

Where are the toys that don't come from China?

A Buyer's Guide for Toys Not Made in China

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Trying to avoid Chinese toys this year? The spate of recent safety recalls has some consumers running scared. While these fears are largely unfounded, here are a few hints for filling your stocking with alternative toys. First, some facts—more than 2/3 of U.S. toys come from Asia. In discounters like Wal-Mart and Target, the percentages often run higher. So how do you avoid toys from that region without leaving the tree bare?

1. Examine the packaging. Many toys made in the U.S. or Europe are proudly emphasizing that fact this year. If you don't see the origin prominently displayed on the front, you will likely find the toy is "made in china"—listed in fine print on the back of the package.
2. Shop small specialty toy stores and hobby shops. Specialty stores avoid mass toys found in the discounters, often offering premium brands still made in the U.S. and Europe. The same is true for web purchases. Some specialty retailers, like FAO Schwarz, allow you to search for toys based on their origin. However, be ready to pay more. Toys are made in Asia because of the low cost.
3. Avoid toys with electronics and technology. These toys are more likely to come from China where manufacturers can find low-cost suppliers of the different toy components.
4. Look for old fashion toys not made of plastic—for example board games, premium teddy bears, puzzles, and wooden trains. These toys are often still made in the U.S.
5. Find stores that carry classic European brands like Brio and Playmobil or a few U.S. toymakers like Little Tikes who still make many toys in the U.S. Even in these cases, check the packaging. For example, Lego once produced everything in Europe but now produces some products in China.
6. Head out to craft shows to find local hand-crafted toys. These won't find their way to Wal-Mart and may not even show up in small toy stores.
7. Avoid bargain stores or shops that only carry a few off-brand toys like convenience stores. If the toys are really cheap—they almost certainly came from China.