

Curious Young Children Taking Things Apart

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 4 August, 2003 - 10:51

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Young children often love taking things apart, but when what they are taking apart are brand new and expensive toys, and you are worrying about how to pay the gas bill, you might want to find cheaper toys, or old toys for the purpose, or perhaps think laterally and find things other than toys for them to take apart. For those who can't afford hugely expensive toys, TCS folks have suggested the following ideas:

- Find a “dollar store” or “pound shop” to take your children to. Then you can relax in the knowledge that no matter how many toys they want, it is not going to break the bank.

I once met a very enterprising but poor family whose house was jam-packed with fantastic toys including a *mountain* of Lego that I calculated would have cost about the same as your average family house, if bought new. They told me that almost everything in their house had come from car boot sales and jumble sales and had cost almost nothing. Quite an eye-opener! So:

- Frequent thrift shops, charity shops, garage sales, car boot sales, and jumble sales, and school fêtes and fairs (might as well use the local schools for something good!).
- Try going to the cheaper “antique”shops and charity shops and telling the managers/owners that your bright, curious child needs things to take apart. Enlist their help in finding items that to anyone else would be worthless old junk fit only for a skip, but to you would be a useful educational resource. You might find that they give you lots of stuff they have been unable to shift, or that they lookout for things for your child and get them for you.

In building up relationships with, and enlisting the help of, shop owners, neighbours and others in your community, *don't* think of your children as little troublemakers if they love taking things apart: they aren't! Children who want to take things apart are wonderfully bright and curious and passionately pursuing knowledge. If you honestly take this view, those whose help you solicit will be much more likely to take that view too, and will *enjoy* helping you and your children.

- If you let your neighbours, friends and relations know that you are on the lookout for toys and other items that your delightfully curious young child could take apart, the chances are, you will be amazed by the response. (Any excuse to get rid of old stuff! And helping a child, too!) Mentioning “decluttering” might help in some cases.
- Don't limit yourself to toys. Consider old household items such as gadgets no longer in use, old electric kettles, computer packaging, cameras, computers, out-of-date Nintendo equipment, etc.
- Check newspapers and other advertising sources for news of auctions and sales and go to them with an open mind.
- Lots of companies get rid of old equipment, and would be happy to give you some of it.

Nawny's brilliant ideas:

- How about toys that are made to take apart and reassemble? Legos, lincoln logs, brio or Thomas train sets, puzzles or waldorfy wooden tiles, bristle blocks, connectix, and some Playmobile sets, just for starters...
- Or build it yourself stuff – robots, big easy to do model airplanes, hammer and nails and some scrap wood, play dough...
- Or cheap non-toy stuff (old electronics, packaging, cassette tapes, random knick knacks nobody cares about)...
- Or e-bay and other online sources, since cheap stuff is so hard for you to find in real life...

Montera suggests:

- On the subject of non-toy things, I think another great thing to take apart would be old clocks. They are really neat inside. If a child (or adult) were interested in taking apart broken or old non-toy things, you could post an add on a bulletin board in your community that you would be willing to pay \$3 or \$5 for broken VCR, clocks, or whatever. I think many people would be quite happy to get \$3 for something they were just going to throw away, and it would make a really cheap toy.
- Another idea for a child who likes to take things apart, is that they may be interested in a lot of different household jobs. Such as helping to take apart the stove fan when it needs to be cleaned, or helping fix the car or change the oil. It can take a lot of patience to do these jobs while explaining every detail to someone else, but the knowledge gained would surely make it worth it.

If you have more ideas, please do post them here.

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Comments

Another idea

Submitted by Julie (not verified) on 5 January, 2005 - 21:05

In the US, consider joining your local freecycle group (www.freecycle.org (<http://www.freecycle.org>)). It's a wonderful way to exchange unwanted items freely with others. If you let it be known that you're looking for old or broken items, you might even receive more offers than you need.

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Hey, I used to due it.

Submitted by Nightmare JG (not verified) on 24 January, 2005 - 16:27

When I was ittle, my main hobby was taking apart old sowing machines, before long this expanded quite a bit to the point I can now take apart and fix most things (including a good deal of electronics)

In short, taking things apart is good!

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taking things apart

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 12 September, 2006 - 18:56

Awww what an awesome site, another one is www dot take it apart dot net, way cool, i loved to take things apart hey i still do even though im in my 20s but i do it with guidelines, first i try to fix it if i can't then i modify it if i cant do that then i take it apart and gut it (use the parts) i can find uses for some of the parts in oh say a broken VCR or a stereo and more

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word of caution - mercury & other toxins

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 19 November, 2008 - 08:06

If your child wants to take apart things, have at it, but be careful with CPUs, digital alrms, and other electronic items. Many are not safe to dissemble because they contain mercury or other chemicals.

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I love taking thing's apart

Submitted by Connor (not verified) on 28 January, 2009 - 19:54

I love taking thing's apart ive took a tv,camera,laptop,2 mobile phones and a photo copier apart and i'm only 9 hurray for kids hey

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