

Go Green HP Toy Swap Guide

Help keep good toys out of landfills, conserve natural resources by refusing products made from new materials and teach the value of sharing and letting go when the fun is done. Host a toy swap in your community at a school, church, temple or even a small one on your block.

Here are easy to follow steps that can be adapted to swap many things beyond toys-kitchen items, cook books, records, garden supplies, this list goes on! The next page is Event Day Instructions and tips.

1. Choose a location, look for somewhere that can accommodate many tables. We suggest allocating 1-8ft table per age group, Infant-2, 2-3,4-6, etc. or category, games, books, art, science, and so on. Allow about 2 hours for your swap, with 30-45 min of clean up/take down.
2. Get the word out! Use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, websites, bulletins, newsletters, Nextdoor.com, anything you have to reach families. Create posters to hang in libraries, train station, wherever your audience goes. Decide if you want guests to RSVP, is it free or will you collect a donation?
3. Ask guests to bring 1-3 toys, games or books in good condition. Be specific about #of toys per child, and if you'll accept items that are slightly damaged, or ask that things be labeled as missing pieces, etc.
A good reminder is ask for toys of the same quality they would like to bring home.
4. Recruit volunteers for the event. Use Signup Genius to create a form with times and jobs for the day. Volunteers can register for a time slot without making an acct, just an email address. Reminders are sent to volunteers automatically a few days in advance. Plan to have 1-2 ticket exchangers and 3-6 toy swap attendants, depending on the size of your group.

Toy Swap Event Day Instructions

Supplies needed:

Tables for each age group/category

Table for ticket exchange

Roll tickets(you know there's some laying in a supply closet somewhere)

Basket/jar to collect used tickets

Signs to hang on tables, age group etc.

Tape

Sharpies/pens to mark tickets as redeemed

A megaphone or speaker is really helpful as well, kids are loud around toys

Boxes/bags for donating leftover toys when done

Optional: A small selection of donated toys to "stock" the shelves. I saved my kids' best stuff for 3 months to have plenty of toys in case there were extra kids.

1. Arrange toy tables to allow easy flow and access to the toys. We recommend keeping guests out of this area until all of the toys are placed. If you have space you could set up different rooms as well.
2. When families come, give one ticket for each toy they donate. They will use this ticket to "buy" something new at the swap. Have a volunteer run toys back to tables for sorting. Have a set time for toy drop-off to start and end. Swap starts afterwards and goes until the toys are gone.
3. 5 minutes before the swap, go over rules with guests and give reminders about safety and kindness.
4. Starting the swap. . There are a few ways to safely unleash tons of kids onto free toys, here are suggestions, use the method that's right for your group or let us know if you think of a new one.
 - a. Let kids in by age, 0-2 gets first 3 minutes, then toddlers get 5 min, etc. until all the kids are shopping.

- b. Call out colors and if you are wearing that color, you get to pick a toy.
 - c. Letters of the alphabet, if your name starts with H, E or T. . you get to go. Call multiple letters at once to keep it moving.
5. Redeem tickets for toys. Have kids “buy” their new treasure by giving a ticket to a toy swap attendant after they choose something. Have the attendants mark ticket with a sharpie to prevent double use or collect them in a jar as you go.
6. Afterwards, you can donate the toys to a local charity, use them at your space or offer toys to kids who may have shown up late.
7. Count all your tickets and let your guests know how many toys were saved from landfills and given new happy homes.

Additional ideas:

Use this opportunity to educate guests in many ways. We had it with a Zero Waste Family Picnic to showcase residential composting and recycling in our city, Highland Park. We rented a park pavillion to have a rain or shine event with playgrounds nearby to pass the time before the swap. Our library, SWALCO and Lakeshore recycling, all set up info tables. We had a large used ride-on toy that was in good shape, so we raffled it off to cover the cost of the pavillion rental.

- Make a permanent “store” at your facility that kids can bring good items to for tickets, to encourage reuse year round.
- Toy swap before the holidays? Collect old pillowcases to decorate with fabric paint/markers as free, reusable “wrapping paper/gift bags” Look up furoshiki, it’s a great way to use up fabric scraps and fun for everyone!
- Make a “repair or rethink” station for kids to reinvent old toys or fix broken ones. Collect small goodie bag/carnival toys to be used as replacement games pieces.
- Ask kids for input, they know toys better than we do!