable of transferring objects from one hand to another.
- Have a progressive development of motions, such as holding, grabbing, pressing, shaking, pulling, and throwing objects onto the floor. Grabbing and holding are totally mastered around 6 months. They are capable of turning thick pages clumsily.
- At around 6 months, visual acuity and colour receptors are almost equal to that of an adult. They are attracted by red and yellow colours and printed patterns.

### 3.2.2 Recommended toy sub-categories

The following toy sub-categories in [Table 2](#) are recommended for this age group.

**Table 2 — Sub-categories of toys for children starting ages 4 months to under 8 months**

Sub-category	Starting age	Description and examples of appropriate toys
1.02	4 mo+	<b>Teethers and teething rings</b>
1.07	4 mo+	<b>Activity playboards</b> – boards that are attached to the crib with various play features such as miscellaneous coloured shapes, shatterproof mirrors, spinners that rattle, buttons to push, parts that slide on guides, doors that open
1.11	4 mo+	<b>Bath toys</b> – animals, small boats, and floating objects
1.45	4 mo+	<b>Balls or cylinders</b> – clear material with visible contents
1.17	5 mo+	<b>Simple blocks, nesting toys, and stacking toys</b>
1.12	6 mo+	<b>Simple books made of textiles or plastic</b>
1.20	6 mo+	<b>Simple push/pull rolling toys (without cord or handle) which make sounds and/or have coloured lights</b> – wheeled animals or vehicles



Table 2 (continued)

Sub-category	Starting age	Description and examples of appropriate toys
1.48	6 mo+	Simple keyboards or hand-held toys with buttons that activate lights and sounds
1.18	6 mo+	Simple ball and track toys

### 3.3 Children with starting ages 8 months to under 12 months

#### 3.3.1 Aspects related to the motor and cognitive development, and behaviour of children with starting ages 8 months to under 12 months

Usually, the following development and behaviour can be observed in children with starting ages 8 months to under 12 months.

- May be anxious in case of the mother's (or father's) absence or in the presence of strangers. They become attached to objects (blanket, plush toy, etc.), which provide comfort and a sense of security. Start the development of imitative behaviours and are able to recognize and imitate voices, songs, and sounds, being able to imitate the latter two, after a number of repetitions.
- From 8 months, their babbling is similar to the sounds of their mother tongue. They start to imitate some actions that are familiar to them with the use of materials or toys, like cradling a doll (it is the first phase of symbolization), and understand the meaning of some gestures (kiss, goodbye, and come here). Start to express themselves by gestures (such as extending and contracting the hand when they want something), however, they still only recognize what is in their immediate field of vision. During this age range, they start to verbalize their first words and associate them with actions, but they limit themselves to the knowledge of their immediate surroundings. Therefore, intentional verbal and physical communication is already occurring. They are still attracted by elements that stimulate the senses. <https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/87da0b2a-053b-45d7-9fac->
- Start to relate objects to their intended purposes and have full awareness of an object's existence and permanence (continue to be aware of them even when out of sight). Are able to turn the pages of a book with more ease, understand simple cause and effect relationships, and are more aware of themselves. They begin to have a notion of heights and the dangers of falls.
- They have better body balance, interest in the movement and placement of objects (balance, motion), and also greater refinement and ability of movement. Have interest in exploring the environment, crawl, and sit unaided. Remain standing and make their first steps with support.
- Have muscle control and more developed fine motor coordination. Primitive clenching is more coordinated (holding, pincer grip) and are able to play instruments with the fingers (usually the forefinger). Use the forefinger with the purpose of pointing out objects and people.
- Are able to hold two objects simultaneously, but cannot coordinate them. Objects remain in their hands for longer time and they grab and beat the objects with more frequency. They practice their fine motor skills by grabbing, pushing, pulling, pressing, clapping, caressing, nudging, shaking, and scribbling. They are capable of scribbling with crayons and felt-tipped pens, but are not able to draw or write effectively.

#### 3.3.2 Recommended toy sub-categories

The following toy sub-categories in [Table 3](#) are recommended for this age group.

Table 3 — Sub-categories of toys for children starting ages 8 months to under 12 months

Sub-category	Starting age	Description and examples of appropriate toys
1.14	8 mo+	<b>Roly-poly toys, bop-punching toys, and pop-up action toys</b> – figures and animals that rock in a to-and-fro motion, made of rigid or inflatable plastic, jack in the box, push-down spinning toys
1.16	8 mo+	<b>Books with thick (chunky) pages</b>
1.35	8 mo+	<b>Soft materials in various shapes for stacking</b>
1.31	9 mo+	<b>Learn to walk toys (walk behind)</b> – wheeled unit with a solid base and handle to support the child in the early stages of walking
5.02	9 mo+	<b>Dolls, imaginary animal characters, with no removable components</b> – dolls representing fictional characters, including animal or human forms

### 3.4 Children with starting ages 12 months to under 18 months

#### 3.4.1 Aspects related to the motor and cognitive development, and behaviour of children with starting ages 12 months to under 18 months

Usually, the following development and behaviour can be observed in children with starting ages 12 months to under 18 months.

- May not be able to alternate their feet when pushing ride-on toys, they cannot yet pedal. The first ride-on toys do not need steering mechanisms because young toddlers may not be able to use them effectively. Also, they can imitate sports only in a playful way, without rules.
- Grow slower and have more developed motions and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills are in continuous development, but dexterity is still limited. On-going enhancement of eye-hand coordination.
- Start to choose their own toys and keep them close by. Can remember past events and still like to explore objects with hands and mouth. Use all the senses to explore the world. Have simplistic symbolic thinking.
- Around 13 months, they start to sing to themselves. Have increasing linguistic skills, present more verbalizations as a means of communication, and understand the meaning of a number of words. Distinguish repetitive and rhythmic sounds. Like to hear simple stories and can relate the pictures with the spoken word.
- Adore songs that involve the body (such as “10 Little Fingers”), appreciate rhythmic instruments and exploration play with musical instruments. Listen to rhymes and jingles, and are able to move objects according to the musical rhythm. Watch TV and other media and want to watch the same program repeatedly.
- Are more and more curious and like new objects. Exploration play is the predominant activity in this phase.
- They start to see differences in the size, shape, and mobility of things. Are capable of matching simple shapes and start to recognize simple shape fits such as triangular, square, rectangular, etc. in terms of exploration. They are able to feel different textures.
- Are capable of handling and carrying toys and light objects. Throw and kick soft and lightweight balls.
- Like small vehicle toys that can be pushed. Like toy cars with doors or compartments to carry toys.
- Like to turn knobs and dials that have low resistance. Hold, handle, pass objects from one hand to another and release them deliberately. Turn pages of books or magazines (several at one time), paying attention to images, not text. Identify an illustration upside down. Like to scribble and can use dough and modelling clays with adult assistance.

- Observe and perform imitations of other children and adults. Have greater capacity for social contact, but are egocentric. Solve problems by trial and error.
- Are more able to walk but still may have unstable balance, muscles are not well strengthened and developed yet. However, from around the age of 16 months, the majority of children are capable of walking and standing in place. Begin to explore their environment; start to walk, going up and down stairs one foot at a time, climb on to furniture, playground toys, etc.; rarely fall on smooth and even surfaces; are aware of heights and the dangers of falls and rudimentary spatial relationships.
- At 18 months, are able to run and stay on tip toes with no support. Have increased mobility, start to dance, and jump with both feet together. Perform simple rotation of body parts.

### 3.4.2 Recommended toy sub-categories

The following toy sub-categories in [Table 4](#) are recommended for this age group.

**Table 4 — Sub-categories of toys for children starting ages 12 months to under 18 months**

Sub-category	Starting age	Description and examples of appropriate toys
1.23	12 mo+	<b>Boxes, tubs, buckets, and containers</b> – to store toys
1.29	12 mo+	<b>Rocking animals and rocker chairs</b> – size suitable for children to ride and rock
1.30	12 mo+	<b>Push toys with a long handle that provides stability</b> – corn popper, lawnmower
1.33	12 mo+	<b>Self-standing foot to floor riding toys, trikes, without pedals</b> – wheeled toys/vehicles without pedals that are propelled by the power provided by the child's feet on the ground
1.37	12 mo+	<b>Sliding beads on a fixed loop or shaft</b> – bead maze or frame
1.39	12 mo+	<b>Shape sorters with miscellaneous shapes and colours</b> – containers and vehicles with holes of different geometrical shapes that only allow parts to pass through the corresponding openings and to fall inside
1.41	12 mo+	<b>Tool benches, pounding benches</b> – toys simulating carpenter's benches (strictly pounding toys at this age)
1.43	12 mo+	<b>Mechanically and electrically operated toys</b> – vehicles, dolls, animal characters, etc. made of plastic, metal, fabric, or plush, with motions powered by spring, or battery
2.10	12 mo+	<b>Lightweight balls (plastic)</b>
5.19	12 mo+	<b>Imitation dashboard panels</b> – controls imitating driving activities of cars, boats, airplanes, or spaceships
6.25	12 mo+	<b>Musical toys</b> – simple musical instruments such as pianos, guitars, drums, tambourines, horns, and others
6.26	12 mo+	<b>Simple play sets</b> – basic structure with three to five figures with limited detail

## 3.5 Children with starting ages 18 months to under 24 months

### 3.5.1 Aspects related to the motor and cognitive development and behaviour of children with starting ages 18 months to under 24 months

Usually, the following development and behaviour can be observed in children with starting ages 18 months to under 24 months.

- Have more refined fine motor abilities and increased gross motor skills, but limited dexterity. Can build a few building blocks together. Turn pages of a book carefully so as not to tear them and

regularly name and point out familiar objects in books. Understand that images tell a story and that an adult is reading the story. Still require non-verbal means of expression.

- Have comprehension of daily routine activities by the sequence of events, and increasingly imitate observed behaviours. Already have representation thinking and exhibit symbolic play, role-playing with daily activities in an isolated way (such as mother and daughter, talk on the telephone, etc.).
- Around 20 months, they are able to carry objects in their hands while walking, are capable of fitting together and separating individual parts (simple fitting method). Use blocks to build structures and think that overturning them is a funny activity. Are able to thread large beads on a cord provided there are large holes. Draw abstract forms and simple angles.
- Spatial sense is under development: “ahead”, “behind”, “up”, and “down”. Recognize parts of the human body. Exhibit higher memory development and are capable of playing with simple toys and puppets. Learning occurs by repetition and gradually understanding cause and effect relationships. Actions with purposes are already evident.
- Are capable of fitting their limbs (arms) into large openings. Explore other physical abilities, such as balancing, running, and jumping. Can walk properly, but are still unable to pedal and drive vehicles with precision. Are able to pull carts and wagons. Have strength, balance, and are more stable and confident walking. Can dance, jump, run, turn, leap, clap hands, beat feet, etc.
- Are able to press keyboard keys (computer/tablet/smart phone), with an understanding of the expected response. Are able to use remote controls (e.g. TV’s) and other simple devices. Are aware of the use of electronic devices (e.g. tablets, smart phones, and computers) by adults.
- Develop concepts of looking after their toys; still put them in the mouth but with less frequency.
- Speak many words and are gaining an understanding of how they can be used in different situations and with different meanings, without fully understanding the meaning of the words. Start to interact more with adults with the ability to sustain a short and simple dialogue. Like to hear songs for children and repeat them with adults. Start to form phrases with single words (e.g. baby, Nana). Up to 24 months, they are able to build phrases of up to three words (e.g. baby wants food) and are in the questioning phase “What is this?”.
- Towards the end of this age range, awareness, feelings, and empathy are more developed; they identify the difference between real objects and toys, choose their own toys, and start to exhibit their liking for social play, but still with little interaction and they still don’t share their toys very much.
- Appreciate play with sand and water but are unaware of the risk of drowning.

**3.5.2 Recommended toy sub-categories**

The following toy sub-categories in [Table 5](#) are recommended for this age group.

**Table 5 — Sub-categories of toys for children starting ages 18 months to under 24 months**

Sub-category	Starting age	Description and examples of appropriate toys
1.27	18 mo+	<b>Toys for sand and water</b> – pails, small shovels, moulds, to play with sand and water
3.07	18 mo+	<b>Toy activity panels with fixed parts and turning gears activated by twisting motions or a crank</b>
3.09	18 mo+	<b>Simple building blocks with overlapping parts that may or may not interlock</b>
3.13	18 mo+	<b>Simple mechanical toys</b> – inclined planes to slide objects, toys actuated by paddles, wheels, and other parts using water and/or sand