

Why do we choose Toy of the Year?

The Toy of the Year award highlights why play is one of the most important building blocks in a child's life. When children play, they develop language, imagination, creativity, problem-solving skills, motor development, and social interaction. Through play, they explore emotions, learn how to cooperate, and discover how the world works. Play helps children grow, both as individuals and together with others.

At the same time, we know that screen time is increasing and can easily take time away from the active and creative play that children need to thrive. That is why we highlight Toy of the Year—to offer families more meaningful alternatives.

The award exists to protect and promote play, and to make it easier to find safe, inspiring, high-quality toys that truly contribute to children's development and joy. By recognising toys with high play value, innovation, and a strong sense of responsibility, we aim to inspire more play, more imagination, and more activity, while also supporting a better balance in children's everyday lives.

The Toy of the Year award shows why play is so important—for children, for families, and for society as a whole.

1. Core Purpose – Why Toy of the Year Is Selected

The Toy of the Year award is the industry's mark of quality, recognising toys with exceptional play value, safety, and innovation. It aims to guide consumers, strengthen the toy trade, and promote the role of play in Sweden.

Toy of the Year is selected in order to: Lyfta lekens värde och barns utveckling

Belöna leksaker som verkligen bidrar till kreativitet, rörelse, fantasi, socialt samspel och lärande.

- **Highlight the value of play and children's development**

Recognise toys that truly support creativity, physical activity, imagination, social interaction, and learning.

- **Guide consumers in a wide market**

Provide families with a trustworthy and easy-to-use quality guide to safe and inspiring toys.

- **Drive quality, innovation, and responsibility within the industry**

Encourage the toy sector to invest in safe, sustainable, and innovative toys.

- Toy of the Year exists to strengthen play as a central part of children's lives and development. Through a professional, criteria-based selection process, toys are highlighted that combine playfulness with quality, safety, and relevance for today's children.
- The Toy of the Year award helps parents and caregivers navigate a wide range of products, provides retailers with a clear tool to communicate and inspire around play, and supports the industry's progress by recognising innovation, responsibility, and strong product development.

If someone in the industry explains the purpose of **Toy of the Year**, it should sound something like this:

Toy of the Year is a mark of quality that helps us collectively highlight the importance of play, showcase the toys that are best for children, and make it easier for parents and adults to choose the right products.

When talking about Toy of the Year, it is important to include at least two of these three key words: **Play value, Safety, Guidance**

A sentence that can be used anywhere to describe Toy of the Year:

Toy of the Year is the industry's way of highlighting toys that truly make a difference for children's play and development, while also guiding consumers and retailers toward safe, high-quality, and inspiring choices.

What Toy of the Year *not is*:

- **A sales competition or popularity list**
It is not about the “best-selling toy” or the one most visible in stores.
We reward quality and play value — not volume.
- **A marketing campaign for individual brands**
The award is not meant to provide “free PR” to a few companies.
It is an industry tool that strengthens the entire category of play.
- **A subjective jury based on personal taste**
It is not about what the jury “likes best” at the moment.
The evaluation is based on clear criteria and professional assessment.
- **An internal industry event with no external impact**
Toy of the Year is not just a gala or an internal recognition.
It is a consumer guide, a driver for retail, and a media platform.
- **A competition where large companies automatically have an advantage**
Small and large companies are judged on the same terms.
What matters is the product and the value of play it brings.

Short summary to use:

“Toy of the Year is a quality award — not a sales ranking or a marketing competition.”

2. Criteria – What Toy of the Year Rewards

High Play Value

- The toy should inspire joy, imagination, and curiosity through play.
- The toy offers long-lasting play potential.

Supporting Children’s Development

- The toy supports one or more key developmental areas:
creativity, problem-solving, social interaction, motor skills, language, and emotional development.
 - It should be clear why the toy is beneficial for children.

Safety and Security

- Meets all applicable safety requirements and standards.
- No obvious risks in design, function, or materials.
- Clear instructions, correct age labelling, and safe use.

Age Relevance and Usability

- Provides the right level of challenge for the target age group.
- Easy for children to understand, start playing with, and succeed.
- Works well in children's everyday play and routines.

Quality and Durability

- Well-designed construction and materials.
- Withstands repeated use over time without losing play value.
- Takes sustainability aspects into account where relevant (e.g. longevity, material choices, repairability, and packaging).

Innovation / New Thinking

- Brings something new through idea, function, design, content, or play experience.
- Can be entirely new or a modern development of a classic toy.

Inclusion and Diversity

- As many children as possible should be able to play, regardless of gender, ability, or background.
- Avoids limiting stereotypes.
- Encourages free and open-ended play.

- **Internal information text**

Winners are selected based on play value, safety, quality, age relevance, innovation, sustainability, and inclusion.

3. Industry Value – Why Toy of the Year Matters to You

Toy of the Year is not just an award. It is a shared industry initiative designed to strengthen the entire toy market. The value for the industry can be summarised in five concrete benefits:

I. A Credible Quality Anchor in an Overcrowded Market

The toy market is vast, trends shift quickly, and competition for attention is intense. Toy of the Year creates a shared benchmark for quality – both within the industry and toward consumers.

- Strengthens trust in the toy category as a whole.
- Helps highlight quality above the “noise.”
- Makes it easier to communicate why a toy is genuinely good, not just that it sells well.

II. Promoting Play to Help Reduce Screen Time

Sweden’s Public Health Agency recommends balanced screen use, ensuring that screen time does not replace sleep, physical activity, social interaction, and play. As a general guideline, children aged 0–2 should ideally not use screens at all, children aged 2–5 should spend no more than one hour per day, and children aged 6–12 should limit screen time to 1–2 hours per day, with age-appropriate content and adult supervision.

Toy of the Year therefore highlights toys with high play value that encourage children to play in a more active, creative, and social way.

III. A Ready-Made Communication and Sales Tool for Retailers

For retailers, Toy of the Year serves as both a consumer guide and an opportunity to increase sales.

- Winners and finalists are already “packaged” with clear motivations and descriptions.

- Provides a legitimate reason to highlight products in-store, online, and in campaigns.
- Offers concrete sales messaging for customer meetings and marketing.
- Saves time in product selection and campaign planning.
- Makes shelves, e-commerce, and advertising easier for customers to understand.
- Drives sales in a responsible and quality-driven way.

IV. **Shared Trend Insight**

The winners act as an annual trend barometer for children's play.

- Provides the entire industry with a shared understanding of emerging trends.
- Helps you plan future assortment and communication.
- Makes play more “newsworthy” and easier to understand as a category.

V. **A Driver of Innovation and Quality**

The award recognises toys that are well-designed, safe, sustainable, and innovative.

- Sets a direction for product development.
- Strengthens incentives for safety, sustainability, and play value.
- Provides the industry with a benchmark to aspire to.

VI. **A PR and Media Platform That Benefits the Entire Market**

Media, influencers, and consumers need a credible entry point into the world of toys. Toy of the Year serves as an industry-wide news driver and communication platform.

- Increases interest in play as a topic every year.
- Creates PR that does not require each company to “start from scratch.”
- Gives the industry a credible voice in societal and child-related discussions, highlighting the value of play.

Short Summary of the Value

Toy of the Year is the industry's shared mark of quality and communication tool. It strengthens play as a category, guides consumers, and provides retailers with a ready-made, credible selection of toys to build campaigns and customer dialogue around.

The Jury's Work and Impartiality

Toy of the Year is selected by a professional jury with broad industry experience. Jury members represent the toy sector and make impartial evaluations based on clear criteria, not on their own products or business interests. The focus is always on children's play, safety, quality, and innovation.

The jury evaluates toys based on:

- Play value (greatest weight)
- Safety and security (must be fulfilled)
- Developmental benefit
- Innovation
- Quality and durability
- Inclusion
- Age relevance

The evaluation is not made public – but it helps the jury remain consistent in its assessments.

The Toy of the Year jury 2026 consists of:

- Alexandra Synnermark, juryens ordförande
- Daniel Åhlund, Lekia
- Olle Karlsson, Dagab
- Petra Jarlheim, Lekextra
- Malin Brewitz, Adlibris
- Peter Wallskog, Leksaksborgen