



family fun guide

OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR

Mother & Baby | Games & Toys | Entertainment | Food | Travel | Books | Home

the grown-ups guide to what kids like

Picks

Mother & Baby

The Kid Who
We all know how difficult it is to find games and toys for children which are truly original and different. Luckily the owners of a new online children's lifestyle store launched in...

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Christmas Gift Guide - Crafty Gifts
These gifts have been handpicked for children that love to get creative! Children can sometimes need prompting to get involved in creative activities...

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Entertainment

Dishonored PS3 Review
Dishonored is an action RPG from the studio who brought us such epics as Fallout 3 and Skyrim. When they bring out an RPG, you expect the best. The best doesn't really...

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Food

Festive Afternoon Feast from Delimann's
Delicious, scrumptious and delectable are just some of the words I could use to describe Delimann's Festive Afternoon Feast. I'd already...

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Travel

A Magical World of Festive Fun at Winter Wonderland, Center Parcs
Have you ever had to pinch yourself to check that you're not dreaming? I did at our recent stay...

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Aged 7, Charlotte is really into her reading. After coming home from school, she often pulls out her day's reading from her bag and insists...

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Games & Toys

Board to Distraction

Family games to help keep your festive season merry & bright.
By Emily Hirschmann
There comes a time in every Christmas when boredom kicks in and fractious cracks begin to appear on the surface of even the most harmonious of family gatherings, especially when children are involved. The obvious recourse in these days of technology is to turn on the computer or stick on a DVD, but I'm a traditionalist at heart and prefer, where possible, to break out the board games. While Snakes & Ladders and Ludo are all very well, we've been looking at some of the more recent additions to the board game market that can help to reduce the friction and add some fun to any family occasion.
Text continues below image



About Time plus free Junior Discovery Pack (RRP £29.99) – Described as 'Time travel in a box', About Time is a rare example of a product that genuinely manages to combine entertainment with education. Admittedly, if history isn't your thing, you may find it less engaging than others, but the beauty of the idea is that just a little general knowledge can get you a very long way. Working either individually, or in teams, you make your way around the board – trying to avoid catching the plague, fighting a duel and other such grizzly ends – attempting to find the year in which referred to events took place.

As a slight twist, exact answers are not required; with the points from each round going to the team whose answer is closest to the truth, helping to avoid any pause in the action. The questions are diverse, covering everything from Ant & Dec to Cleopatra, inviting in all demographics. A new take on a good, old fashioned family favourite, offering compelling game-play for all.

About Time plus free Junior Discovery Pack is available from www.abouttimeboardgame.com

LEGO Creatory (RRP £24.99) – With the obvious exception of bare-footed altercations, there's something universally appealing about LEGO. Whilst being hugely engaging, it helps develop co-ordination and motor skills as well setting the imagination free. Creatory is a slightly pared down, more structured version of the original, but results in much hilarity. In premise, a 3D version of Pictionary, the basic gist of the game is that one player attempts to build a LEGO figure while the others try to guess what is being 'created.'

It sounds simple, but if you're lacking in the building skills department, you may well struggle... Which seems to add to the fun, particularly when it's Mum or Dad doing the struggling. With three difficulty levels, the game is suitable for three to eight players aged 7+, with instructions for three game play 'modes' as well as some amusing extras. Creatory manages to be equally entertaining for adults and kids alike, with little chance of growing stale before its time.

To buy online or find your nearest stockist visit www.games.lego.co.uk

Telestrations (RRP £24.99) – Sticking with the creative theme, Telestrations is a picture-based Chinese Whispers, which is far more amusing than it has any right to be. The simplest description is the one on the box: 'Draw what you see, then guess what you saw...' In a nutshell, that's the entire game, but just as Chinese Whispers can turn 'cheesecake' into 'keepsake', Telestrations can turn 'shampoo' into 'milkshake' and cause much merriment along the way.

Refreshingly, all the game components are reusable and with more than 1,100 words available there's plenty of replay options; inventive parents could even add extra words to the pack at a later date to enhance the possibilities. Suitable for four to eight players, aged 8 and up, Telestrations is one of those exceptional games where a points system is available, but doesn't really need to be adhered to and the less skillful the players, the funnier the game gets. While aimed at kids, this is also great to break out with a bottle of wine after a dinner party. An all-round winner.

Telestrations is available from all good toy stores and online retailers, including www.amazon.co.uk

Game of Life Zapped (RRP £22.99) – The original Game of Life was just about my favourite board game when I was growing up. Pootling around the board in my little car, picking up a family, the whole thing just appealed, so I was excited to hear about the updated release; Game of Life Zapped. While on the surface the game is pretty much as I remember, technology has added a whole new twist. Designed for use with the Apple iPad, gone is the rickety spinner, instead it's all done with the sweep of a finger and a free downloadable app, but the tech does not end there.

Each player can customise their peg-shaped avatar and as you move around the board, the iPad works as a virtual master of ceremonies, directing play and enlivening the action with mini games, video links and more besides. This multi-platform play won't be for all, but kids seem to love it and the videos have an attention-grabbing hook that ye olde board games seem to lack. Undoubtedly, the first of many Zapped games to come.

Game of Life Zapped is available from www.amazon.co.uk

Forbidden Island (RRP £17.00) – Unusual in its ilk: rather than being competitive, Forbidden Island encourages team-work... Surely music to the ears of any parents to inherent bickerers? Aimed at kids aged 10 and up, this is a game of infinite possibilities, where the flip of one card can change the outcome for all and strategy comes into its own as you work to discover hidden artefacts before the island sinks beneath your feet, taking all players to a watery doom.

Despite the comprehensive rule book, the game is fast paced, simple to follow and only takes 30-40 minutes from start to finish. With four difficulty levels – from Novice to Legendary – you can learn the basics at leisure before upping the ante for more of a challenge, giving the game legs so you can keep going back for more. Nicely presented with attractive artwork and a pleasingly functional storage tin, Forbidden Island brings a little peace-keeping calm to the tempestuous game-playing waters.

To buy online visit www.amazon.co.uk

Sort it Out! (RRP £19.99) – One for adults and older kids, Sort it Out! is essentially a quiz about putting things – and people – in their places. The basic idea can't help but sound a little mundane – you're given a list and asked to put the items in order, shortest to tallest, slowest to fastest, fattest to thinnest, you get the gist. What stops the game from being instantly tedious is the subjects involved – where else do you get to compare Barack Obama with a kangaroo?

With questions covering entertainment, general knowledge, history, geography and the downright bizarre (what takes the longest – an adult male urinating, or the shower scene in Psycho?), no one player can possibly have the edge throughout the game, so the winner is generally the person with either the most logic, or the biggest mine of pointless information... Or, possibly, the greatest luck. Fast-paced and enormous fun, Sort it Out! proves that simplicity is often the key to quality entertainment.

Sort it Out! is available from Argos, WH Smith and www.amazon.co.uk

Banagrams (RRP £14.99) – If you're a fan of word games, then Banagrams is a must-have, for home and travel. As with all the best games, the idea is simple: each player picks between 11 and 21 letters (depending on the number of players) and makes their own mini crossword, the first person to successfully use all their letters wins the round, with other rules chucked in to make it a little more entertaining and challenging.

With no board or score pads, or confusing inflexible rules – letters are not fixed and can be moved around at will – this is a completely portable game with endless potential. As with all word games, play is obviously limited by participants' ability to spell, but this is also a fun way to increase children's vocabulary and teach them the benefits of using a dictionary. Fast, fun, flexible and supremely affordable, fabulous entertainment.

For more information visit: www.banagrams.com

Deadly 60 Tracker Board Game (RRP £14.99) – Being one of the BBC's most successful children's programmes for a long while, it was only a matter of time before a Deadly 60 game was launched. The question is, does it live up to the brand? Despite an initial disappointment at discovering an obvious typo on the packaging, I have to say, yes, it does.

The aim of the game is to move around the board from your base camp and track down deadly animals, the first player to discover three wild beasts is the winner. Accompanied with a booklet packed with exciting 'deadly' facts, this is a fantastic way of teasing young minds into action, although it would have been nice to see a few more animal stats littered throughout the. Nit-picking aside, this is engaging and entertaining for the over 8's and appealing to both sexes, so a good little rainy day saviour for the Christmas holidays and beyond.

Deadly 60 games are available from Tesco, or online from www.amazon.co.uk

LOGO What Am I? (RRP £24.99) – A variation on the LOGO theme, What Am I? has been specially designed with younger players (8+) in mind, opening up the brand to a much larger audience. Combining all the best bits of traditional family gaming, What Am I? eschews questions and focuses on three challenges – drawing, guessing and describing – as players work their way around the board and through the logos.

Some topics are easier than others, but this is a fast and fun game, allowing you to discover just how successful stealth marketing can be... And also to show your age! Being a multi-tasking game, What Am I? does take some getting used to and younger players may not take it straight away, but if you take the time to explain all the instructions, LOGO What Am I? will entertain the family for hours.

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