



Happy Thanksgiving

An illustration of a wooden wagon filled with pumpkins, surrounded by autumn trees in shades of orange, red, and yellow, with a few pumpkins scattered on the ground.

We Are Thankful for YOU!

Thank you for sharing your precious children with us!

Thank you for opening your homes and arms to us!

Thank you for taking our recommendations to heart and putting them into action with your children!

Thank you for your advocacy!

And if you are thankful for VIPS and are able to give a gift to VIPS this Holiday Season...

- *Please consider making a donation to our annual holiday fundraiser*
~ or ~
- *Purchase an item or two from one of our wish lists.*

VIPS CKY
VIPS Indiana
VIPS Louisville

Toy Recommendations by VIPS

Age recommendations for toys are typically listed by each manufacturer but should be taken as suggestions. Depending on your child's level of development and physical and cognitive skills, a toy recommended for a three-year-old might be appropriate for a much younger child and a toy recommended for a three-month-old might be appropriate for an older child.

VIPS is not endorsing any seller – we have used Amazon links for convenience. If you decide to purchase from Amazon, please consider going through AmazonSmile, which is exactly the same as ordering directly through Amazon, but offers a percentage of your purchase to a charity of your choice. And, of course, we would love for you to select Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Inc. as your AmazonSmile charity.

The blue product name contains the link.

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David Sterne, Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision, First Steps Supervisor, VIPS Indiana

The Oball Wobble Bobble Ball®

Highlights

- Bright colors to attract the visual attention of children with low vision
- Different textures to touch and explore
- Vibration to provide increased sensory input
- Music and sounds to motivate children to play and move
- Ideal for children with developmental ages of 3 months to 3 years



This multi-sensory toy has been a favorite with some children on my caseload this year, and it's easy to see why. Just a simple shake of the ball activates the music and vibration and encourages use and development of cause and effect skills. It can also be used to help develop turn taking and social skills in addition to orientation and mobility.

Available for \$29.94 from AmazonSmile.

Melissa & Doug's Poke-A-Dot Books® - Small

Highlights

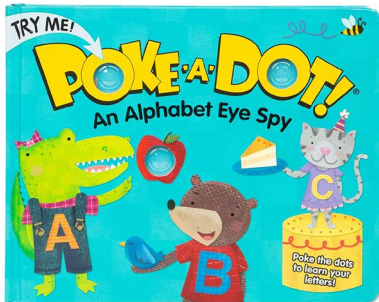
- Have sturdy pages
- Helps develop a child's fine motor, visual scanning, and cause and effect skills
- Available in a wide range of topics such as alphabet, animals and pets, Christmas, dinosaurs, shapes and emergency vehicles
- Available in different sizes and price ranges

I first learned about this series of books when some were donated to VIPS Indiana a couple of years ago. I discovered that many children enjoyed scanning each large board book page for the plastic buttons or dots to "pop." Since then, families have shown me smaller versions of these books they bought, with photos instead of illustrations and at least one button on each page.



I would recommend starting with a smaller book (10 pages, 6 x 6 inches) for very young children (the recommended developmental ages are from 12 months and up), like the one pictured, since they feature simple photos of objects with high contrast, simple backgrounds. The smaller books range from \$6.99 each to sets of 3 for up to \$25.95 through AmazonSmile.

Melissa & Doug's Poke-A-Dot Books® - Large



The larger books (20 pages, 9.25" x 7.25") feature illustrations with some pages having moderate visual complexity (more going on in the background) and are a great next step. The larger books range in price from \$11.99 to \$30.95 each, and all are available on AmazonSmile.

**Tracy Webb, Developmental Interventionist,
VIPS Louisville**

Bright Starts Press & Glow Spinner®

Highlights

- Provides visual, auditory, and tactile stimulation
- Develops fine motor skills
- Designed for children 6 months and up



This toy has worked well for children on my caseload. With one push of the star on top, children will enjoy the lights and sounds of the spinner.

It is available for \$12.98 from AmazonSmile.

Fisher-Price Laugh & Learn Magic Color Mixing Bowl®

Highlights

- Easily activated lights and playful songs about letters, numbers and colors
- Removeable pieces that are BPA free
- Encourages pretend play
- Includes volume control switch for children sensitive to sounds
- Appropriate for ages 6-36 months



Press to hear about letters, numbers, colors, and more.

This is a fun, light-up, pretend mixing bowl with play ingredients for exciting baking play! Children can place and remove objects in the bowl and explore each of the six play pieces that includes a BPA-free chocolate bar safe for mouthing, rattle egg, milk bottle, set of 2 measuring cups, pretend cherries and a spoon for "stirring." Toddlers will enjoy the lights and sounds as they pretend baking by stirring, pouring and pushing buttons to activate the sounds. Sounds and phrases introduce children to the alphabet, numbers, colors, and color mixing.



It is available for under \$16 from AmazonSmile.

**Amy Nichols, Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision,
VIPS Indiana**

Plan Toys Braille Alphabet Tiles®

Plan Toys Braille Number Tiles®

Highlights

- Alphabet tiles feature an upper case side and a lower case side with both print and braille versions of the letter
- Tiles are made from sustainable rubber wood and coated with a non-toxic finish.
- All colors are made from vegetable dyes
- Encourage visual interest for children with low vision
- Appropriate for ages 2 years and up

These are two of my favorite toys for our little ones. Each piece has a braille symbol that represents each letter in the alphabet or each number.

Plan Toys Braille Alphabet Tiles are available for \$40 from AmazonSmile. Plan Toys Braille Number Tiles are available for \$22.95 from AmazonSmile.



Amy also recommends Glo Pal cubes. See their description below under Paige Maynard's recommendations.

Paige Maynard, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/ Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Louisville

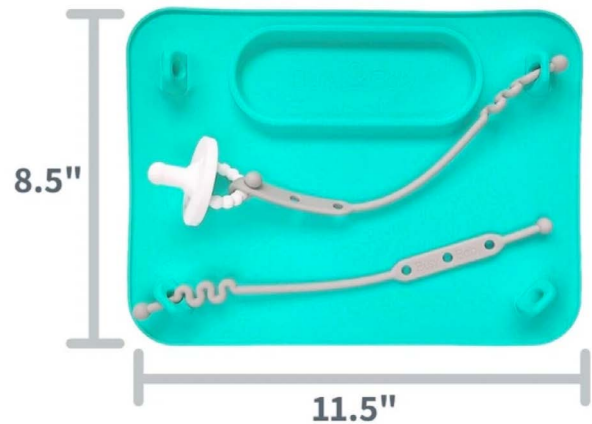
Glo Pals®

Highlights

- Available in 4-packs of yellow, blue, purple, green, and red
- Each Glo Pal lasts a minimum of 16 lighted hours (about 30 days)
- Each has a story about what makes it unique
- They have posable arms and legs
- Easy to grasp and easy to "attach" to another object

These light-up sensory toys glow a single color when placed in water.

They use non-replaceable, but recyclable, batteries. GloPals were created by the mom of a child with autism to help him overcome his fear of water. Created as a classroom project at Mississippi State University, a portion of every purchase is donated to Children's Hospital of Mississippi. Glo Pals cost \$10 plus shipping.



Busy Baby Silicone Mat®

Highlights

- Made of food grade silicone
- About the size of a sheet of copy paper
- Has two safe, durable straps for attaching objects to keep them within your child's reach and free from germs as when objects are thrown to floor
- Can be placed on a vertical surface as well as horizontal ones

This place mat was designed to withstand the child's tugging, pulling, and prodding while remaining stationary due to four silicone suction cups on the bottom designed as part of the place mat. It is safe for baby to play on, eat off of, and do everything else babies do while exploring their surroundings. It is available for \$24.99.

The Bubble Fidget Toy®

Highlights

- Highly portable
- Tactile and colorful
- Made of washable and reusable silicone
- Encourages fine motor skills



This toy consists of rows of silicone "bubbles" that can be pressed, just like you pop bubbles on bubble wrap. Turn it over to the other side, and it's ready to play again. It is easily tucked in a diaper bag, purse, or backpack, and can be attached to a key chain. It comes in many shapes, styles and solid and variegated colors. It is great as a texture for weight bearing, could be used on a light box and also is a good tool for exploring finger isolation, turn taking, and modified braille play. It is made of reusable and washable silicone.

The Bubble Fidget Toy is widely available in many superstores, dollar stores, or on AmazonSmile, ranging in price from \$5-\$30.

**Rebekah Dunda, VIPS Kids Town Preschool
Classroom Assistant, VIPS Louisville**

Fat Brain SpinAgain® Stacking Toy

Highlights

- Six discs of bright colors and different shapes
- Promotes hand-eye coordination
- Teaches cause and effect
- Encourages motor dexterity and visual tracking
- Made of strong, BPA free, coated ABS plastic
- Appropriate for ages 12 months on up

The bright colors and differently shaped discs are pleasant and motivating to see, feel and hear spinning down the corkscrew pole.

The toy is available for \$29.95 from AmazonSmile.



**Mindy Koehne, Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision,
VIPS Indiana**

“Eye Am Kids” Subscription

Highlights

- Monthly book boxes
- Specifically developed for children who are visually impaired
- Incorporates skills from the Expanded Core Curriculum
- Age appropriate themes and activities
- Options for children with CVI
- Encourages child/family interaction

These monthly book boxes of themed activities are wonderful for your family to create, play with and learn with together. Each box includes a book related to a monthly theme, addresses sensory channels with tactile/sensory items that deepen



the child's understanding of the book and theme, and provides opportunities to further your child's passions and interests from an early age.

Subscriptions are available for 1 month for \$30.95, 3 months for \$29.95/month or 6 consecutive months for \$28.95/month.

**Melisa Matthews, Blind/Low Vision Specialist,
VIPS Indiana**

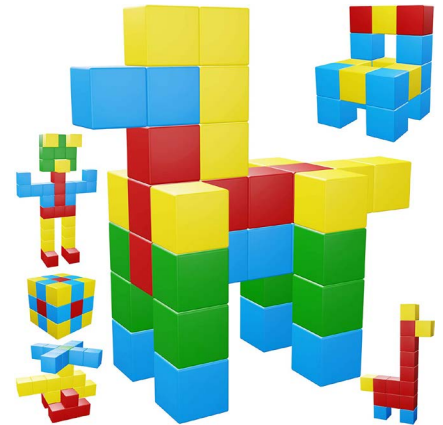
Intock Magnetic Blocks®

Highlights

- BPA free
- High contrast
- Magnetic
- Click when “stuck” together
- Appropriate for children 3 years and up

These magnetic cubes are wonderful for developing stacking skills. They are great to use for high contrast activities and beginning pattern activities too. These blocks offer fun activities to develop imitation of play and building without all the frustration of towers that are easily knocked over. They are also excellent fidget stress relief toys for children with sensory issues or Autism. Happy building!

Intock Magnetic Blocks are available for \$30.99 (set of 40) or 69.99 (set of 100) from AmazonSmile.



**Dixie Marz, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/
Developmental Interventionist, Little Learners
Teacher, VIPS Central Kentucky**

I am recommending two of my all time favorites.

Playskool Busy Ball Popper®

Highlights

- Colorful and visually stimulating
- Teaches progression of fine motor skills
- Teaches cause and effect
- Easy to activate
- Replacement balls are available
- Appropriate for children 9 months and up

If working on putting items into a container is a skill that your child needs to accomplish, try the Playskool Busy Ball Popper. Purposeful release can be a difficult skill for some children to learn. Letting go of a toy into a container, which they might perceive as a deep hole, is often a challenge. I



have had much success over the years using the Playskool Busy Ball Popper for this skill. First, when all the balls fly out, there is a reason to have to put the balls back in. Second, the large red circle at the top of the toy is an easy target for our children to see for releasing the ball and then watching it roll down the ramp. Once all the balls are back in the toy, then the child can push the button to activate again. As the child starts to learn to release onto the red circle, she will typically then start trying to release down into the hole in the middle of the toy, defining her ability to release into a smaller area.

Playskool Busy Ball Popper Toy with 5 Balls is available for \$36.99 from AmazonSmile.

Simple First Words Let's Talk Board Book® – Sound Book

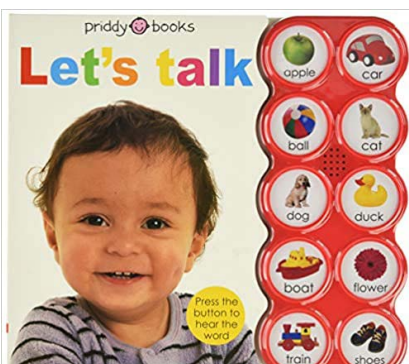
Highlights

- Great first book for picture identification
- Large, realistic photos
- Colorful
- No visual clutter
- Allows for differing levels of visual difficulty

This book is my other favorite go-to item. Each page contains one picture so there is only a choice of two pictures to choose from until the last page. On the last two pages, the pictures return in a smaller size with five per page. This is a nice gradual step to identifying pictures in an array. When the child is ready to try to find

even smaller pictures, the buttons on the side of the book show all ten pictures in a much smaller format and, when pushed, will say the word.

Simple First Words Let's Talk Board Book is available for \$13.46 from AmazonSmile.



Staci Maynard, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/ Developmental Interventionist, Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

Building with materials is an amazing play activity for well-rounded child development. Children of all ages not only learn to use their imaginations but also build problem-solving skills and learn about math and science concepts such as measurement, geometry, and physics. They also learn important social lessons about sharing and working together. At times, block play can be less engaging and more complicated for some children with visual impairments, as it is easy to get frustrated when a structure keeps falling as one is trying to build. However, there are options that may make this activity more appealing and meaningful to them.

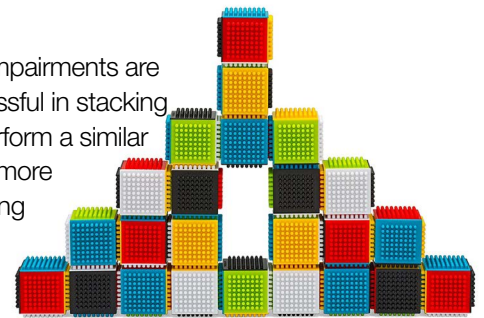
While this is our teacher holiday list, it should be said that children can build with whatever is around at any time. Bigger items such as cereal boxes and coffee cans work just as well if not better than block products when children are first learning to build. Once gifts are unwrapped, your family could have fun building with the empty boxes, wrapping paper tubes, and decorations left around before recycling them. Here are a few retail options that have features that might be helpful as well.*

Infantino Press and Stay Sensory Blocks®

Highlights

- Come in bold colors
- Have nubs for connecting easily
- Stay put when placed

Children with visual impairments are more likely to be successful in stacking them. Bristle blocks perform a similar function, but these are more user-friendly for beginning builders.



A set of 24 Infantino Press and Stay Sensory Blocks is available for \$14.84 from AmazonSmile.

TickiT Silishapes Soft Bricks®

Highlights

- Made of silicone, so no sharp edges
- Easy to grasp and attach
- Come in bright, primary colors
- Translucent

My favorite feature of these blocks, which are similar to large Lego bricks, is that they are translucent so they could be a fun



toy to explore on a light box for children with CVI or low vision.

A set of 72 bricks is available for \$96.60 from AmazonSmile.

TickiT Sensory Blocks®

Highlights

- Come in a variety of shapes
- Have durable wooden borders
- Block interiors are transparent panels
- Blocks contain different fillers, some that make sounds

These are another great building option for light boxes. Other manufacturers make similar blocks if you'd like to shop around.

A set of 16 TickiT Sensory Blocks is available for \$81.70 from AmazonSmile.



Remember that while skills such as stacking blocks are developmental milestones, the most important aspect of block play is that children are given free rein to explore their own ideas. As adults, we can come alongside them to play, to describe what they are doing, and to ask open-ended questions about their plans and actions. (For example, talk about what shapes your child is using, ask about which of your child's towers is tallest, or discuss what your child thinks will happen if she/he puts a large block on top of a small one.) A simple gift of building materials can be the catalyst for all sorts of creative and cognitive skills development for years down the line.

**Thanks goes to Tal Ditye, Ph.D., on [Mommyhood101.com](https://mommyhood101.com) for drawing my attention to these products in her article "The Best Sensory Toys of 2021" that you can check out here if you'd like additional gift ideas. While Dr. Ditye is focusing on sensory needs in general, these particular blocks should be great for our VIPS population specifically.*

Tammy Maynard, Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Central KY

Wrist Rattles

Highlights

- Brightly colored
- Soft textures
- Make sounds
- Encourage many early skills
- Inexpensive



Parents have loved wrist rattles for years. Current options feature brightly

colored wrist straps with contrasting color and 3-dimensional sound-making animal heads fashioned out of soft fabrics safe for children. Velcro closures enable most rattles to be placed on children's wrists or ankles; some rattles are also available attached to socks. The rattles encourage children to become more aware of their hands, to make intentional movements so they can hear the sounds, and encourage children to bring their hands to midline. Little hands can explore the textures of the animals and the bright colors, often including black and white which are preferred colors for infants, stimulating the child's vision. The rattles also aid in the development of the child's hand, foot and eye coordination. Many options are available commercially in the \$7 to \$12 range.

The Winkel Rattle & Sensory Teether Toy®

Highlights

- Features
- BPA free
- Soothing
- Visually stimulating



This item is a maze of soft, continuous teething tubes that is very easy for kids to grasp and rattle. It can be refrigerated for soothing comfort while teething, a perfect baby chew toy for tiny hands. The bright colors create visual interest and this lightweight toy promotes clutching and two-handed play while the center cube encloses the rattle that provides the auditory stimulus so motivating to little ones. The Winkel is small enough to fit into the diaper bag.

Available from AmazonSmile for \$9.99.

PlayLearn Fiber Optic Lamp®

Highlights

- Visually stimulating
- Changes colors
- Battery operated (three AAA) or USB connection



This is an awesome lamp that most families love because it is very mobile throughout the home. The interesting texture of the lighted fibers provides a sensory experience to the curious viewer.

Available for \$14.99 from AmazonSmile.

The Fisher-Price Deluxe Kick 'n Play Piano Gym®

Highlights

- Has sound and lights
- Offers multisensory activities
- Grows with baby, having learning activities for different developmental states
- Soft and washable

This toy is often loved by babies to explore with their vision, touch and hearing. It goes way beyond just a play mat with four ways to play! The learning content changes with baby's age and stage of development with 3 Smart Stages (learning levels). Babies can reach, touch, grasp, focus on so many things! Most love to kick the light-up, detachable piano at the bottom, the fourth level, that features real music notes! The piano activates for music and lights, which develop fine motor/cognitive skills too! This soft machine-washable play mat features loops so babies' toys can be attached.



Find this toy for \$39.88 at AmazonSmile.

Pam Holladay, TVI/DI, Kids Town Preschool Teacher, VIPS Louisville

The SmartNoggin NogginStik Developmental Light-up Rattle®

Highlights

- Has lights and textures
- Changes colors
- Easy to grip
- Comes with Parent Guide



This is a handy dandy little thing, aptly developed by SmartNoggin. The NogginStik not only lights up but the colors change (soft red, blue and green) to promote visual stimulation and encourage visual tracking skills. The mirror on the bottom is a bonus. Little ones can grip the stem and enjoy the fun textures that delight the sense of touch. The SmartNoggin plays a pleasant tune. It comes with a Parent Guide that includes a milestone checklist for the first 12 months of baby's life.

Available for \$22.99 from AmazonSmile.

The Skip Hop Developmental Learning Shape Sorter® - Explore & More Sort and Spin Yeti

Highlights

- Talks, plays music, and giggles
- Colorful shape sorter
- Accommodates progressive developmental stages

This Yeti-inspired interactive learning toy teaches shapes and colors in 3 stages of play: Yeti talks, moves, and plays music; switches to a shape sorter with reinforcing lights, music, phrases and giggles; and then spins and pops out (unloads) the shapes for the kiddos to sort again. The Yeti helps develop fine motor, hand-eye coordination, problem solving and cause and effect skills. It plays over 50 songs, sounds and phrases.



Available for \$25.54 from AmazonSmile.

Change Service Requested



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Lesley Lusher, Developmental Interventionist, VIPS Central Kentucky

Spike, the Fine Motor Hedgehog®

Highlights

- Colorful and visually stimulating
- Promotes development of a variety of fine motor and cognitive skills
- Comes with 6" diameter hedgehog and 12 quills



This is a great toy for working on visual motor skills and fine motor skills of taking objects out of a container and putting them back in. The bright colors are visually appealing for little ones. Spike is a good toy for matching and identifying colors, same and different, and to encourage visual scanning. The plastic base comes with 12 spikes, shaped and sized to fit small hands. Available for \$14.99 from AmazonSmile.

The Battat Shapes & Sounds Shape Sorter®

Highlights

- Visually stimulating
- 3 basic shapes
- Appropriate for 18 months and up



This is a great first shape sorter toy and also encourages cause and effect learnings. When the child puts the correct shape in the hole, the toy makes a funny sound as the shape descends to the bottom. Because it has only 3 shapes, the child has more chances for success. Once the child has put the shapes in the correct chutes, she can practice turning the toy over to get the shapes out. Available for \$9.99 from AmazonSmile.

The Fisher-Price Bright Beats Juniors – Beat Bo®

Highlights

- Colorful
- Has lights, music and movement
- Easily activated



This is a popular toy with the infant/toddler group. It is great for working on cause and effect. There are different sizes and slightly different variations of these toys, which is a nice way to introduce a slightly different toy with similar characteristics. Available for \$17.99 from AmazonSmile.

VISability is a quarterly publication of Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Jan Moseley, Editor.

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