



HOLIDAY COUNTDOWN

WHAT TO BUY

PRESCHOOLERS



Nobody's more fun to buy for than preschoolers, and there are gifts that will win endearing smiles in every price range. After all, the little people were happy playing with pots and pans not long ago.

— Tahree Lane
Blade Staff Writer

Lads can spend hours assembling tracks and racing small cars, which are made by the likes of Fisher Price (GeoTrax), Hot Wheels, Matchbox, and Thomas the Train. We say anything that can grip imaginations for more than 15 minutes is worth its weight in gold, and if he likes the starter kit, you can always buy additional tracks for future gifts. **The Hot Wheels Wall Tracks Gorilla Takedown Track Set** (ages 4 and up, Kohls, \$54.99) attaches to the wall easily (hence, no floor-space sprawl). A GeoTrax Sack of Track is \$26 at Toys R Us.



Duplo building blocks are twice the size of the standard LEGOS, suitable for fingers aged 1½ - 5. Tubs come in all sizes. **Kmart, \$15-\$34; Toys R Us** has a 71-piece-set for \$35. Additional options at many retailers.

The LeapFrog LeapPad2 Explorer (ages 3-9) comes with apps for learning songs, art activities, a camera, and video recorder. Book apps provide a say-it/sound-it reading experience, and other programs zero in on reading, art, music, language, culture, science, geography, mathematics, health, and more. The tablet automatically adjusts the learning to each child, asking more challenging questions as her or his skills develop. **Target, Toys R Us, Kmart, \$99.**



The Aeromax Tutu (\$16.99) at Target will turn your princess into a ballerina.



Colorful character hats, gloves, and earmuffs keep your preschooler warm during the cold holiday season. Available at **Macys** from \$7 to \$15.

It's a pillow. It's a pet. It's a **Pillow Pet!** Invented by a San Diego mom in 2003, these soft cuddlers fold into a stuffed animal and fold out to a pillow. Models range from unicorns to monkeys, penguins to dragons. You can't go wrong with the 18-inch washable **Snuggly Puppy**, \$19.99 at Toys R Us.



Cozy Coupe II Car is the vehicle of choice for ages 1½ - 5. It is a durable, made-in-America favorite by the Ohio-based Little Tykes company. It has a handle in the back for a strolling grown up to push, a removable floor board that protects little feet but lets bigger feet propel the car à la Fred Flintstone, and storage in the back. Little Tykes sells replacement parts on its site. **Meijer, Target, Kmart, Walmart, \$55.**



Girls love playing with paper, crayons, paints, stickers, stamps, stencils, rounded scissors, and glue sticks. Encourage them to "write letters" to friends and family. **Hobby Lobby** or **Michael's**, \$20 for a kit.



Gotta have books. **Small Bunny's Blue Blanket** (by Tatyana Feeney, \$17) is for the kidlet addicted to his special blanky or stuffed animal. **Monster's Monster** (by Patrick McDonnell, \$17) shows the power of gratitude. A good choice for grannies is **Have Fun, Molly Lou Mellon** (by Patty Lovell and David Catrow, \$17). **Barnes & Noble.**