



toy inventor & designer guide

eighth edition: 2026



*"Imagination is the beginning of creation.
You imagine what you desire, you will what you
imagine, and at last you create what you will."*

George Bernard Shaw
Irish dramatist (1856-1950)



Inspiring Generations of Play

Toy Inventor and Designer Guide | Eighth Edition
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Comments on this Guide may be submitted to: info@toyassociation.org

Welcome to the Eighth Edition of **The Toy Association's Inventor & Designer Guide.**

In an era in which creativity and imagination reign supreme, the need for comprehensive guidance for inventors and designers is greater than ever. It is with great pride and gratitude that we present this guide, a testament to collaboration and expertise, made possible through the joint efforts of The Toy Association and the United Inventors Association (UIA)'s Toy Hub advisory board.

The Toy Association, a stalwart advocate for the global toy and play community, recognizes the significance of nurturing the creative spirit and fostering innovation in the industry. This recognition prompted us to lean on the expertise of The Toy Hub, whose years of experience, profound industry knowledge, and passion for innovation have been instrumental in shaping this guide into a comprehensive and reliable resource for aspiring toy inventors and designers.

As you delve into the pages of this guide, you will discover a treasure trove of information, including essential steps in the design and invention process, intellectual property guidance, and so much more. Whether you are a seasoned professional seeking to refine your craft or a newcomer with a dream of bringing the next big toy to life, this guide is designed to empower you on your journey.

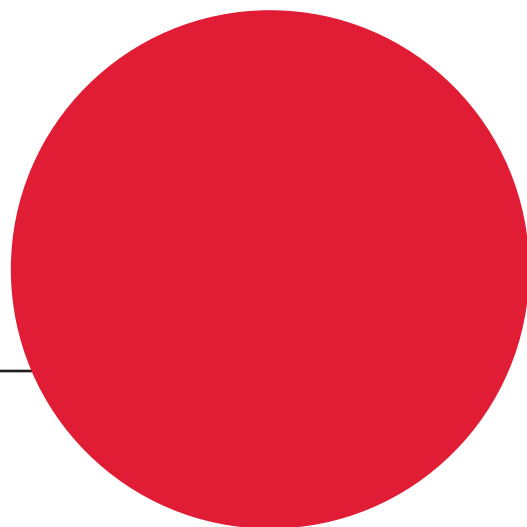
In the spirit of collaboration and creativity, we present the Inventor & Designer Guide as a tribute to the boundless potential of the toy industry. May it serve as a source of inspiration, knowledge, and guidance, propelling your ideas from concept to reality.

Thank you for embarking on this exciting adventure with us. Together, let us continue to shape a world where the power of play knows no bounds.

The Toy Association

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New ideas are the backbone of the toy industry. The need for innovative products is constant.

Toy and game inventors, designers, and creators are an important source of new products. And while it's not easy, inventors have never before had the tools that exist today to break into the toy industry – either by presenting your concept to existing companies for licensing or by launching your own company and selling direct to consumers. In either case, before you invest time and resources in any idea, it's wise to make an honest assessment of your personal circumstances. Ask yourself:

- *Are you willing to research and understand the marketplace to ensure your ideas are unique?*
- *Do you have the desire and drive to self-launch a product and manage a business, or do you prefer to license your concepts and focus on inventing?*
- *Can you face business-related obstacles such as strong competition, criticism, and rejection?*
- *Have you considered, if it's necessary, to pursue formal IP protection?*

Some inventors are able to invent full-time as a primary source of income or work for invention firms. Some inventors have established careers and invent as a hobby or side business. Once an idea is on the path to production, it's important to recognize that the “turnaround time” to get any idea to toy retail shelves may exceed two years. Research, legal fees, and production costs can be expensive if you are self-launching a new product. Inventors who license their concepts have to give up control over development and marketing and wait a year or more to see their first royalty checks. Both the self-launching and licensing paths require patience and persistence.

If you plan to **self-launch** a new toy or game, please consider:

- *Is it a unique and marketable idea?*
- *Is it cost-effective?*
- *Do you have sufficient financing to fund inventory and marketing?*
- *Is it safe? Will it meet the requirements of the relevant laws and safety standards, such as the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA)?*
- *Are you legally protected (by a patent, trademark, copyright, etc.)?*
- *Have you completed a patent and trademark search to ensure you are not infringing on another's IP?*

If you plan to **license** a new toy or game, please consider:

- *Is it a unique and marketable idea?*
- *What is the primary feature?*
- *How is it different than what's been in the marketplace historically?*

Getting Started

- *Do you have a proof-of-concept prototype?*
- *Have you created a pitch video?*
- *Will a toy company be able to answer “yes” to the questions above about launching a toy?*

The risks and rewards of licensing a concept to a toy company vs. launching your own company are quite different. As you might expect, launching a toy startup requires a significant investment of time and money. Everything will depend on you and your partners. If your product fails, then you could lose your entire investment. On the other hand, licensing requires much less of an investment because the toy company handles all the manufacturing, marketing, and distribution for you. Of course, the difference in risks means the rewards are quite different as well. If you launch your company and the toy is a hit, you'll earn substantial profits and own the brand equity as well, a valuable asset. If you licensed the toy and it's a hit for someone else, you'll get a handsome royalty, but the toy company will earn the lion's share of the profits and own the brand.

As you review the information in this guide, it's helpful to keep these differences in mind as you try to find the right path for you and your concept. In addition to covering some of the topics that may help you develop your idea; this Guide also introduces you to some of the rules and standards that must be followed to meet U.S. safety requirements and a variety of resources that can provide helpful information and assistance.

Is it a Unique and Marketable Idea?

Of the thousands of new toys and games that make their debut at The Toy Association's Toy Fair®, held in New York City every year, most are created by salaried professional toy and game designers. New products also originate from independent inventors and creators.

Before you invest in any idea, it is critical to understand what is in the market, currently and historically, to determine if the idea you have in mind — or something very similar to it — already exists. You should research the toy industry at the retail level in-store and online to protect your time and resources.

Start by exploring the websites of toy manufacturers, retailers, and crowd-funding sites. For a more in-depth, hands-on experience, visit as many toy retail outlets as possible (large toy chains and small, local toy stores; discount, variety, gift/novelty, card/stationery, and department stores; as well as other outlets including bookstores, museum gift shops, drug stores, supermarkets, juvenile furniture stores, sporting goods stores, and home centers).

In-store research may be most productive in the early fall when new products have arrived at retail stores for the holiday shopping season.

Did You Know?

The toy industry has licensed more than 1,500 concepts from inventors, and most never had a patent in place at the time they were secured. The toy industry is used to licensing ideas from inventors without formal IP protection, which is a benefit to inventing in the toy business over other industries that primarily focus on licensing patents, technologies, formulations, etc. Many inventors have been inducted into the **Toy Industry Hall of Fame** and have been finalists and winners of the **Toy of the Year® (TOTY®) Awards**.

Coming Up with a Good Idea

While you're in the store:

- *Observe how various toys are being sold.*
- *What is called out on packaging?*
- *What are the "Try Me" features?*
- *Pay attention to categories, pricing, packaging, product displays, the amount of retail shelf space devoted to each category, etc.*

Read industry trade magazines, such as the Toy Book or Toy World Magazine, especially after new items have been previewed by toy buyers at Toy Fair and other major trade shows. Search online for recent articles and reports covering toys and trends, including The Toy Association's annual **[Toy Trends Report](#)**, as well as blogs and podcasts focused on the toy industry. When following consumer press, consider both seasonal updates (e.g., outdoor and ride-on toys will be covered more heavily in the spring) as well as news during the holiday shopping season. You may also want to obtain copies of annual reports from publicly owned toy manufacturers and toy retail chains. Take advantage of helpful and free resources like The United Inventors Association **[Toy Hub](#)**.

Did You Know?

The Toy Association offers resources to guide manufacturers in developing products that foster STEM/STEAM discovery and learning, including **[guides for best practices to develop & market STEM/STEAM toys](#)** as well as an official **[STEAM Toy Accreditation Program](#)**.

Will it Sell?

The toy industry is often compared to the fashion industry; styles and trends are seasonal and shift frequently. Today's attention-grabbing "hot toy" can become tomorrow's "toy box filler." Occasionally, though, a toy or game will catch and gain widespread appeal as a classic product that entertains and engages many generations of kids. When moving forward with your invention, you should ask yourself:

- *Does it have long-lasting play value?*
- *Will consumers get their money's worth?*
- *Is it fun and engaging?*
- *Is it safe for the intended age grade?*
- *Is there growth potential (e.g., through brand extensions)?*

Toy companies are more willing to purchase an idea that has demonstrated long-lasting consumer appeal. And almost all of those toy companies began with an entrepreneur who launched their company with one great toy they invented. Most of the larger toy manufacturers conduct extensive market research to determine what types of toys children like and play with the longest, and the types of toys parents want to purchase for their children. Anticipating trends, however, is difficult at best ... even for the experts. But that doesn't mean you should skip doing research and rely only on your gut feeling.

Many independent inventors conduct their own informal market research by having friends or family playtest a product with the age group for which the toy is intended. Of course, family and friends may not always be honest

Coming Up with a Good Idea

with you, or might hold back good feedback because they're worried about hurting your feelings. Find some unrelated people in your target audience to try out your concept, accept their feedback, and then refine your concept until it's fantastic.

Is it Cost-Effective?

Toys and games can be low-cost, low-margin novelty items on register counters or high-cost, high-priced electronic marvels. You must be able to manufacture the product at a reasonable cost to support a competitive retail price in its category and to ensure a profit if you plan to self-launch. Your initial research at toy outlets should provide a good idea of the price range in the product's category. Remember: The toy's price needs to cover production costs, shipping, marketing, insurance, sales commissions, and legal expenses, as well as a profit (if you're manufacturing) or a royalty (if you're licensing) for you.

If you are manufacturing the toy yourself, you will need to speak directly with a factory or sourcing agent to get quotes for your product and see if it can be made at a reasonable cost. If you are licensing the concept, manufacturers do not expect inventors to have formal costs but will typically ask for a parts list so they can quickly gauge the costs of your invention as part of their evaluation process. Still, you should have a good understanding of the impact various components – such as electronics and magnets – can have on the cost of the finished product.

Should You Make a Prototype?

Yes! Self-launching or licensing your concept will require a proof-of-concept prototype at a minimum. Manufacturers simply don't license concepts that have minimal thought and investment and what is commonly seen in easy-to-generate sell sheets or sketches which have low to no value in the industry. A factory can't make your toy for you unless you have a good works-like-looks-like prototype as a basis. Manufacturers also need to see a working prototype to understand how something actually works and functions before they'll invest internal resources to begin a formal evaluation.

That said, some prototypes are easier to make than others. For instance, most prototypes for board games can be made at home, but prototypes for other toys, such as virtual and augmented reality products, require highly specialized computer programming skills. In addition, as 3D printers become more reasonably priced, it is also becoming easier, with the right skillset and equipment, to produce a model at home.

Is it Safe?

Safety is fundamental to toys' development and production. **All toys sold in the United States must comply with federal government reg-**

Did You Know?

The [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) provides free market research and competitive analysis resources.

Did You Know?

There are several reputable companies that can help you build proof-of-concept prototypes for a fee and/or percentage of any related sales or licensing fees.

We encourage you to complete your own research before investing with any vendor or partner to build a prototype. Network with other inventors and seek advice. Consider working with an experienced consultant or agent to help identify some of these resources.

Coming Up with a Good Idea

ulations. Many of these criteria have been in place for years within the ASTM F963 standard for toy safety; this standard was mandated in 2008 when the [Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act \(CPSIA\)](#) was signed into law.

Did You Know?

The [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\) website](#) contains the latest federal safety information.

The Toy Association continually addresses evolving safety, legislative, and trade issues affecting toy companies. Members can access exclusive services, tools, and content related to ongoing issues on its website.

This comprehensive law has numerous implications for product invention and design – especially as it relates to the materials used in and on toys, such as lead and phthalates. In certain cases, additional federal regulations apply, as do specific additive regulations in several states. In addition, the standards will vary depending on the toy’s “age grade” (the age of the child most likely to play with your toy). Note: You don’t set the age grade; it is determined by reference to the toy’s play pattern, size, colors, etc. Last, be aware that safety standards in other countries, such as the European Union, differ from those in the U.S. and may be more stringent.

The Toy Association and members of the toy industry are dedicated to ensuring the highest standards for safe toys. Because new issues emerge over time, toy safety standards are continuously reviewed and enhanced. These standards are shaped by a variety of considerations, including research on child development, dynamic safety testing, and risk analysis. The Toy Association continually addresses evolving safety, legislative, and trade issues affecting toy companies. Members can access exclusive services, tools, and content regarding ongoing issues on its website.

If you plan on manufacturing your toy, you will need to hire a certified testing agency to test your products before selling them. If you plan to license your concept as an inventor, you won’t be responsible for this step, but you still need a basic knowledge of the safety rules to ensure that your concept is not rejected out-of-hand as a toy that can’t meet the safety standards.

Are You Legally Protected?

Whether you pursue patent or trademark protection for your concept can be a difficult question. Among the many factors to consider are the likelihood of the protection being granted, the cost of doing so, and whether you will be able to reap the rewards if the protection is granted. As a general rule, it’s more important to pursue legal protection if you plan on launching the toy yourself because you will reap the rewards of owning the patent or trademark. If you plan on licensing your concept, unlike most other industries, you won’t need a patent to do that in the toy industry. However, even if you plan on licensing your concept, a patent can be quite valuable in getting your item licensed and in giving it multiple shots at retail shelves over the years.

If you plan to self-launch a product, it’s prudent to research whether the toy you invented is already protected by a patent owned by someone else. The [U.S. Patent & Trademark Office](#) offers tips on how to conduct a patent search yourself. However, because this is a specialized field, many people hire a professional firm to conduct the search. **If you plan on licensing your concept, it’s not necessary to conduct a patent search before presenting your concept to toy companies. At the same time, you don’t want to present a concept that obviously infringes on an existing**

Entering the Marketplace

patent. Thus, even if you're licensing your concept, it's a good idea to do some patent research on your own.

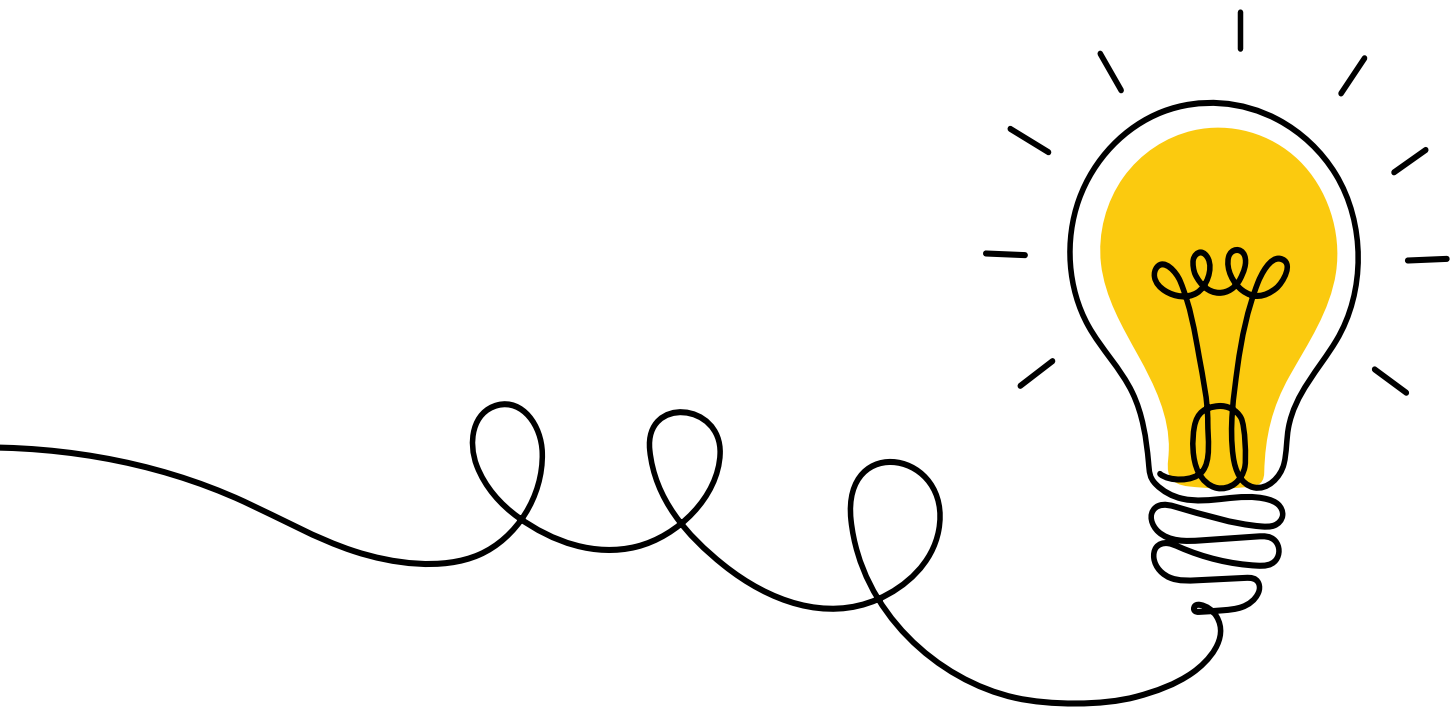
Local colleges, business schools, or adult education organizations may offer courses on obtaining patents and trademarks. You can also take advantage of online learning courses through sites like LinkedIn, or hire a patent or trademark attorney/agent who, for a fee, will provide this service for you. Along with a vast amount of information for inventors regarding patents and trademarks, the **U.S. Patent and Trademark Office** maintains an **online roster of agents and attorneys** registered to practice before the agency. (There is no comparable list for trademark attorneys.)

Another form of protection to consider is confidentiality. If you are showing your concept to potential partners, such as people who might invest in your startup, you will want them to promise to keep your concept confidential and to not use it for any other purpose. Typically, this is done through a non-disclosure agreement, or "NDA." If you are showing your concept to toy companies for potential licensing, most likely they will have their own form of this that might be called a "submission agreement." Understand that a submission agreement will have many provisions that protect the toy company from allegations of concept theft and may or may not promise to keep your concept confidential. Always read any agreement carefully before signing. This can be particularly important if your concept is patentable because a non-confidential disclosure of your concept can significantly impact your ability to patent it.

Did You Know?

Toy Association members have access to several white papers on the issue of patent and trademark protection, including **"What's in a Name? Trade-marks and the Toy and Game Industry"** and **"The Real Threat of Fake Toys,"** among others.

This is just one of the many benefits available to toy designers and inventors who become **Toy Association members**.



Entering the Marketplace

As an inventor or designer, you can typically introduce a new toy into the marketplace in one of two ways:

- *License or sell your idea/invention directly to a toy manufacturer (or have an agent represent and license the idea for you).*
- *Manufacture and distribute the item yourself.*

License or Sell Your Idea/Invention to a Toy Manufacturer

How do you find someone interested in purchasing your idea?

Some toy manufacturers seek new product ideas from outside their company and will license or purchase ideas from toy inventors. Many toy companies are often so busy in the development phase of their current product lines that they rely very heavily on the outside inventing community for innovative ideas. Also, as companies look for cost savings, more and more are turning to the inventor community. On the other hand, some manufacturers will purchase an outside idea only after the item is actually on the market and has demonstrated consumer appeal and sales.

The toy industry has never been a more welcoming environment for new inventors with many resources to support industry pitching and networking, such as The Toy Association's **Creative Factor: Inventor Day**, which gives inventors and designers the opportunity to pitch their product ideas directly to inventor relations executives from Toy Association member companies. Typically held during Toy Fair, the largest annual toy trade show in North America, these opportunities can be critical for industry newcomers looking to get facetime with key decision makers and get their foot in the door.

Many companies now also provide open pitch access via professional platforms and portals to support inventors that may not have the ability to travel to pitch events. Inventors can find a free directory of pitch events and online pitch access on The Toy Hub. Both online and in-person formats are great options for inventors to get their ideas out there for feedback.

Agreements & Royalties

If a manufacturer wants to buy your invention, a confidential licensing agreement will be negotiated between the manufacturer (the Licensee) and the inventor (the Licensor). Inventor royalty rates usually range from 3 to 5 percent of the item's "net sales" but rates and other deal points will be negotiated based on that unique circumstance and opportunity.

Brokers

You may choose to obtain the services of a third party that will "broker," or negotiate, the sale of your idea to toy companies. Manufacturers sometimes turn to these middlemen for outside ideas. They may be referred to as toy

Entering the Marketplace

brokers or toy agents; some are former toy industry executives and many are independent toy inventors or former toy company staff designers. They work on commission, and their fees may range from 15 to 60 percent of the royalties paid to the inventor by the manufacturer. Other companies are what are known as “invention promotion firms” that advertise heavily and ask you to pay for numerous fees upfront.

You should deal with these third parties as you would other professional service people: If they haven't been recommended to you, ask for references and check them thoroughly. Exercise caution when any individual or organization requires payment in advance and doesn't work purely on commission. The Federal Trade Commission provides good information on [how to protect yourself from scams](#) and your rights under the American Inventors Protection Act.

Manufacture & Distribute the Item Yourself

Many thriving toy manufacturing enterprises began as small, entrepreneurial businesses. Though more time consuming and costly than selling your idea – and certainly requiring more general business skills – doing it all yourself may lead to success in a couple of ways: (1) the personal satisfaction of establishing a business of your own, and/or (2) having another toy company recognize your success and purchase the rights to the product or buy your company after you've established sales and built a brand.

Many successful entrepreneurs cite the importance of studying how others have made their way into a new field. You may wish to ask those familiar with the toy industry about the best way to proceed with starting a toy business of your own, your realistic chances of success, and pitfalls to avoid. Don't be shy about asking tough questions. There's a lot to learn. For example, Kickstarter offers an attractive way to pre-sell your products to consumers, which then funds your manufacturing. But having a hit on Kickstarter still requires significant planning and resources. In short, there's no quick path to success.

For example, if you decide to form your own business to manufacture and distribute your invention yourself, you must be able to:

- Raise capital;
- Contract for production services at an affordable cost;
- Obtain orders from toy retailers and ensure timely delivery; and
- Continue promotional activities to increase consumer interest and sales.

And remember to consider such aspects as:

- Legal matters (patent and/or trademark protection);
- Safety (there are federal government regulations covering more than 100 areas, including small parts, sharp points and edges, lead and phthalates, flammability, toxicity, electrical hazards, proper labeling, etc.)
- Product life cycle and stability of demand;

Promoting Your Idea

Did You Know?

The Toy Association maintains an **online directory** where inventors can search for manufacturers sales reps who can help sell your product to wholesale and retail customers.

- New competition;
- Marketing (getting toy retailers nationwide to carry your product); and
- Distribution

Starting and maintaining a successful business requires many skills, and proper planning is crucial. Create a business plan prior to introducing your product; determine cost-effective manufacturing, distribution, and marketing strategies; and projected sales growth.

Your business plan may call for purchasing all the raw materials (components) and assembling your product yourself or hiring various suppliers and contractors to perform these services for you. Suppliers of materials and services (molds; dyes; fabric; stuffing material and machinery; game parts; sound devices; boxes; art service designers of illustrations, logos, cover art, etc.; die-cutting for customized game boards; packaging services; photography; wood fabricating; and toy and game assembly) are available online. Also be aware that most toys are still manufactured overseas, and you may need help crossing language and cultural barriers.

Bringing Your Product to Market

How Does a Toy Get into the Hands of a Consumer?

You can sell directly to consumers through platforms such as Amazon, eBay, and Etsy, as well as through your own website. You can sell directly to stores and/or toy wholesalers in your area, get mailing or email lists to contact toy retailers directly, or hire sales representatives or distributors who specialize in the toy industry to do that work for you. You can also advertise in one or more toy trade magazines.

Exhibiting at a trade show is one of the most cost-effective ways to reach a large number of toy buyers at one time. As the world's largest and most iconic toy, game, and play product experience, The Toy Association's **Toy Fair®** is where inspiration lives. This trade-only event attracts global play professionals from across the industry, including the Top 25 retailers in the nation, buyers from key markets around the globe, licensors, distributors, entertainment executives, manufacturers, brand marketers, and more than 1,000 members of the global press — all of whom can help catapult your innovation into the global marketplace. Very few other industries provide such a relatively inexpensive method of entry into the marketplace.

Plus, Toy Fair's **Launch Pad** is a space dedicated specifically to first-time exhibitors, where you'll have the opportunity to showcase your concepts to buyers and media, attend educational sessions at **Toy Fair University**, and make impactful connections that accelerate your growth.

At one time, industry insiders recommended against exhibiting at a trade show unless sufficient inventory existed to be able to fill an order. But today's manufacturing techniques are now fast enough that it's acceptable to hold on production until initial order(s) are received. In either case, it's a wise business decision to have a plan in place regarding how an order will be fulfilled once that first order has been received.

Promoting Your Idea

Did You Know?

Toy Association members have access to rich **educational webinars** tackling a range of key topics such as toy safety, brand protection, toy shopping trends, entering new markets, media and promotion, and much more.

Promoting Your Product

The media landscape has radically changed, and the global pandemic only further accelerated the shift away from traditional viewing habits (i.e., TV). Today, there are multiple means of advertising to kids and parents, including on websites, social media platforms (such as YouTube and TikTok), and sales platforms (such as Amazon). In addition, kids content creators have moved into first place and social media has become the go-to avenue for advertising, affecting the buying habits of kids and their parents. Leveraging their influence to promote a toy or game successfully requires a solid strategy and partnership. The Toy Association has hosted a variety of webinars that provide insights on how companies can get the most out of influencer marketing. Members can access the webinars **recording online**.

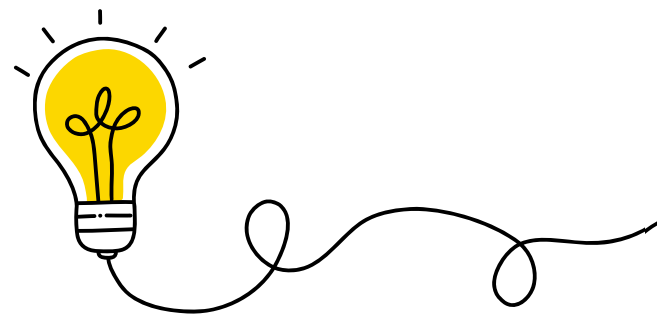
Joining The Toy Association

Professional toy inventors, designers, and design firms are eligible to join The Toy Association as regular members. As a member of The Toy Association, you have the ability to promote your company to the industry, attend valuable networking events to connect with other industry executives, receive important information about safety regulations and other industry topics, and take advantage of discounts on exhibit space at Toy Fair and other events.

As a member, you will be included in the Association's **Member Directory**. Available 24/7 with real-time updates for contact information and other key data, this searchable tool assists members in making new industry contacts and connecting with prospective customers. The Member Directory can be searched by company name, professional category, and by member type. (Non-members can also search the directory.)

Members of the Association receive exclusive benefits at our marquee event, Toy Fair, including access to walk the floor, discount rates and priority points on exhibit space, access to the Member Lounge, and educational offerings at the show.

The Toy Association hosts a variety of other events that help members build industry relationships and attract exposure to their business, including virtual events that connect toy sellers with buyers around the world, no travel required. The Toy Foundation's annual Toy of the Year® (TOTY®) Awards, which celebrates the top innovations in toys and play, offers another perfect opportunity to network with industry executives.



Resources

As mentioned previously, safety in toys continues to be an important issue that the industry faces on a daily basis — and it starts with toy design. The Toy Association works diligently to maintain the industry’s reputation on safety issues and to assure that emerging regulations are practical, sensible, and effective. Our staff ensures that members stay informed of all the latest toy safety developments with updates delivered straight to your inbox through Member Alerts and our weekly newsletter, [Toy News Tuesday](#).

In addition to these offerings, the Association sponsors periodic seminars, trade show workshops, and referral services for toy inventors and designers. Members have access to all of this information free of charge. For more information about membership, or to join, please [visit the membership section](#) on the Association’s website.

Toy Association Resources

[The Toy Association website](#)

[Toy Association Inventors & Designers Resource Page](#)

[Toy Association Member Directory](#)

[Toy Association U.S. Safety Standards Resource Page](#)

[The Bloom Report](#)

Toy Association Inventor Events

Creative Factor: Inventor Day at Toy Fair (New York City – February)

[ToyFairNY.com](#)

creativefactor@toyassociation.org

People of Play’s Chicago Toy & Game Fair (Chicago – November)

[chitag.com](#)

info@chitag.com

LA Previews (Los Angeles – September & April)

[The Toy Building](#)



Other Associations

America's SBDC (Small Business Development Centers)

8990 Burke Lake Road, Burke, VA 22015

1-800-8-ASK-SBA | AmericasSBDC.org

America's SBDC represents the country's Small Business Development Centers, a national network of partnerships uniting higher education, state and local nonprofit economic development organizations, private enterprise, and government. It is the Small Business Administration's largest partnership program, providing management and technical assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their own businesses.

American Society of Inventors (ASI)

1601 Market St, Philadelphia, PA 19103

610.642.1000 | aso.org

The American Society of Inventors (ASI) is a non-profit organization formed in 1953 to bring inventors together and to educate them on protecting, developing, and marketing or licensing their invention.

National Academy of Inventors

3702 Spectrum Boulevard, Suite 165, Tampa, FL 33612

813.974.4438 | academyofinventors.org

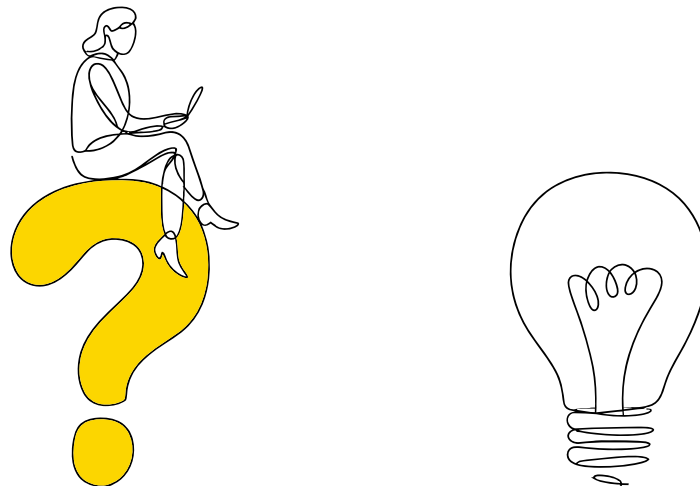
The National Academy of Inventors is a member organization comprising U.S. and international universities, and governmental and non-profit research institutes, with over 4,000 individual inventor members and fellows spanning more than 250 institutions worldwide. Membership with the NAI is available through local university and non-profit research institute chapters only.

United Inventors Association (UIA)

1025 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20036

uiausa.org / thetoyhub.org

The UIA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports independent inventors through education, resources, and advocacy for ethical business practices. In 2022, UIA formed an advisory board of experienced and proven toy industry professionals with a mission to welcome and guide inventors and entrepreneurs with an interest in toys and games. Its Toy Hub website offers additional resources for the toys and games community.



Educational Institutions

The following educational institutions offer a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Toy Design:

Fashion Institute of Technology

Toy Design Department – Room A571
227 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001
212.217.5120 | fitnyc.edu/toydesign

Otis College of Art and Design

9045 Lincoln Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90045
310.665.6820 | otis.edu/toy-design

Publications - Books

Del Vecchio, Gene. **The Blockbuster Toy! How to Invent the Next Big Thing.** Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2003.

Levy, Richard C. and Weingartner, Ronald O. **The Toy and Game Inventor's Handbook.** Updated Third Edition, 2013.

Miller, G. Wayne. **Toy Wars: The Epic Struggle Between G.I. Joe, Barbie, and the Companies that Make Them.** Crown Business, 1998.

Monosoff, Tamara. **The Mom Inventors Handbook: How to Turn Your Great Idea into the Next Big Thing.** New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2005.

Peek, Stephen. **The Game Inventor's Handbook.** Second Edition, Cincinnati: Betterway Publications, 1994.

Tinsman, Brian. **The Game Inventor's Guidebook: How to Invent and Sell Board Games, Card Games, Role-Playing Games and Everything in Between.** Garden City, NY: Morgan James Publishing, 2008.

Watson, Bruce. **The Man Who Changed How Boys and Toys Were Made: The Life and Times of A.C. Gilbert, the Man Who Saved Christmas.** New York City: Penguin Books, 2003.

Publications - Consumer Magazines

[Entrepreneur](#)

[Inc.](#)

[Innovators Magazine](#)

[Inventors Digest](#)

[Minority Business Entrepreneur \(MBE\)](#)

[Make: Magazine](#)

Publications - Trade Magazines

Gifts & Decorative Accessories

Gifts & Decorative Accessories is a leading monthly trade magazine serving retailers, manufacturers, and vendors in the gift and home industry.

Global Toy News

Global Toy News is an online publication focused on news, commentary, and analysis of the global toy industry. It serves professionals in toy manufacturing, design, retail, and licensing, offering insights into market trends, consumer behavior, and industry events.

Hobby Merchandiser

Hobby Merchandiser is the premier trade magazine serving retailers, manufacturers, and distributors of the model, hobby, and toy industries.

Mojo Nation

Mojo Nation is a UK-based organization and media platform dedicated to the toy and game design community. It connects designers, inventors, and industry professionals through events, editorial coverage, and recognition programs that highlight creativity and innovation in play design.

The Toy Book and The Pop Insider

The Toy Book is a leading trade magazine serving the toy industry providing news, trends, new products, and happenings within the industry. The Pop Insider features announcements and reviews of the latest collectibles, licensed products, and entertainment content.

Toy World Magazine

Toy World has firmly established itself as the market-leading UK toy trade magazine. Toy World features news, opinion, insight, analysis, comment, interviews, articles, product features, and much more. It also offers an unrivalled panel of expert contributors, comprising brand new columnists and some old favorites.

U.S. Government - Offices/Publications

U.S. Copyright Office

101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, DC 20559

202.707.3000 | copyright.gov

Publications include: Copyright Basics, Copyright Fees, etc.

Inventors Assistance Center

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313

800.PTO.9199 or 703.308.4357 | uspto.gov

Resources include: Patent and Trademark Practitioners (licensed to practice before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office), General Information Concerning Patents, Basic Facts About Trademarks, etc.

Resources

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

409 3rd St, SW, Washington, DC 20416

SBA Answer Desk: 800.827.5722 | answerdesk@sba.gov | sba.gov

Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

4330 East West Highway

Bethesda, MD 20814

800.638.2772 | cpsc.gov

U.S. Government Bookstores

866.512.1800 | ContactCenter@gpo.gov | bookstore.gpo.gov

List of U.S. government bookstores nationwide and online ordering for such titles as: Starting A Business & Keeping Records; Exporters! The Wit and Wisdom of Small Business Owners Who Sell Globally; and Preparing Your Business for Global E-Commerce: A Guide for U.S. Companies to Manage Operations, Inventory, and Payment Issues, etc.

State Governments - Offices/Publications

Many states have a **Department of Economic Development** to aid small business owners/entrepreneurs. General business assistance and information is available in many local offices of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and its partner, **Small Business Development Centers**.

Use the **SBA Learning Platform** to participate in a variety of online courses pertinent to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

For specialized information about the toy industry, you may want to obtain copies of annual reports of publicly-owned toy manufacturers and toy retail chains. Toy consultants can usually provide information themselves or obtain it for you from other sources. Manufacturers' representatives for the toy industry, who are also known as sales or advertising representatives, may be available for consulting purposes. They are salespeople who handle incoming orders for manufacturers and are usually located in major cities in all states.



Pitch Prep Tips

1. Do Your Homework

Before you pitch, research the companies you're meeting with:

- Visit their websites and social media channels
- Understand whether they focus on mass vs. specialty
- Know their product lines, top sellers, and target audience

2. Get to the Point

- Lead with **what it is** and **who it's for**
- Keep it simple and memorable
- Share your elevator pitch first, then show the product

3. Show the Fun

- Demonstrate your concept as quickly as possible
- Skip rules until they matter
- Set up your prototype to show the best feature or moment of play right away

4. Prototype Smart

- Your prototype should be a proof of concept, not a finished product
- It doesn't have to be perfect, and you don't need to break the bank
- Be honest about what works well and what still needs refinement

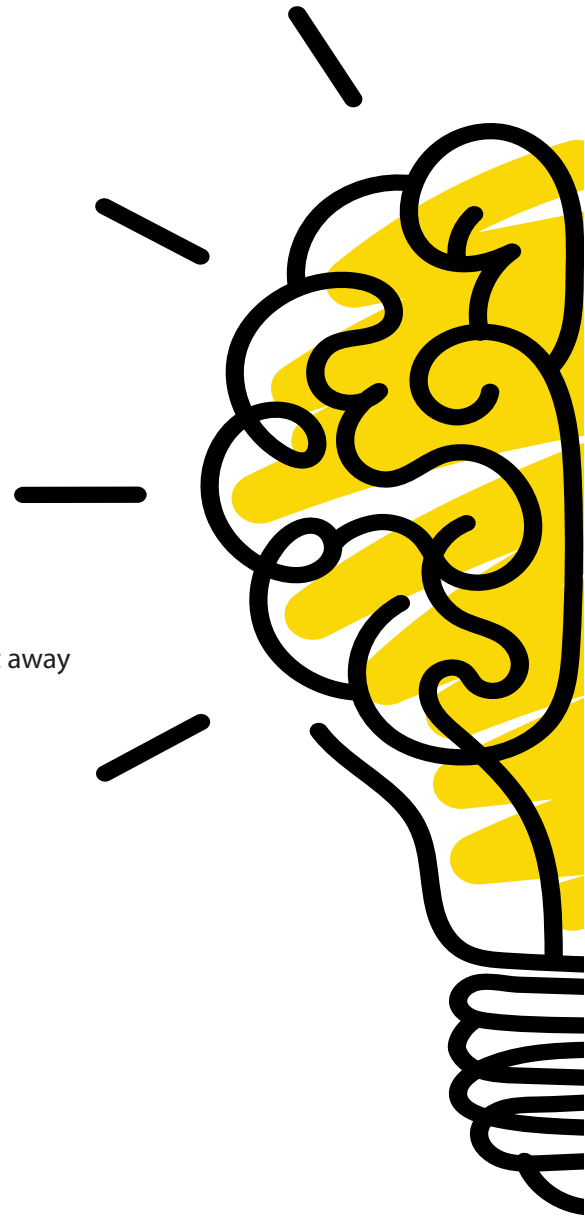
5. Know the Business Basics

Be ready to share:

- Product category and target age
- Estimated price point range (suggested retail price)
- Comparable products
- What's new or different about your idea

6. Practice, Practice, Practice

- Rehearse your pitch so it fits comfortably within 90 seconds
- Be prepared, but flexible
- Let the conversation guide you if questions come up



Pitch Prep Tips

7. Listen & Learn

- Invite honest feedback
- Ask what could strengthen or improve your concept
- Be prepared to take quick notes — you're pitching to industry experts

8. Be Ready to Follow Up

- Make it easy for them to reconnect with you
- Have your contact info clearly displayed and ready to share:
 - *Name, Email, Phone, Website (if applicable), LinkedIn*

9. Miscellaneous (Good to Know)

- If you have a patent or your product is patent-pending, be sure to let the company know
- If you've already shared your concept with an attending company and they passed, confirm whether they'd like to see it again
- If a company asks for a sample or prototype on the spot, it's okay to say you'll follow up
- Many companies have internal processes for submissions, reviews, and shipping — clarify next steps before handing anything over

10. Know Your Paths

Understand the three main paths for inventors:

- [Licensing](#) (most common in toys & games), [Self-publishing](#), Acquisition
- Also, understand what an **option agreement** is and how it works.

You've got this! We're here to support you — please reach out with any questions.

Shannon Swindle

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"Around here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

Walt Disney

American animator, producer, and entrepreneur (1901-1966)



Inspiring Generations of Play