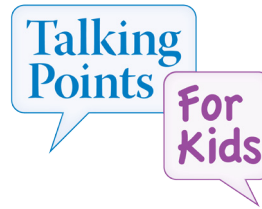


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Bringing Toys to School

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July 2013 Edition

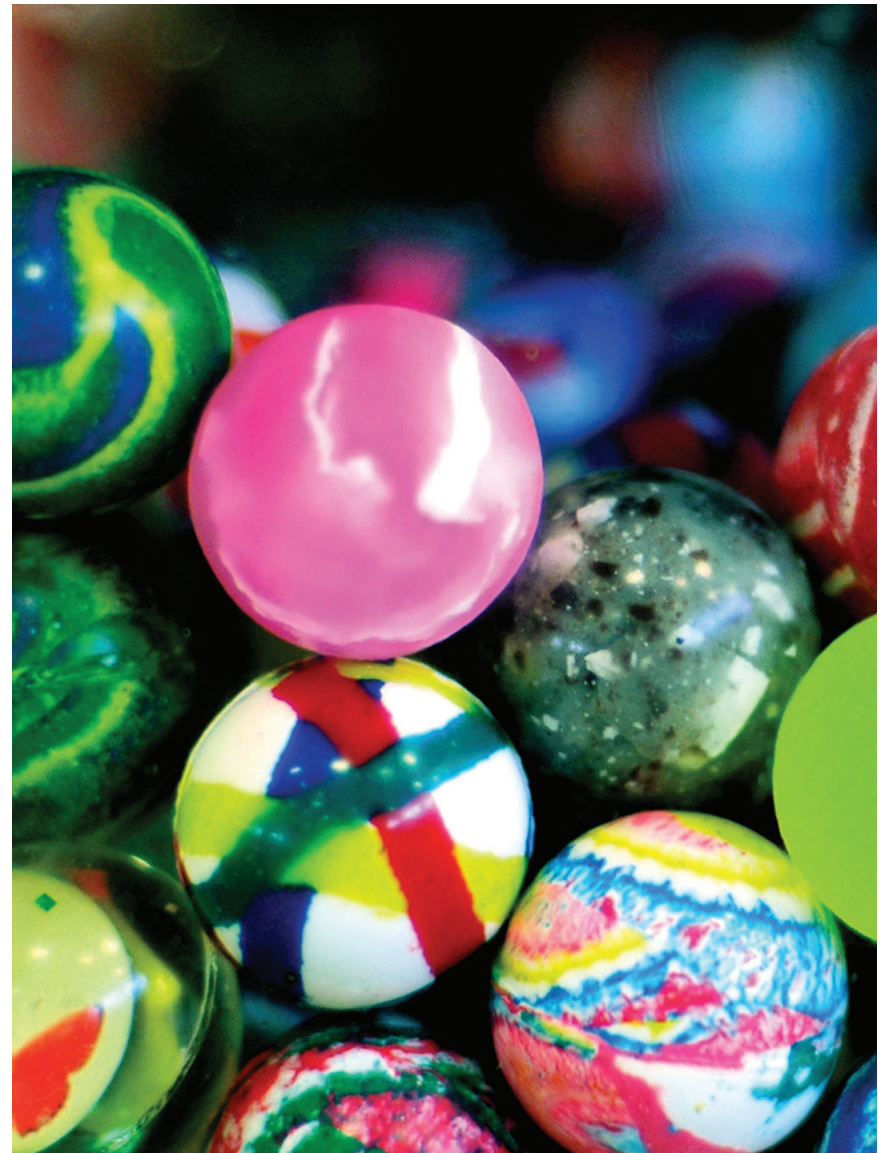


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Toys in School



At the beginning of the school year, students learn what their teachers expect of them. They learn the rules for their classroom and for their school. Most schools have rules about running in the halls and about how children should behave towards each other. In many schools, children are told that they must leave their games and toys at home.

Whether it's stuffed animals, trading cards, toy cars, or video games, many kids like to bring toys to school. However, some teachers find that toys can cause problems in class and on the playground. Some parents agree. Others think that kids should be able to use their own toys at recess.

Do games and toys have a place in school? You will read about the problems they cause. You'll also hear why some people believe children should be able to bring their games and toys to school. Some people even think children could learn more if teachers used games and toys in their lessons. After you read this book, write and talk about your ideas with your classmates. Do you think children should be able to bring their own games and toys to school?

What Science Says about Games and Toys

Scientists have found that children like to play and need to play. Studies show that playing helps children learn about the world. By playing games, children develop their language, imagination, and problem-solving skills. They learn to work together, make rules, and work out problems. Active games also help kids train their muscles. And while it is true that games help children learn facts, they also help children learn how to learn.

How can playing help you learn? Games in the computer lab can teach you how to use your observations to solve problems. In addition, playing lets you be creative and try out new ideas. When you pretend to be someone else, you come to understand the people around you better. It can also help you work through feelings in a safe way.

When you explore how toys work, you learn basic ideas about science, math, and social studies. You see physics at work when you play with balls and balloons. You see math at work when you combine different shapes to make a new shape. You see history at work when you use plastic figures to act out a battle.

Of course, not all games help you learn. Some people worry that competitive games can make kids unhappy because someone loses. To test this idea, scientists studied competitive games to see if kids played too hard or if they felt bad when they lost. One study found that if children were taught to be fair and friendly, competitive games didn't cause bad feelings or angry actions. Instead, children learned important life lessons.

Scientists have not yet studied whether bringing games and toys from home creates problems. Some teachers, though, say that conflicts happen when kids don't share and when toys are lost or broken. Teachers can use this as an opportunity to teach students about



sharing or taking care of their things, but there are lots of other things that students need to learn in class. Also, teachers find that students don't always pay attention to their lessons if they can play with their toy instead. Most teachers feel that toys from home cause problems at school. But they all agree that elementary students need free time during the school day to play.

From Balls to Video Games

In the past, students brought dolls, balls, stuffed animals, and action figures to school. Today they bring video games, too. These games easily fit into a pocket, so kids can take them anywhere. Games can also be played on cell phones. And though parents want to be able to call their children, they don't want their children to play video games in school.

Studies have shown that children who spend a lot of time playing video games find it harder to stay focused in class. That's because video games move quickly and give rewards. Some kids get angry when they have to stop playing. Kids want their school assignments to be fast moving and give prizes, too.

Children who play video games for hours spend a lot of time alone. They don't talk as much with other children, and they don't learn how to share or work with other people. Some children forget how to be friends with others. Children also don't get the exercise they need to stay healthy.

In addition, some video games are violent. People worry that kids who play them will think that violence is normal. Some worry that games may even make kids become violent. So far, studies haven't proven this, but no one knows what effects violent video games might have on children.

There are many people who are not worried about video games, too. They say that video games are just another toy. Not all video games are violent or fast moving, and not all have lots of rewards. Some people say that video games teach children lessons they may need later in life, like how to use computers or how to use their brain, eyes, and hands together to solve problems quickly.



Letter to the Principal From a Parent

Dear Mr. Franklin,

I feel that games and toys are an important part of growing up. I am not sure I like the new rule banning them from school.

My daughter Jackie is a good student, and she loves school. She learned so much in third grade, and she was excited to begin fourth grade. However, school can also be stressful for kids, as you know.

On the first day of school, Jackie wanted to bring her hand-held video game. It has a drawing program that she likes. Jackie wanted to have something to do at lunch in case she couldn't find her friends. She also wanted to show her friends and her teacher some drawings she had made during the summer.

I can understand the problems that games and toys can cause. Jackie once brought a toy to her friend's house. When it was broken, she blamed her friend. After a few days, Jackie and her friend worked out their feelings. Now Jackie is more careful about her toys and how she treats her friend's toys. I'd like to think that Jackie and her friend have learned an important lesson.

Children need recess time to play, relax, and use their imagination in ways that they can't in class. Soccer balls, swings, and jump ropes are fine for some children, but they're not for every child. It just doesn't make sense to limit what children can play when it is how they relax.

I hope you will think again about your ban on games and toys brought from home. Surely it would be enough to allow parents and teachers to decide what students can and cannot bring to school.

Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Young



Letter to Parents from a Teacher

Dear Parents,

I'm sorry to say that trading cards are no longer allowed in school. They were not included in the ban on games and toys, but trading cards have become a problem, too. Here are some problems I've had in my class:

1. Trading cards are dropped, and students run to collect them. Then they get upset if cards are lost.
2. Students make trades without thinking them through. Hours later, they argue over who owns a card.
3. Lots of time is wasted as students look for a place to store their cards. They expect me to stop my lesson and give them plastic bags to keep their cards safe and clean.
4. All of this activity can make it hard for students to focus on their lessons. It can also cause students to feel bad if they don't have as many cards as others, or if they don't have the more popular cards.

We have plenty of toys children can use at recess. We have balls, jump ropes, and other toys. Children can also use computer games, board games, and puzzles when it rains.

Please tell your children to keep trading cards and other games and toys at home. That way, everyone will be able to focus on learning.

Thank you,
Mr. McDonald



What People in Other Countries Say About Games and Toys in School

Imagine that instead of textbooks, your teacher handed you a computer. That's what the government in South Korea has decided to do. It will be the first country in the world to replace paper textbooks with computers. Children from kindergarten through fourth grade will get tablet computers. Older students will get laptops.

Of course, the computers will be used for reading, writing, math, and research. But they will also be loaded with videos, photos, songs, and games.

One reason for the change is that video games are a national passion in South Korea. More than three in four homes have Internet access. There are 15,000 Internet cafes. Many cafes stay open 24 hours a day. Video-game contests are huge events. Winners become famous.

South Korean students don't spend all their time playing video games, though. In fact, they spend many more hours a day on their studies than students in the United States do.

However, not everyone in South Korea likes the new plan. Some people think kids should spend less time on computers, not more. About one in ten South Korean children already spends too many hours playing video games. That means they spend less time talking with their families and friends and doing schoolwork. Sometimes they even skip school to play games.

To fix this problem, South Korea has opened centers that help kids stop playing so many video games. Adults introduce kids to art, music, and games that don't use a screen. They help kids learn to play sports and games with others. The kids also talk with adults about their problems with games.

While the government sees that video games can cause problems, people also see that computers can help students learn. And South

Korea is not the only country that will use computer textbooks. Other countries, such as France, Japan and the United States, already use tablets in place of paper textbooks in some schools.



What Do You Think?

Have you ever brought games or toys to school? Why?

How should schools deal with the problems caused by games and toys?
Should they take toys away if they are causing a problem?

Should schools allow children to bring only some kinds of games and toys?

Do you play video games? How much time do you spend playing video games?

Should Children be Allowed to Bring Games and Toys to School?

Why would schools ban students from bringing toys to school?	What toys or games would you allow or not allow at school? Why?
Are there certain kinds of toys or games that cause problems in school?	What should the teacher do if a student brought a toy to school?