

10 Gift Ideas for Pre-Schoolers, under \$15

I love shopping for pre-schooler birthdays. They love discovering new toys, games and even a new cardboard box will keep them entertained for hours. Here is my list of fail-safe gift ideas for children 1-5 years old.

1. Play Dough or Finger Paint Kit

Put together a carry bag with the ingredients to make either play dough or finger paint. Make up a cute recipe card to include in the parcel so everything is on hand when it's time to use your gift.

2. Colouring In Supplies

A big colouring in book, some textas or pencils and a few plain notepads will keep a pre-schooler drawing for hours. They'll love the discipline and fun of drawing in the colouring book as well as the freedom and creativity of a plain drawing pad. Tie it all up with some string and your gift is ready.

3. Torch

I'm not sure what it is with torches, but kids LOVE them. They love shutting the curtains and playing hide and seek as well as going outside at night to see what they can find by torchlight.

4. Bedding

Somewhere around 12 – 18 months most children will move from a cot to a single bed. Get a friend to put in with you to get them a special doona/ quilt set for their big bed. Having two people contribute financially to get a bigger gift is a great idea for any age present as you'll be able to buy something more significant for the birthday child.

5. Kids CD

We have two kids CD's which are on repeat in my car. They're fun songs sung by children and my kids love singing along to them. They enjoy the rhyming and laugh at the silly lines like "*knick knack paddy whack give a dog a bone*".

6. DVD

Too much TV might give you square eyes, but having a good DVD on hand for 'those' days is essential. Something with episodes makes it easy for parents to limit screen time. Elmo, Dora, Little Einstein's or The Wiggles are always favourites.

7. Balls

Soft rubber balls are great for pre-schoolers because they are easy to kick, easy to catch and don't hurt too much if they get one to the head.

8. Puzzles

Completing a puzzle is a rewarding activity to do, and is also great for fine motor skills and concentration. Try to find a puzzle with a picture of interest to the child you're buying for as they're more likely to keep coming back to complete it.

9. Cars

Toy cars may be predictable but they're also fail-safe for young boys. I discovered when my boys were little that toy shops often have single long pieces of plastic tracks you can buy for about \$2. I think they're meant to connect into those fancy trick sets, but on their own they are great to race cars off the coffee table or down a set of stairs.

10. Placemat

If you're thinking a placemat as a birthday present is strange, just hear me out. We've been given kids placemats twice and they were total hits. The kids started taking initiative in setting the table of a night and knew straight away which seat was theirs at meal times (no more fighting about who was sitting where). You can get personalised ones, which is what we have, and kids love anything that has their name on it. So, in my book, placemats are a great gift!