Skip the costly electronic games and digital gizmos. Pediatricians say the best toys for tots are blocks, puzzles, and even throwaway cardboard boxes that spark imagination and creativity.

“A cardboard box can be used to draw on, or made into a house,” said Dr. Alan Mendelsohn, co-author of a new report on selecting toys for young children, up to around age 5.

Many parents feel pressured by ads promoting tablet-based toys and games as educational but there’s not much science to back up those claims, he said. Simpler toys that parents and children can play with together are preferable, added Dr. Mendelsohn. The report was published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.