

Guide to tech: Buying a smart toy

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Planning to buy a smart toy that uses AI or connects via Bluetooth, Wi-Fi or mobile app? Here are 4 things to consider.



1. How does the toy interact with your child and other devices?

Make sure you understand what key things your child can do with the toy and if it can connect to any other devices. For example, **can it send messages to a phone** or connect to a smart TV?

Questions to ask

- Is there a **chat function** that allows children to communicate with AI or others?
- Does the toy need to connect to any other devices?
- Are there apps that can be used with the toy which **may contain ads or allow in-app purchases**?
- Does the toy require information about **your child's location or other data**?
- **Where is the interactive data stored** and processed?

2. Does the toy require your child's personal information?



Some toys ask for your child's name, their age and a parent email address to work. **To ensure your child's privacy and data are kept safe, make sure the toy company is reputable** and check out their data privacy policy so you are aware of what is saved and collected, along with their procedure in the event of a data breach.

Things to do

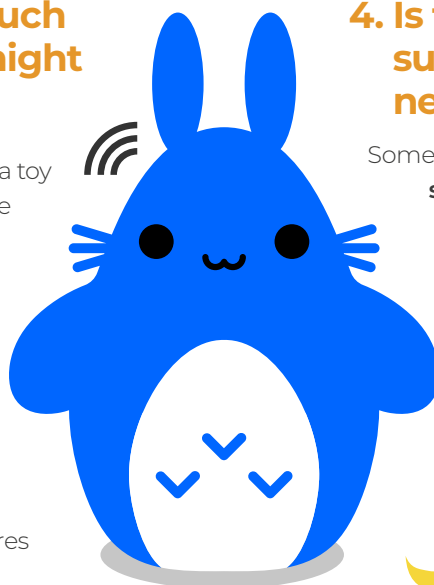
- **Read reviews** about the toy and see if there have been any other concerns raised.
- Only put the **minimal amount of information** about your child that's required.
- **Read the terms and conditions** and privacy policies.



3. Are there any features such as AI or a camera that might put a child at risk?

Carry out a series of checks before buying a toy with such features as they may be vulnerable to hackers. Examples include a camera or built-in microphone that connects to the internet. Be clear with your child on how the toy can be played with to **ensure it doesn't encourage them to put themselves at risk**.

Weigh up whether these features are worth having. If you do decide to buy it, to buy it, make sure to switch off risky features when not in use.



4. Is there a monthly subscription to access new content with the toy?

Some smart toys may feature an **additional subscription service** to access new content to help children get the most out of the toy.

If you choose to opt-in, **make sure to read the terms and conditions** on cancelling the subscription as you do not want to be paying monthly charges when your child is no longer playing with the toy. Also assess other costs like requirement to buy batteries.

