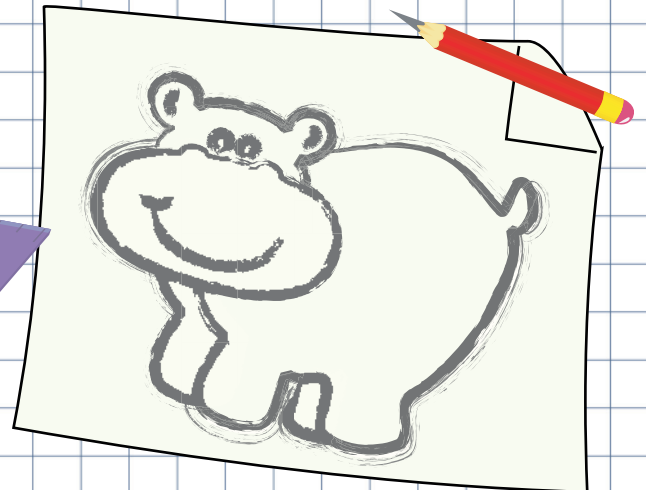
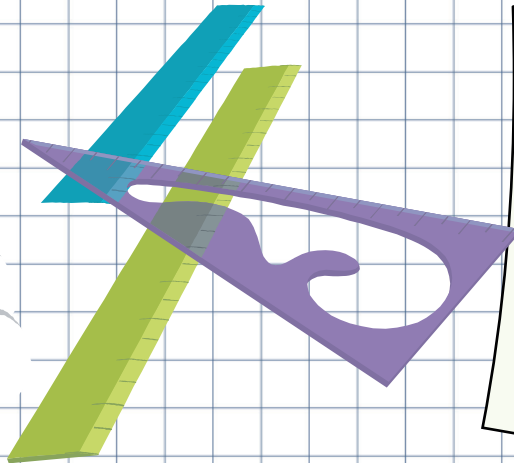
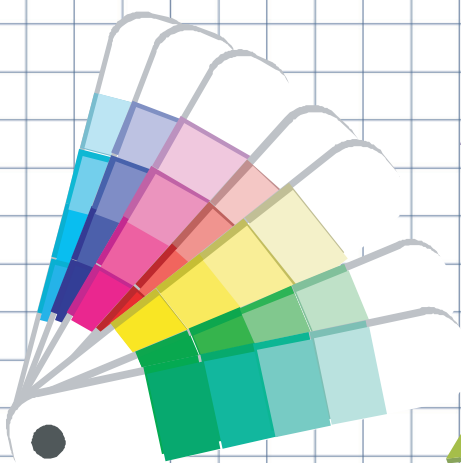


# Product Quick Launch and Design Guide

15 Questions  
You Already Have the Answers to  
Which Will Rocket Your Toy Idea  
In To a Reality.



Brought to you by Binkley Toys Inc.

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# Product Quick Launch and Design Guide

15 Questions That You Already Have The Answers  
To Which Will Rocket Your Toy Idea Into Reality! 

This design guide is meant to help new as well as experienced stuffed toy inventors organize their ideas through a series of questions that, when answered, will allow you to work more easily, more quickly, more closely with graphic artists, prototype designers, production managers, web designers, logo developers, branding experts, marketing experts, sales reps, retailers, consumers and any other expert you intend to deal with.

Your answers to these questions will become invaluable to you as you refer back to them again and again. The answers you write down will help you with your toy, accessories and sales materials both online (website) and offline (brochure, packaging, point of purchase displays). The advantage to completing this Product Quick Launch and Design Guide is that your ideas will be communicated clearly to the experts you decide to use keeping the look and feel of your ideas consistent.

## Consistency In Design Over Time

A BIG advantage to having this Design Guide completed is that you will be clear in your idea. If have an artist do a sketch, or a web site designer shows you a first draft, you can refer back to your notes to determine whether or not you are still on track. When you see a design element that doesn't "fit" within the scope of your "big idea" you can confidently correct the error.

If you are unsure of a question, or you think "I'll wait to see what the graphics people come up with", please do not think this. Even if you are unsure at this point, Guess! Then as you work with other professionals you can tell them your ideas and they can interpret your ideas their way. It is very good to be open to other experts ideas since this can literally grow your idea into a product greater then you can imagine. The use of this design guide is to create the fence for those experts to play within. The benefit to doing this is that your final product will closely resemble what you originally intended and with professionals input it will be even better.

If you are completely stuck on an answer, then simply list what you don't want for your toy idea in that area. This can help you and experts that you work with to avoid going in a direction you do not desire.

So take your time and answer each question completely. If you get stuck, skip that question and come back to it. As you work through other questions, your mind will be stimulated and previous answers will come to you more easily. If you get really stuck with the answers then arrange a trip to a local toy store that has a good selection may help.

## Get Professional Help!

If you cannot work out one aspect or another and it is holding you up, you may consider arranging some time with a stuffed toy expert. Some experts may be available for brief conversations for free but paying for some time may be more of to your advantage. If you arrange paid consultation time with an expert then you can request a Non-Disclosure agreement to protect your ideas and you can also be sure that you are getting their undivided attention. Free advice is normally dispensed by people who have time on their hands and if your consultant has too much time on their hands how good can they be?

## Working Through This Guide

You should be uninterrupted while completing this exercise. You do not have to complete it in one sitting but when you are working on it be sure you are not distracted by others. If you have a partner that you wish to work with on your toy invention, each of you should complete a work sheet each on your own. (Just print out two copies - for copyright protection purposes you may use this guide within your organization - giving it to other inventors is copyright infringement so please do not pass this along without written permission) Then bring your ideas together to negotiate which are best for the final product.

Do not be held back by doubts or unknowns at this stage. Concerns like ‘Can a manufacturer even make this?’, ‘Won’t this be too expensive to do?’ or ‘Will anyone even buy this?’ should be completely left out of your mind. (for now) When you are working on this exercise imagine the most perfect toy for you. A toy that everyone in your target audience wants and is priced exactly where they will gladly pay for it. Reality will catch up to you easily and soon enough with production limitations and narrowing of your market but for now leave those doubts aside for later.

## Record Your Ideas

Each section has a notes section where you can write out your thoughts or sketch out your ideas. Don’t worry about drawing in a professional manner any doodles or ideas are simply for you to refer to later. As long as you can understand your notes later that is all that matters. I would highly recommend you use the ‘flow of consciousness’ method for writing your notes. This is where you don’t second guess or edit your ideas as you are writing them down. You just write your thoughts. This is especially powerful when you don’t have an answer, so your writing based on the question of complexity would look like this if you didn’t know what to write.

“I am not sure what to write here. This is my answer about complexity. I don’t know what to say. I know that my favorite toy was my teddy bear. The teddy bear was very simple. He was just brown... actually his fur had flecks of gray and beige in it. His fur was quite complex I guess, but smooth. Not shaggy. His face was very plain though. So I guess that I wouldn’t want my toy idea to be too complex, but it would have some good details on it. The expression was friendly and fun. So from this writing I think the complexity would be medium.”

## The End Result

When you complete this exercise and start to deal with a toy manufacturer they will be sure to tell you what they ‘cannot do’. That is okay because there can be real obstacles and limitations when manufacturing a product at low quantities (under 5,000 pieces). A professional’s guidance will be based on the realities of the industry; what is possible with materials and accessories at various quantity levels. Some manufacturing techniques are not possible (or are cost prohibitive) at lower quantities but as your sales grow you can introduce Version Two with your more difficult ideas. An example of this is to install sound in to a toy.

If you want sound to be included in your toy (music or talking) it is difficult for a manufacturer to make a low enough quantity for you to inexpensively test the market. You don't want to order 10,000 pieces to see if your toy will sell, so there will have to be some compromise. You can however find alternatives when working with the right toy manufacturer that will get your toy selling, so that in the near future your production orders are in the 3,000 - 5,000 range which is a good place to start with sound in your toy. When you get to that stage, you will have your 'perfect' toy created on paper and can proceed quickly to producing your toys the way you had always dreamed. So don't limit yourself at this stage. There are plenty of people and natural obstacles that will limit your ideas further down your journey. You must accept those limitations as real but for now, just dream big!

## WHAT to LOOK FOR when LOOKING!

As you are completing this exercise, you are best to find a toy manufacturer that can provide;

**A 100% money back guarantee** - this way if your ideas are completely squashed entirely or you are not comfortable with the people you chose to work with, you have not lost any of your 'setup' or 'design fees'

**A full service experience.** This includes sketches, a prototype and additional supporting services like getting set up with the right tools to market and sell your toy (like a website, flyers or sell sheets) is key to your success

**Product liability insurance** - You do not want to get through the whole process of designing your toy, going in to production and then finding out that the company does not offer PLI. It is best to start with a company that can help protect your assets as you sell more and more toys

**Ability to sell in multiple countries** - Don't limit yourself or your toy idea to selling in just your local country. If you are in the USA, you want to find a company that has no problem distributing your toys in other countries like Canada, the UK and anywhere else. Canada for example has a special Registration Number that if is not displayed on your toy can result in the toys being seized and destroyed and heavy fines incurred. The USA also has a registration process which your toy manufacturer should take care of free of charge. The UK has strict guidelines which can have your goods seized at the border.

**Legally Responsibility** - Your toy manufacturer should be quick and happy to sign legal documents stating that all work they do belongs to you. They should not be selling their own toys to the market that you want to sell to. This can cause a conflict of interest. Your toy manufacturer should be local ( in the USA or Canada) so if the worst thing happens, they are accountable in a court of law

**Experts focused on what they do** - Many toy manufacturers are manufacturing and selling their own line of toys - oh and when they have the time they will make your toys as well. Finding a manufacturer that specializes in just making Custom Plush Toys for you, is important.(it also eliminates the conflicts that can arise when your toy sells 'big' and is competing with their line of toys)

**Dedicated point of contact** - Inventing and producing a new stuffed toy idea can be expensive, take time and be very complex. The last thing you need to do is to call your point of contact and have to explain your whole project again, to bring them up to speed. Find a toy manufacturer that has a system in place that has one person who knows your project intimately and has the ability to get things done.

**Organization** - Have a look at my company's SEED System to compare it to the manufacturer you are thinking about using. You will see that I have systemized the entire process to give you a great experience.

## Why You Should Listen to What I Have to Say

### A Big Problem Hits Close To Home

I remember it like it was yesterday. It was October of 2002 and Mary Reynolds, a good business friend of mine had called me in tears. She was a good corporate customer of mine who didn't think twice about ordering large orders of 50,000 to 100,000 pieces. They had 40 trade shows every year and gave out thousands of toys at every show. Mary was also a Mother of two and had a stuffed toy idea that she was looking to invent and wanted to sell.

### Trying To Save A Buck

A year before she was asking if I would help her work on her toy. I gave her my best advice that I had and corrected a few assumptions that she was making. Mary asked me if I would be offended if she used someone else with a lower price. An alarm went off in my head but I wanted to make sure I was fair with her since the company she worked for was such a great customer. So a year had past since she first started and I was now on the phone with her and she was in tears. Since it was October, it was too late to do anything about getting her new toys for Christmas. The biggest shopping day of the years (Black Friday) was weeks away and even with all of my skill, connections and production capabilities I wouldn't be able to save the day.

She was a smart woman. She tried her best to work through another small supplier who promised a quick delivery time and cheaper prices. At her big corporate job she didn't think twice about spending six figures on our custom toys, but this was different. This was her own money now and her family depended on her.

That is the day I decided to make a difference! I decided that I wouldn't allow another individual to get sucked in by companies over promising and under delivering. I had made great money from working with the big companies but I now saw a need for my expertise.

She had been so excited and passionate about her toy idea that she was ripe to be 'sucked in'. Mary was so frustrated, upset and had lost a lot of her family's money. She had been told incorrect information and had been made false promises. Her excitement and creativity had been used against her, but it doesn't have to be that way!

Before I tell you about how I am helping people now, let me tell you how this all got started.

I want you to question everything you read and hear on my website and especially on other websites that you go to. I have no interest in "selling you" something that is not a good fit for you, but I also do not want you giving your money to the 'rip offs' that are out there. I have made my money in business by dealing with the 'big boys' from corporations like Serta, McDonalds, Boeing and other big money companies.

### Strict Standards

Serving those huge corporations was not easy money of course. They have very strict standards. You have to match their logo colors exactly and if they have a trade show you need to be on time, early

or they throw all the toys back at you. They take International Safety Standards and cut them in half making us comply with Super strict safety rules. They inspect our factories looking for poor and inhuman working conditions.

Of course I was happy because I was dealing with orders that were 50,000 - 100,000 and 250,000 pieces at a time, but this is where it gets ugly...

### **Sad Phone Calls and People Getting Ripped Off**

As time passed, I was getting the same phone calls. An example is one woman from Florida who had sent money to an 'agency' promising to market her stuffed toy idea, or a man I remember from California who thought it was cheapest to use a factory direct from China. It was the same type of phone calls over and over with only a few details different. These people were looking for me to track down their contacts in China, or fix toys they received from an agent in the USA. They had lost thousands of dollars because they were looking for a quick and cheap deal.

I really hate talking about that time with all of those phone calls, because I feel bad that I wasn't doing more to help them - and then that changed...

## **History Lesson: How Binkley Came to Be**

I left University and was thinking about what I should do about a career. What did I know then? I promised my father I would help him with his business. He had run the same business since 1974. As I worked in his t-shirt business, I put pressure on my father telling him that I wanted to make more money. I was working 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. After pushing him for more money, he decided a second company was the answer. That means double the income, right? Wrong.

I was busy running his t-shirt production and he mentioned buying a stuffed toy company that he had done printing for called Binkley. It was a Teddy Bear company that manufactured stuffed toys locally. It was a very successful toy company at one time, selling its toy line to retailers all over North America but that company was getting squeezed out of the market because its toys weren't made in China. Binkley's sales were below \$70,000 which was too low to keep it going. My father purchased it and went to work. I knew that he was spending a lot of time with the new business and he was complaining about the manager that came with that toy company. At this point I still had nothing to do with the toy company, but that changed fast!

### **When Everything Stopped!**

After six months we received some terrible news. The government wanted to do an audit for taxes. We had always run our business in an ethical manner, but like any small business where the owners have to do most of the work on their own, the books were not in pristine condition. This was from disorganization rather than from corruption of course. I did a ton of research on what to do when being audited and worked days running the t-shirt business and nights getting the paperwork together to satisfy the audit. What an education!

As I was putting all of our sale and purchase receipts together for both the toy company and the t-shirt company I saw the money being spent in the toy company. There was over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars borrowed to buy materials, a hundred thousand dollars borrowed to cover labor and more in other supplies and utilities. This was well beyond the revenues coming in from both the t-shirt company and the toy company combined.

Now, please understand that I love my father and this was a rough spot for us, but to this day I see my dad five days a week and we are still good friends. However, during that time though I was furious. After all of the roadblocks I had received from him when I suggested spending more money to make more money, my father had gone out and spent money we just didn't have. It was all borrowed. I found the paper work for the funds that were borrowed and the interest rates were almost 20%. It seemed unrecoverable. You'll be amazed at my journey from this point.

## **Oops, I Own A Toy Company!**

I remember that day like no other. My father threw up his hands and looked at me and said I could do what I wanted with the toy company. He was done. I really didn't know what I was talking about at the time, but I agreed and said that I would give it a shot. I guess that is the optimism of youth. I had no idea what I was getting in to.

I went over to where the toy company was located (one of my first times) and I saw the work that had been done. They had been building up stock of locally made toys, for the BIG sales my father promised. Those sales never came so there was thousands of finished toys, tons of partially finished toys and thousands of yards of material.

This all started a decade long struggle. I won't bore you with all of the details, but here are some of the highlights.

## **Rock Bottom**

Not only could I not increase my income, which was the plan, but I took a huge pay cut. This made it so the only option I had was to move in to a small 10' x 10' room in the back of the toy factory. I was living in the factory. I supervised staff during the day and designed new toys at night.

I scraped all the money I could together to pay for a booth at the International Toy Fair. I presented our locally made bears (super expensive because they weren't made in China) and nobody was very interested. People kept smiling politely at my stuffed toys and then they would say "That is nice, but can you make my toy idea?"

That is where CustomPlushToys.com came from. That is what led me to dealing with the big corporations and making their toys.



## **The Next Decade In A Paragraph!**

I spent a decade studying hard simply because I had to so that the company could survive and my father and I could get out of debt. Looking back I am not sure if I was being stupid or being loyal to my father and not leaving him with that debt. Let's say it was loyalty. I was learning on the job about selling to businesses, selling wholesale, selling retail, selling on the internet, selling at trade shows and so on.

I was asked to speak at Colleges about selling on the internet. My website at the time which I built from scratch (they didn't have fancy software back then to build websites - you used Notepad) was selling tons of toys online. That site which sold the locally made bears online as gift items, was featured in a book called Selling Online by Jim Carroll and Rick Broadhead. This book was officially endorsed by Visa which was a huge accomplishment since the banks were not very excited about the internet back in the year 2000.

Developing that retail site allowed me to master the art of convincing people to give me money over the internet. Mastered international logistics (shipping stuff around the world) and I grew an intimate understanding about what an individual wants and needs who is trying to invent their own stuffed toy.

This brings us back to the point I decided that I was sick of the phone calls about how you have been ripped off again by someone promising the world and delivering crap. Or worse... Nothing.

**Don't take my word for it.   Look at some basic facts!**

### **Made In China -Bad Right?**

*When you call me and say, "I don't want my stuffed toy to say Made in China" what do you want me to tell you?*

The facts are that my company was one of the last stuffed toy factories in North America. And if I could make loads of money by manufacturing toys that say Made in USA, I would still be doing it. But people don't want to pay \$28 for a stuffed toy. They want to pay \$5 for a stuffed toy. Look at your shoes, look in the hood of your car. All the parts are made overseas if the whole product isn't. I am not looking at getting in to a debate over whether we should save our manufacturing jobs or not, what I am saying that in the toy industry, Made in China has won. There are no other options. (other than Made in Mexico or Made in Philippines) I bet on the Made in USA idea and I lost 5 years out of my life and hundreds of thousands of dollars so trust me, your choices are Made in China, or doing nothing and putting your stuffed toy idea on the shelf until next Christmas when you will be kicking yourself for not having done something about that nagging excitement in your belly.

I have no interest in you choosing my company as the one you would like to work with by scaring you. No. If any of my insider secrets disturb you, then it is best that you not make a stuffed toy at all, rather than sign up with my company. I do not tell you any of this to 'sell you' but rather, I just don't want anymore of those terrible phone calls.

### ***But It Takes So Long***

When you have dealt with where the toys will be made you will start to get so excited about getting your toys made that you will want your toys created, manufactured and in your hands tomorrow. You are excited to get started and that is normal to want to see the results fast That is the society we live in these days. There are ways to fast track a new idea, but be careful. Please! I don't want you to be another phone call to my office saying that you bought in to the idea that some company could get you custom toys in your hands in 10 weeks or 8 weeks, or even 6 weeks. This is crazy to think this. There are physical limitations that prevent any company on the planet from getting your phone call and having a unique custom stuffed toy on your doorstep in 6 weeks.

### **The Magic Toy Company**

Give me a few minutes and I will tell you some ways that they CAN do it and at your expense.

### ***They Send You Stock Toys***

1) The 'magic' toy company can take all of your well thought out ideas for your new stuffed toy idea, ignore them, take a stock toy off of a shelf, put it in to a box and ship it to you. This is one type of phone call I get, where the product shows up and it looks nothing like how they described. Now, I am not talking about someone being picky, I am talking about a person who received toys that looked nothing like what they asked for. This is after you have wired (wiring your money is a method of payment from bank to bank - there is no way to get a refund and this is the only way that this 'magic' toy company will accept your payment) all of your money to the toy company.

You should be looking for a toy company that gets your approval on every step. This will ensure that your toys show up looking how you want. I spent years developing what I call the SEED system. This guarantees that the toys look the way you want. I will tell you about the SEED system when you get a quote.

### ***They Ship Express On Your Account - Ouch!***

2) The ‘magic’ toy company can make your product and they may look pretty close to the way that you wanted. After telling you that there were some additional charges that you must pay before shipping you are still happy because the total price is still below what you were quoted from my company. You are then told the goods are ready for shipping and they need your UPS, Fed Ex or DHL number. You don’t have one, so they tell you that you must get one. You get one and they ship the goods to you. Well, if the goods do make it into the country (skirting 3 dozen rules and regulations) then you find yourself writing checks to several companies for dozens of charges. The courier (UPS, Fed Ex or DHL) charges alone will equal the expense of the toys. Yes, I am saying that the shipping charges will cost as much as the toys themselves since they were shipped Express and not by ocean which is way cheaper. Then you have an arms length worth of fees that may or may not be included in the courier fees. DDC, Brokerage, Duty, Customs, Paper Handling, Fuel Surcharges, Reg. No., Surety Bond, Dock Charges and so on. This is about when you pick up the phone and call me, wondering how you can get out of paying all of these fees. At that point my price is looking much more reasonable.

When you get a quote you will understand how our 5 point Guarantee works. You only get a final invoice for exactly what we said it would be. No Surprises! Guaranteed. If your toys get inspected by customs at the border, which with heightened security levels this is more common then ever, I won’t be sending you the bill.

### ***Now You See Them, Now You...Call Me!***

3) One of the worst calls I get is from the woman who did her homework, wasn’t trying to get a ‘great’ deal, did what the toy company told her to do and she still lost. When she saw her new toy for the first time, she had some changes. She emailed or faxed the changes to her toy manufacturer and waited. If she did see changes come back to her they were wrong. So she politely requested the changes again. When she doesn’t hear back for several weeks she escalates the number of calls, or her intensity. This is when normal people turn ugly and start to say things they would be embarrassed to be repeated back to them later. She leaves messages cursing the man she has been speaking to and his entire family...I am exaggerating somewhat here, but you see what I am getting at. The next thing she knows, the emails bounce back, the calls and faxes get a “this number is not in service” message and she has nothing.

There are several other types of calls I receive but these are the main ones.

I hope you can see why I have decided to share my knowledge with Stuffed Toy Inventors. I really want to stop the calls!

So with that, let’s work on designing your first professionally made stuffed toy.

## **Head-Start-!**

It may be helpful to skim through this guide quickly to see what questions are coming up. This way you can be sure that your ideas will be captured as you get deeper and deeper in to this Design Guide.

# Style

## 1) Overall Style - What is the flavor of your idea?

It is difficult to pin down a one or two word phrase that everyone involved with a project will understand. The difficulty with the stuffed toy business is that there isn't an 'association' that has nailed down or formalized what a specific phrase explaining a design term means. The interior decorating industry for example has decade's worth of literature explaining what words like 'neo-classical' and 'Georgian' style means. Even for a well established industry like interior design these terms are fuzzy and must be explained by further examples. (example: Neoclassicism - an eighteenth-century stylistic movement based on Greek and Roman art and architecture; the English Adam style and French Louis XVI are examples of the neoclassic style) The experts in the interior design industry often do not even agree with the definitions of there own terms. The point is that this is a guide only to organize your own thoughts and decisions and to relate some of your ideas to experts more easily and more quickly. One expert may not fully understand your vision based one this one criteria alone. They would need this description along with the rest of this guide to fully outline your idea.

As opposed to having you study a century of toy design, we have provided common themes which can be referred to as you work with experts. Be sure to use the full description as it will help define what you mean. The keywords behind each theme will help you picture the theme. You can leave out a word or include it and what you don't want as well. For example, you could call your style "Country - but not frilly".

- ◇ **Country** = relaxed, traditional, calm, honor, proud, humble, natural, earthy, comfortable, plain, frilly, worn, weathered, homey, Southwest
- ◇ **Moody** = dark, intense, harsh, abrupt, weaponry, capes, purple, red, black, navy blue, evil
- ◇ **Trendy** = current trends, current styles, pop culture, conforms to specific criteria of a specific currently popular group
- ◇ **Classic** = traditional, sleek, noble
- ◇ **Friendly** = comfort, familiar, warm, kind, simple, warm, fuzzy, soft, floppy
- ◇ **Lower end** = simple, plain, small, basic, keychain, school bag hook/ clip
- ◇ **Infant** = primary, safe, friendly, simple, large features
- ◇ **High end** = rich, thick, heavy, expensive
- ◇ **Eclectic** = mix, modern, designer
- ◇ **Hand Made** = simple, classic, homey, grandma
- ◇ **Fantasy** = bright colors, unreal, legends, myths, magic

**My Overall Style will be** \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

*Notes* *Doodles* **Sketches**

# Personality

## 2) Personality Details - What personality will your toy have?

This is closely associated with #1 above, but can be defined differently to give a unique look. Normally a 'friendly' design style would not have fantasy/exaggerated feature. But combining two styles that are different may fit your vision.

- ◇ **Realistic** = eyes are real looking, five fingers defined, proportionate to a real object/person/animal
- ◇ **Comic/Cartoon** = eyes are large, eyes are white with color details, proportions are exaggerated in a traditional manner.
- ◇ **Psychedelic/Bizarre** = highly artistic with features in places and in ways that wouldn't be expected, proportions are awkward and out of balance.
- ◇ **Fantasy/Anime** = exaggerated features based on a set tradition in the Anime or Fantasy genera. Large eyes, large head, simplistic features.

My Personality in the Details will be \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

Notes Doodles Sketches

# Complexity

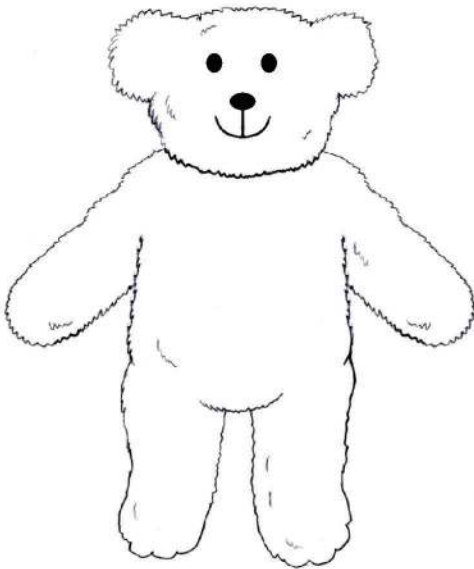
## 3) Complexity - simple, medium, complex, or very complex

Complexity can be defined as the amount of design features and 'stuff' on your toy. The complexity can effect the cost of your toy and you should think in terms of using additional design features that the end consumer will see as having more value.

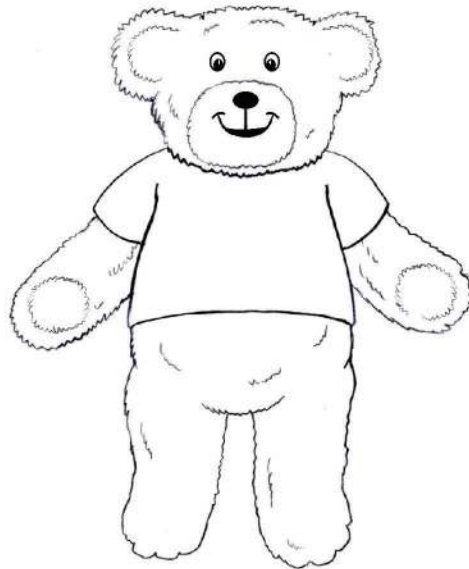
For example: making a toy design in to a puppet can add quite a bit of extra complexity. The hole where your hand goes in, making the mouth and arms designed to move, as well as the soft liner inside for your hand to slide in to, all add to the complexity and expense. If you don't clearly sell your toy as a Puppet which adds to the educational value of the toy then all of the expense of making your toy a puppet is lost on the consumer.

However, if you highlight the educational value of your toy being a puppet clearly then the expense of that complexity in the design adds significant value to the toy.

Here is a side by side comparison of some examples of complexity.



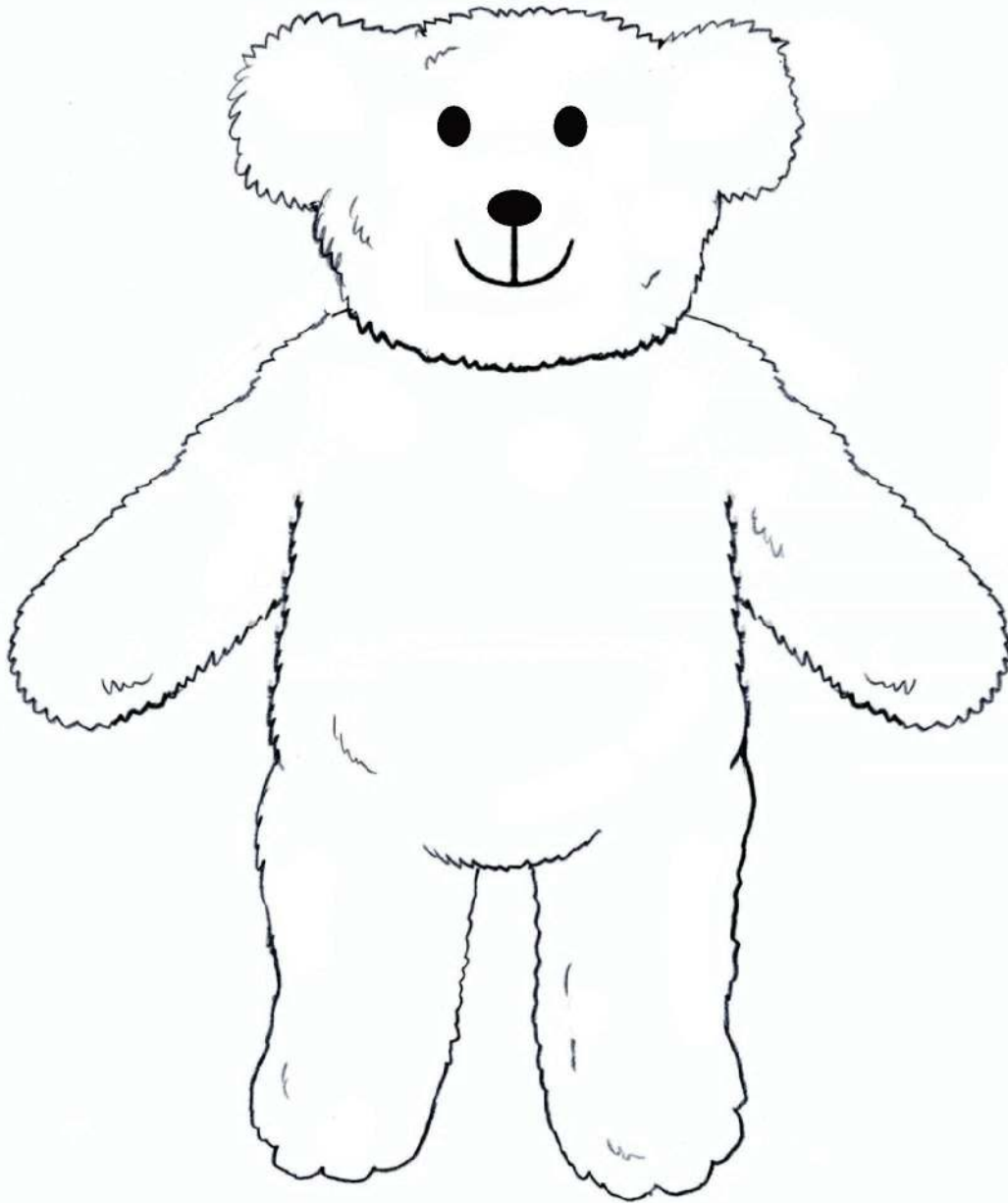
**Example of Simple**



**Example of Medium**

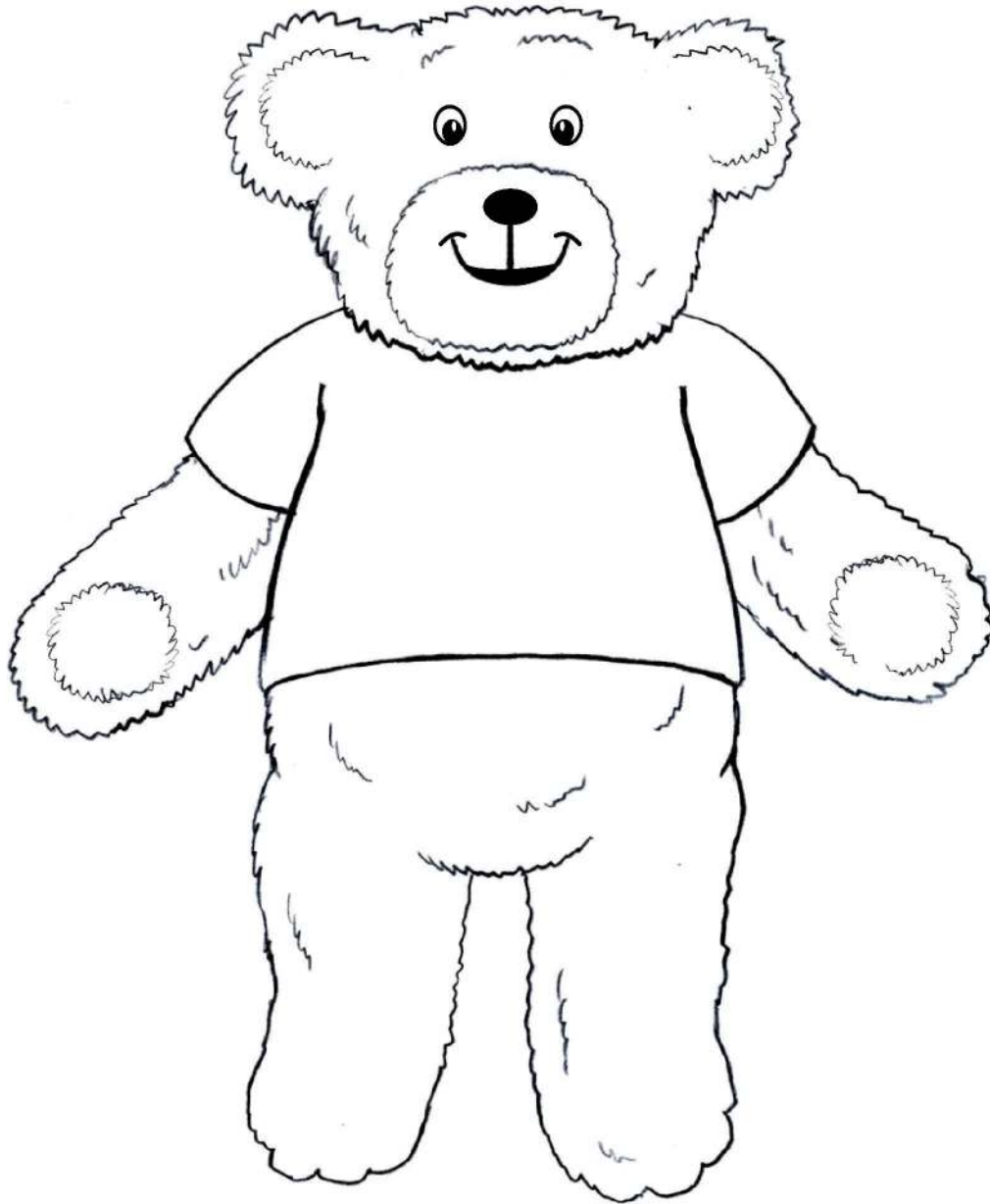


**Example of Complex**



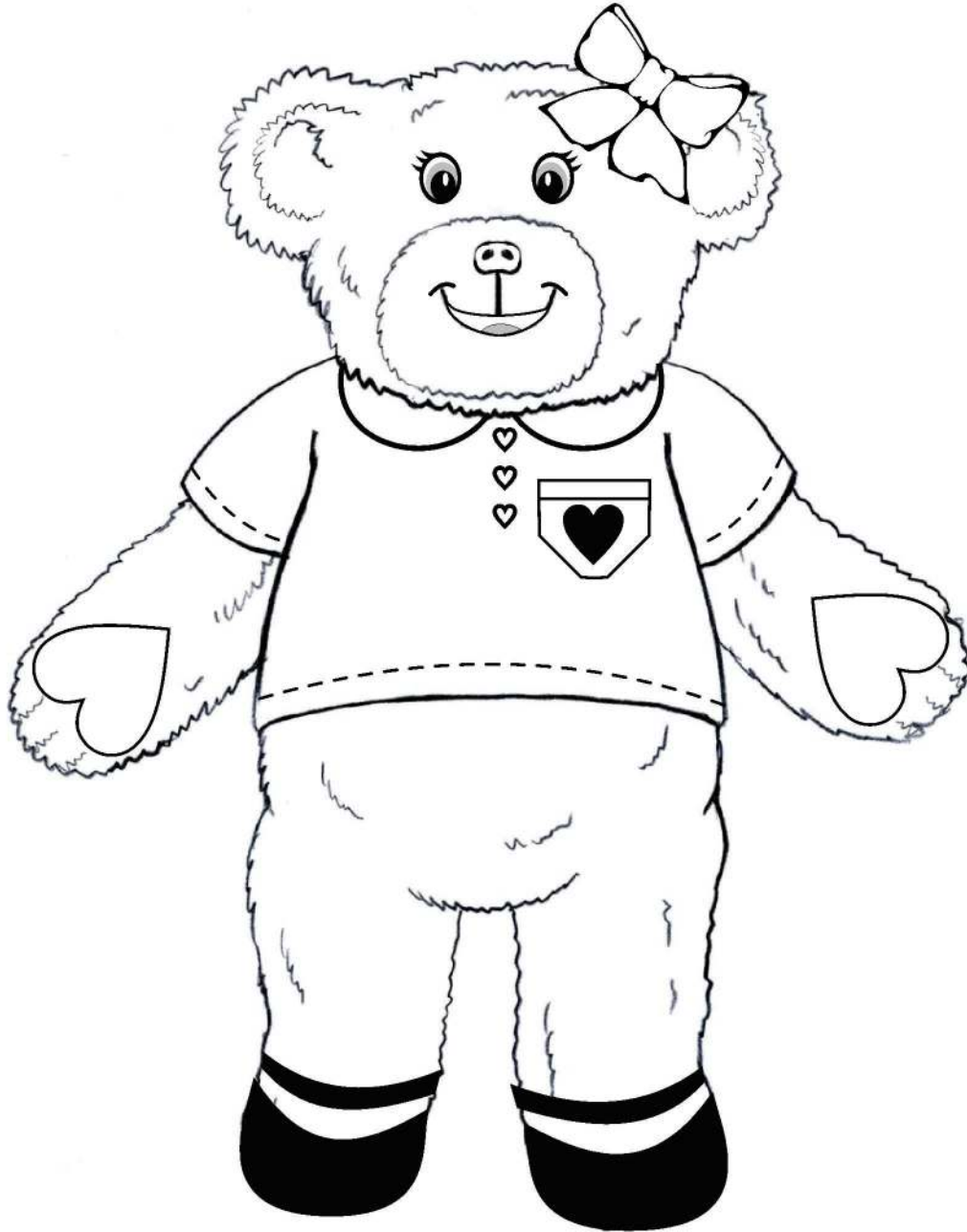
## Example of Simple

**Simple Complexity:** A simple toy will have plain black embroidered facial features or simple plastic eyes and nose. Normally there will not be paw pads, 'fingers', ear lining, belly definition and very little hand sculpting.



## Example of Medium

**Medium Complexity:** This level of complexity will have multi-colored eyes in plastic or more complex embroidery. The facial features are more involved. You will find paw pads and ear lining. The design may feature simple accessories like clothing, hats or glasses.



## Example of Complex

My Complexity in the Details will be \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

# Hand-Sculpting!

**Definition:** when a toy is sewn together, it is then stuffed and closed up. A sewer then takes a needle and thread and shapes the toy by hand. If you think about it, all of the stuffing inside is pushing out. This can make definitions in the design seem softer and more round. The Hand Sculpting pulls the shapes in to satisfy the look of the design. A sharp bridge of a bear's nose is a good example of where hand sculpting is used. Hand sculpting can make a posed bear, or firmly stuffed bear feel even stiffer as it increases the tension on the materials.

Notes *Doodles* **Sketches**

# Feel

## 4) Feel - How will your toy feel?

This can be a complex topic. Some clients will get their prototype and say ‘it isn’t soft enough’. When I start to ask questions, it becomes clear that the surface material is soft enough, but the toy is stuffed too firmly. Their toys don’t feel ‘soft’ because it is firm. So with the same material and just a little less stuffing, the client is very happy.

Often, it is not simply a matter of just under stuffing the toy since it’s the cut of the pattern that makes the toy look the way it does, is not designed to look and feel right when under stuffed.

### **Floppy:**

Traditionally, a floppy toy is designed where the arms and legs hang loosely by the side. If you hold the toy off a table and drop it, the toy will slump down and the arms and legs will fall as they wish. “Fatter” arms, legs and belly can help achieve a floppy feel. Under stuffing the toy will also help complete the overall look and feel. Generally less detail is normal for a floppy toy.

### **Medium:**

This is a happy medium between Floppy and Sculpted. Generally you can include more details than in a floppy toy and you can include design features not possible in a floppy toy. The toy is softer than a Sculpted toy and has some flexibility.

### **Sculpted:**

This is a more firmly stuffed toy which is sewn in a posed shape. If you dropped this toy on the table top it would stay in whatever pose it started it. It would not ‘flop’. This toy does not need to be ‘stiff’, but it is firm to the touch and is fully filled with stuffing. Hand sculpting\* makes this toys details look more high definition. This is the firmest style of toy, so it normally matches children’s book character drawings, animated characters and other characters with distinct recognizable poses.

**My Feel will be** \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

Notes *Doodles* **Sketches**

# Target Age Group

## 5) Target Age - What age will your toy be aimed at?

### Baby (birth to 1):

A baby learns about his or her environment by using all five senses - sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. A child this age is also learning the concept of cause and effect and loves repetition. High contrast black and white or brightly colored noisy toys give the child the ability to relate to toys even before they can physically grab them. Once babies are able to start picking things up toys that are textured and mouth friendly are great ideas to wake their senses. You should avoid plastics and other accessories. There is specific safety tests for this age group, which you are encouraged to have done.

### Toddler (approx 1 to 3):

A toddler moves busily within his or her environment-- walking, climbing, pushing and riding. Imaginative play begins during this period, as does a strong interest in manipulating and problem solving with objects. Children of this age group like repetition as well as toys that move to keep up with their ever growing mind and imagination. Functional toys are great for this age group as children tend to mimic adults and enjoy toys that interest their curiosity. Plastic parts like eyes, noses and other accessories are best left off of any toys for ages 3 and under.

### 3 to school age (approx 3 - 5):

Apreschooler loves to be around other children and enjoys sharing many kinds of activities, particularly imaginative play and simple games. Children of this age group love jumping, throwing and anything active so toys that provide movement or interaction like puppets give the child the opportunity to use their coordination and imagination around their friends. Children of this age group also tend to show attachment to toys whether it's a favorite teddy bear or doll. Safety standards are less strict when produced for ages 3 and up, so plastics and other accessories are a welcome and safe addition.

### School age (approx 6 - 9):

A school-age child seeks out new information, experiences and challenges in play. Extremely social with a clear sense of fairness, a child in this age group is influenced by peers and has a strong gender identity. This group tends to surround themselves with younger versions of adult games and activities and enjoys their creative side when it comes to their involvement with arts and crafts, puzzles and kits.

### Pre-teen (approx 9 - 12):

A pre-teenager is independent, yet thrives on play with other children. A child this age knows how to cooperate and negotiate using advanced social skills. Mastery of academic skills enables him or her to pursue both intellectual and creative pastimes. This age group enjoys special hobbies and more advanced toys like models, science kits and arts and crafts.

### Adult (13 and up):

An adult is looking for either a toy novelty (gag gift), the toy to perform a function (pacifier holder), or has some value and nostalgia (collectible, replica of old toy). This age group tends to surround themselves with things that relate to their interests, family life and personality.

**My Target Age Group will be \_\_\_\_\_**

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

Notes *Doodles* **Sketches**

## Price Range

### 6) Price Range - What price bracket will your toy fall under?

There is a big difference between the price of your toy, the value of your toy and the perceived value of your toy. When I was learning how this toy business worked a customer would ask me to make their toy look more 'rich' looking. So I was sure to locate and use materials that were more expensive. I thought that making the toy cost more, would make it "more rich looking". At times the customer hated the new toy saying that it looked even worse.

What I learned quickly is that more expensive materials do not mean that the toy looks like it has more value. Previously in this guide you were asked about the complexity (which can be seen as having more value) and the overall style which can also set the value of the toy. The Price Range refers only to where in the market you want your toy to sit. Will it be the cheapest, in the middle, or the most expensive?

I will tell you, that based on my years of experience you should keep your toy at the higher end of the price range, if not the highest priced toy. If you claim to be the cheapest, there will always be someone else that will be happy to compete with you to be cheaper. If you are the most expensive the typical big corporation will think that you are shooting yourself in the foot by being the most expensive when really there are a good majority of the customers out there that feel more expensive means more value (or better quality).

So compared to other toys of similar size, style and complexity what price range do you want your toy to meet?

**High end** = Most expensive when compared to similar toys

**Median pricing** = Your toy is good value at a good price

**Low end** = You are shooting for high volume to make your money

**My Price Range will be** \_\_\_\_\_

Notes Doodles Sketches

## Target Gender

7) Gender - Will your toy appeal to males, females, or will it be non-gender specific?

In a perfect world every child on the planet would own and enjoy your toy. Selecting a gender or choosing not to target a gender can help your designers make choices on your behalf with many aspects of your toy. The colors, the contours and the overall look can all be adjusted to appeal to one gender over the other. The typical 'pink or blue' is only one small consideration when designing a toy based on gender. The eyes and facial features can also influence if a toy is deemed to be more feminine, masculine or neutral.

## Tip On Gender

Yes, blue can mean boy and pink can mean girl but more and more those traditional lines are being blurred with the toy ideas coming out for sale. If you want to become an inventor you may not have the budget to create new industry changing standards so you may want to stick with what is established. If you want to be gender neutral think about incorporating neutral colors like green, yellow, purple, red and other colors not normally associated with one sex or the other.

My Toy will be Aimed to Please \_\_\_\_\_

Notes Doodles Sketches

# Materials

## 8) Materials - What materials would you like to focus on?

There are 4 major factors involved in describing a material.

**Color** - You can read more about color in #9 below but it is always interesting when dealing with color and materials. You will find that some materials actually have two or more colors represented. If you brush the hairs up on some materials, the color will look darker. When you brush the hairs down on that same material, the color looks much lighter. This is normal for certain materials. This is why it is best not to worry about 'exact' colors, since it is nearly impossible to get an exact color match. This is simply the natural nap of the material reflecting light in different ways.

**Nap or Pile Length** - No matter what material you are talking about, there is a length to the nap or pile. The nap or pile is the distance from the base (backing) of the material to the end of the 'hair'. Whether the material looks like a fur with hair or not it has some length of pile. The easiest way to describe this is if you think of your grass. From the ground up to the tips of the blades of grass is the length of the grass. The same can be said for furs and other materials. There is a length to the nap or pile. Some materials have virtually no pile (like jean denim) all the way up to a 4" length fur for super large animals. Pile lengths that are too long begin to encroach in to safety hazard areas. Find an expert who can guide you along the way.

**Treatment or Style** - Beyond color and the pile length is the style of the material. There are several styles, all which can look different on different materials. The styles can include;

- ◇ a straight hair or fur
- ◇ a slight curly hair
- ◇ a wavy hair
- ◇ a tightly curled hair (Kohair)
- ◇ a Sherpa type material (loops like lambs wool)
- ◇ a woven strand

## Material-Secret!

There are so many variables in the available furs that it may be best to leave the final decisions up to a professional designer. Why? Well there are a number of reasons. A professional designer will be working with the materials that are expected to be hip, cool, popular, big sellers, and available next year. What you see on store shelves now is basically 'out'. The professional designers are designing with next year in mind based on thousands of company's demands from around the world.

**Density** - The density of materials is described in two ways. There is the density of the backing and the density of the fur (hairs/pile). The density of the backing is determined by how tightly the backing is woven, or made. The denser the backing is the more strength the material has, but it is also stiffer. If the backing is more loosely woven, the material will be more flexible and will seem softer to the touch.

The other way a material can be considered dense is the number of hairs per inch. A 'thicker' material will have a thicker pile.

## **Insiders-Secret!**

Because there are virtually an unlimited number of available options, there isn't a book of available materials (like a wallpaper book). Don't stress over this, since the rest of the questions in this guide will narrow your materials choices to two or three.

Whether it is obvious to you or not, an expert will have two or three materials that will be 'just right' based on your decisions in other areas of your toy.

Also, if your first few production runs are smaller quantities (under 5,000 pieces) then you basically have to take what is available in a local China market or pay big premiums to have custom materials made.

**My Material will be** \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

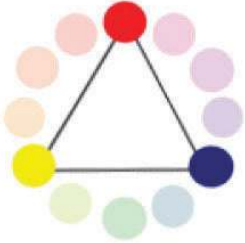
Notes *Doodles* **Sketches**

# Color

9) Communicating in Color - What Pantone colors will your line of toys center around?

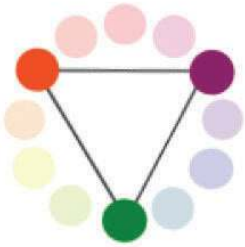


## The Color Wheel



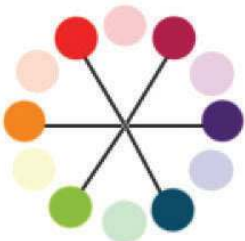
### Primary Colors

Those colors that cannot be created by mixing others.



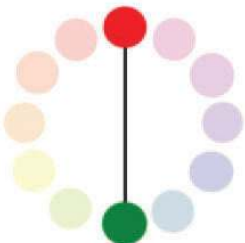
### Secondary Colors

Those colors achieved by a mixture of two primaries.



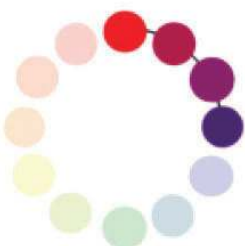
### Tertiary Colors

Those colors achieved by a mixture of primary and secondary hues.



### Complementary Colors

Those colors located opposite each other on a color wheel.



### Analogous Colors

Those colors located close together on a color wheel.

With clients who are new to the designing and creation of a product, color can be the most difficult to communicate. Often we get a client who is correcting a color in our sketch with words. For example if there is a green frog, that they would like to be brighter they will say “No, please make the frog more grassy green.” This is slightly humorous (we’re laughing with them) because what grass do they mean? Grass in Texas in the middle of a dry season will be quite brown, while grass in Florida during a nice rainy spell will be a deep dark green color. The way the pros communicate with each other when referring to color is to refer to a Pantone color code. Pantone is a company which has made its job to identify, categorize, organize and standardize color. So instead of saying “grassy green”, we would say Pantone 342c Green. This is a very specific green color which anyone one of our team members can refer to.

The best way to talk color is to purchase a Pantone book. Pantone books can set you back \$300 - \$400 depending on where you purchase them, how current they are and how many options are included with the book. The most common set are two full books. One is coated and one is uncoated. The coated refers to a glossy piece of paper and the uncoated refers to an uncoated piece of paper (dull or matte). The same Pantone number will look different on the coated as compared to the uncoated. This is not a problem since you will be using the colors as a guide and not an exact match. Simply identify the color with the ending identifiers of “c” or “u”. This will tell all of the professionals involved which book to refer to when trying to come close to the colors you choose.

### **Pantone Color Matching System**

The Pantone system was developed for the paper printing industry. For materials and furs it should be viewed as a guide only since there will be slight variances from material to material. Some furs look like they are a different color when you brush the hairs up as compared to when the hairs are brushed down.

### **More About Color!**

My company actually has a Pantone chart online. So you can go to a webpage where you can see color swatches on your computer screen with the Pantone numbers listed below. This can help immensely as it is instantly accessible and you don’t have to purchase a Pantone book. If you are working with a Binkley Project Manager simply ask them to have access to our Pantone chart online.

### **My Pantone Colors will be**

*Fur will be Pantone 485c (example)*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Color-Secret!

You can find Pantone books on Ebay and other auction sites for as little as \$75 for a set of two books. Coated and Uncoated. But be careful. Read the descriptions carefully and if you aren't sure, ask the seller questions. Avoid books of 'chips'. They will work, but are a little annoying because over time these books will fall apart. Do not order metallic books. Avoid 'vintage' 'rare' or years that are more than 5 years old. The Pantone company recommends that you purchase a new book every year since the colors can fade overtime. This is a bit excessive in my opinion and I have used some Pantone books for almost 6 years at a time as a backup, but you should purchase a more recent book. Each year they add new colors and you want the book to be no more than a few years old. If you are only purchasing one book, get a coated book. They are just nicer to look at and they stay cleaner longer since the paper surface will not absorb dirt as easily.

*Notes* *Doodles* **Sketches**

## What does it DO?

### 10) What Does your Toy DO?

**Nothing** - You can hear the parents around the world breathing a sigh of relief. Do not be afraid to explore the idea of having no special function in your toy. If it does not have a swirling, spinning gizmo inside, advertise that fact and use it as a selling feature. In today's world where everything has a purpose, a plain toy can bring comfort to a child that is over stimulated every where else in their life. Toys without electronics are seen as 'classic' toys and you can receive a bigger vote from the parent which will influence the child.

**Secrets** - There are many toys with secret compartments, pockets, pouches and other way in which things can be stored or hidden. It is not uncommon to have the toy hold a photo (like a large stuffed toy broach) or store a note from a travelling parent to their child.

## Insiders-Tip

Pull string sound modules where you pull the string in the back of a toy and it plays the sound as the string is sucked back in to the toy are not allowed to be produced anymore. The length of the string needed is considered a strangulation hazard and is not available anymore.

**Sound** - Toys that play a recorded sound will increase the quantity required for your initial production order but sound can increase the prices you charge to your customer. Generally the length of time the sound will play for will dictate the cost associated with the sound. These plastic boxes are called IC Modules. The most common type of these plastic boxes is activated by squeezing the outside of the two box halves together. So you basically have a match box sized plastic case cut in half. The two halves fit inside of each other and contain the battery, a small speaker, the chip which contains the memory which holds your sound and a trigger. Pushing the two halves together triggers the sound to play.

Most of the sound modules (clamshell boxes) are not accessible by the consumer, but the end consumer can open up their toy, find the box, open the box and replace the watch style batteries inside. If a customer requests it, we can make the sound box accessible through a Velcro opening or zipper pocket. We have found though, that by the time the batteries run out, the parents are sick of hearing the sound anyway (no offence). There is nothing worse as a parent then sneaking in to tuck your sleeping child in, only to step on that toy that plays sound and wakes your child up. They are usually relieved when the toy doesn't play the sound anymore.

Continuing with sound, you can also offer a recordable version. A recordable sound module is one where the customer can press one button (sometimes located in an ear or paw) and record their own voice, or music. When you press another button (normally the belly or another paw) the sound is played back. Sound quality is normally average or low, so do not expect terrific reproduction of the sounds.

**Electronics / Interactivity** - I have only worked on a couple of projects that included real complex electronics or interactive features. This is when a toy contains features such as optics (to sense movement), motion triggers, and movement such as hopping, shaking and other more complex reactions to exterior stimulus. All of these features are available and more; but this increases your minimum orders and setup fees. Most toy manufacturers will have a minimum order for a plain plush toy (no sound or electronics) of 500 to 2,400 pieces. If you had a simple sound module, your minimum order would be approximately 3,000 to 6,000 pieces for a first order. When you want to incorporate more complex interaction in your toy, your minimum order for a first production run can be as much as 20,000 to 50,000 pieces for your first order depending on how complex you want the toy. For this reason I always recommend that clients hold off on these high level features until they develop a good market and grow their business over time.

## Save!

There are stock units that will shake when a button is pushed or they will wag a tail when a button is pushed. If you can balance your full idea with what is available in stock you can reduce your minimum orders from 20,000 - 50,000 down to a more reasonable order quantity of 3,000 - 10,000 pieces. (depending on the final product)

You may be giving up on your full idea of a dog running around, wagging it's tail, doing flips and going potty on the carpet (as an example) but you will be getting a cool toy for a lot less of a commitment. Don't forget the sales and marketing is what sells a product and not whether the eyes light up or not. (think of the pet rock if you think I am wrong)

**Functional Toys** - This is one of the more complex projects to handle. An example of a functional toy is a stuffed toy that holds a baby's pacifier. The toy would have a function that would hook on to, or hold a pacifier that is purchased separately (or even included with your toy). The complexity with an example like this is that there are so many different sizes, shapes and styles of pacifiers available on the market that it is very important to design the toy so that it works with a wide range of secondary objects. Also, every baby that would use such a toy may lay differently causing the product to work for some and not for other Moms. Most manufacturers will not assume responsibility to ensure that your toy will fit every available product or circumstance on the market. This is just not possible. Ensuring that your toy can work with any other intended product or circumstance on the market can be an extensive design process which can become very expensive. You can reduce this expense by relaxing your design idea, or finding a simple system that is virtually 'fool' proof. Some time at your kitchen table toying with some samples and coming up with a solution you feel is best can save you thousands of dollars. My company for example has discovered many solutions quickly and inexpensively but at times we have to raise the question, do you want to tell us how to solve this technical issue, or would you like to pay us to proceed to solve this.

# Example

I can't talk about the details of this customer's product but it was to fit on to a child's car seat. Specifically, it was to fit around the buckle that closed between the child's legs. The toy would then be available for the child to play with. The clever part is that the child could not drop the toy on the floor. It was always securely affixed to the car seat preventing the child from screaming loudly when the toy was on the floor and both the parent and child could not reach it while driving. The problem with this product though was that the inventor was designing the toy for their specific car seat. They took careful measurements and the inventor was very demanding for us to meet those exact measurements to make the toy work as they had hoped. Our team highlighted to the inventor many times the fact that they should consider many other models of car seats and different size children. The inventor did not heed our warnings and proceeded into production and regretted the decision ever since.

**Clips, Hooks and Velcro Straps** - Your toy may be sold as a companion that travels clipped to a knapsack, a baby carriage, or a car seat. Getting this into production is much easier than the 'functional' product (as described above) since it usually does not fit on, around, or inside of anything. We also have many stock hooks, buckles, clips, keychain rings and Velcro straps to choose from. It can get tricky though if you want "glow in the dark neon pink plastic buckles" (for example) since these may not be as easily found on the market and could get expensive to custom make to something - clips, hooks, Velcro, (be careful since your customer may use it on a product that is slightly different - so you have to be sure that your product will fit on to, in to or around any of the possible products that are out there.

## My Toy Will

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(define your own "What does it do?" Style by describing it or sketching it out here)

*Notes* *Doodles* **Sketches**

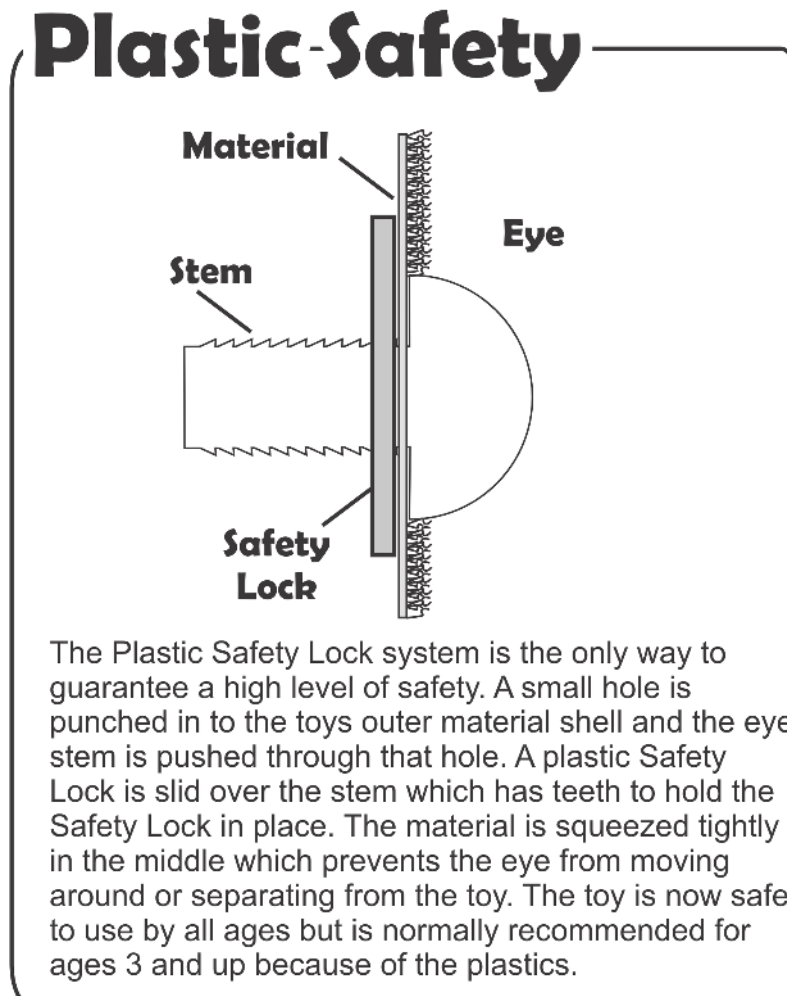
*Note! The next few sections have some overlap as we may refer to a set of glasses on a toy as 'plastics' and we may also refer to them as an accessory. Essentially they are both, so there may be some overlap in the next few questions.*

## Plastics

### 11) Will your Toy Contain Plastics?

There are safety factors, design factors, as well as value factors involved in the question of whether you should use plastics or not.

**Safety Factors** - For toys targeted towards children ages three and under, you should avoid all plastics on the exterior of the toy. For this reason, plastic eyes, plastic noses and other plastics should not be included in your toy design. It is okay for you to still have hangtags attached to your toy since they are to be removed before given to an infant. You can also include plastic pellets inside your toy. You should find a toy manufacturer that you trust, since it is easy for you to 'believe' that something is unsafe. If you could see the huge binders I have in my office that describes the details in what makes a toy safe or unsafe. Even with the huge amount of documentation that details the parameters that goes in to toy safety I still allow professionals to guide our company in what is safe and what is not. We normally use a company called MTL-ACTS which specializes in toy safety. If they say a toy is safe, then it is. They are the top toy safety testing companies in the world. If you use the correct toy manufacturer you can be sure that any toy design that you come up with will be safe no matter what.



**Design Factors** - Plastics can add several things to your design. A highly stylized comic character will need plastic eyes, because normally this is the only way to get the true character in the face of the toy. Plastic eyes can relate virtually any emotion or character in a toy. Your toy manufacturer should have many examples of eyes. I know that my website has a 'clients only' site that display many different styles of eyes for you to choose from. With the right design team you can combine design features to give an unlimited number of looks for your toy.

## Adding Value

If you hold a toy that does not have plastic pellets it will 'look' like a cute toy. If you put plastic pellets in the belly and hold your toy in your hand, it will look like a cute toy and 'feel' like a great value. The weight of the product can add value to the toy in the customer's mind. Adding plastic pellets in the belly, hands and feet will increase the value even more. At times your toy will just not work with plastic pellets but if it will work then you should consider adding plastic pellets.

I will be using Plastics in the following ways \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

**Notes** *Woodles* **Sketches**

# Accessories

## 12) What accessories will your toy have?

Every month my Project Managers have detailed conversations with our clients and learn new and original ways that they can accessorize their toys. We have dozens of ways to add accessories to a stuffed toy and we are adding new ideas to our list all the time through the conversations with our clients. For example our company also manufactures temporary tattoos. They are the highest quality you can get in North America, are very inexpensive and are lots of fun for kids and adults. One time we had a slight delay in our delivery of a prototype design so we offered free tattoos to our client. We thought they could hand them out to children and create additional advertising for their product. Well the customer asked if the tattoos would be attached to the toy like a hangtag. (A hangtag also known as a hand tag is the cardboard 'advertising' that hangs from a toy - like a business card.) So we got together as a team and figured out how to get this done. It did add to the cost, but it turned a hangtag that would otherwise be thrown out in to additional value for the end consumer and additional advertising when the child goes out to play with the tattoo to show their friends. Brilliant!

Some accessories you may consider:

- Cardboard rectangle hangtag
- Cardboard custom shape (like a dog bone shape) hangtag
- Plastic hangtag removable
- Plastic collar emblem (normally affixed)
- Removable clothing
- Removable head wear
- Pre-recorded sound
- Recordable sound
- Keychain rings
- Plastic book bag clips
- Wire armatures (inside wires to make your toy bendable)
- Plastic glasses
- Plastic soother/pacifier (toy)
- Dog collar
- Cotton bag
- Plastic bag (always with child safety warning)
- Gift bag
- Gift card (normally with individual consumer's message inside)
- Gift box
- Booklet (short story, or about the product)

**I will be including the following accessories with my toy \_\_\_\_\_**

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*Notes* *Doodles* **Sketches**

# Packaging

## 13) How will your toy be packaged?

Your answers to #14 below, “What sales channel will you use to sell your toy in?” can affect how the toy will be packaged. When I refer to packaging here, this is how you pull the toy out of the box when it arrives to you from our factory floor. Most toy manufacturers include bulk packing for your toys. This means that there is a big cardboard shipping carton that holds 25 to 100 of your toys, depending on how big the toys are, a large plastic bag that surrounds all of the toys (box liner) and keeps them dry and dust free during transportation. When you open the box the toys are loosely packed inside. When you reach in the box you can pull out the toy and hand it to a consumer.

Some common ways toys are packaged are;

**Bulk Packed** - The toys are loosely packed in a cardboard box (shipping carton) and one plastic bag liner protects the toys during shipping

**J-hook Plastic Fasteners** - This is similar to how your cardboard hangtag is attached except that it has a hook on the end to hang your product. You know those plastic threads that hold the price tags on in clothing stores? Well, this is similar except that one end has a plastic hook which can hang your toy. This is an inexpensive and easy way for retailers to display your toy.

**Plastic Bags** - Each toy is sealed in an individual plastic bag. A child safety warning must be printed on the bag so you should be able to get your logo on there as well for free. This is generally inexpensive and still allows the retailer the option to discard the plastic bag when displaying or leaving it in the bag depending on their circumstances.

**Plastic Bag With Topper** - normally this is a cardboard top displaying your logo, company name, product name and a little about what the toy does. Below this is a plastic bag which holds the product. The cardboard topper normally has a hole or slot to hang the goods on a retail display.

**Soft Bag** - This can be cotton, polyester or some other type of soft bag. Normally they will have a drawstring at the top to close the bag and have your company logo or product name printed on the outside. You can also use a patterned material which then functions nicely as a gift bag. These are inexpensive and do not add to your shipping costs.

**Display L Box** - This is a cardboard box with a full bottom and back. The sides are normally triangles that hold the bottom and back sturdy. This leaves the top and front open for the consumer to touch and feel your toy. This is very good for toys that have sound or some other function which demonstrating will help sell the toy.

**Full Retail Box** - This is a cardboard retail box which usually has a window display in front which shows the toy.

## Note On Boxes!

I am not a big fan of boxes for stuffed toys. It is a matter of opinion, but I think that what sells a great toy is the face first and then the feel of the toy second. If you are going to sell in a retail environment and your toy is in a box, the purchaser can't squeeze and give your toy a hug. Nobody wants to hug a box. So make sure that a box will enhance the buying experience enough to make up for any extra expense or lost sales.

# Great-Tip!

Be careful! When pricing out a box for a toy you must consider much more than the price of the box. Artwork for boxes can get expensive if your toy manufacturer does not include this in the price. Also, think about the price of the box and double it. You double this price because not only do you pay for the box, but you pay to ship a larger shipment from the factory to you and then from you to the retailer and consumer. If you think about it, shippers will charge you for the weight of a shipment. When your toys take up more space as compared to their weight the shipper changes the calculations to the rates based on the volume of the shipment. This is called dimensional weighting. So if the manufacturer could have fit 100 of your toys in one shipping carton, they may only be able to fit 40 of your toys in the same box if each toy is in its' own retail box. This will increase the size of the shipment by 250%. You will then have to pay extra to ship the product to you and then pay extra to ship it to the consumer or to the retailer. You may consider other packaging options that do not increase your prices so much.

My Toy will be packaged \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

**Notes** *Woodles* **Sketches**

# Sales Channel

## 14) What Sales Channel will you use to sell your toy?

Retail: through wholesalers and distributors to retail stores

Online: selling direct to the consumer through your own website or others websites

Multi-channel: both Retail and Online

Please understand that it would be impossible to explain all the factors that go in to how to sell your toy idea online and in traditional sales channels. What I can do for you is to give you some great tips on how to choose what sales channels you would like to use and some great tips on how to sell in multiple channels.

### Retail Stores

Selling through retail stores has its positive and negative sides. On the positive side, there is a well established network of distributors, wholesalers and sales representatives throughout most countries. This network is already tied in to all of the retail stores and has a good relationship already established. The retail stores are always looking for 'what's new' and have a trust built with the sales representatives (sales reps).

The negative side of selling through retail stores is that the chain of hands in the middle will want to take a cut by marking up your toy to sell to the next person in the chain. In the end this is basic business and they should get paid for their time and services. You should consider your prices carefully to allow for this markup and not scare away the end consumer. Each step in the chain needs to feel that they have benefitted by selling your product or they will find another product to sell that is more beneficial.

### Online - Direct To Consumers

Selling your toy idea online means that you have a website or your product is on someone else's website (I highly recommend you have your own website) and a website visitor can read about the product, choose to purchase your toy and pay with a credit card or some other form of payment like PayPal. The toy is then shipped out to the consumer and the transaction is completed. Or is it? The key advantage to online marketing is that it is easy to collect the data so that you can follow up with the customer.

How many regular stores do you walk in to purchase something and walk out of with no way for that store to ever contact you again? Most stores right? Well an online store can enable you to update the same customer on future sales, new products and fun information. Perfect! Right?

## Important-Tip!

Please do yourself and your toy idea a favor and do not use your nephew, or friend who makes websites on the side. There are hundreds of things that can affect a websites ability to sell product and the last thing you want to do is waste valuable time and money only needing to have it remade. I have run in to this situation quite a bit with clients.

Well, an online store can be as much work as keeping a real offline brick and mortar store running. The common factor in both types of stores is people. You still have to fulfill the customer's wishes and keep them happy.

A negative aspect of Online sales is that you have to generate the 'foot traffic' (visitors to your website) yourself whereas a retail store would take care of this normally in offline sales. If you can generate the sales though, you are then considered the manufacturer, the wholesaler, the sales rep and the retailer. So you can collect each markup yourself.

### **Multi-Channel**

Selling both online and offline is the best of both worlds. If you can do it, this is the best way to go since it covers all types of selling opportunities. The main trick to selling in both channels is to price your toy online high enough so that the retailer can still undercut you by a couple of dollars.

What this means is that if the retailer can mark up your toy to \$19.99 (for example) and be happy with the profits they are making then you must list your toy for \$21.99 on your website. You do not want your retailer checking out your website only to find that you are competing head to head with them. To further build the relationship with the retailers (so they don't complain about you selling the same product directly online) is to list the local stores where your toy is available on your website. You'll be encouraging people who to prefer to shop face to face to choose a store in their area while still capturing those who prefer the speed of shopping online.

**I will be Selling my Toy** \_\_\_\_\_

(define your own style, combine two or three and then define it in words)

**Notes** *Doodles* **Sketches**

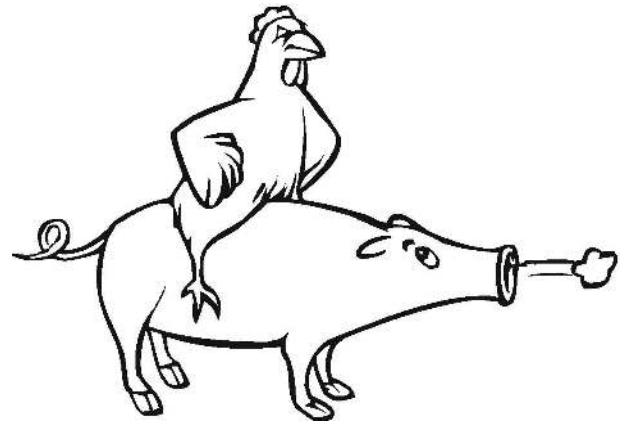
# Commitment

## 15) How committed are you?

This answer should not be submitted to a design firm, or a toy manufacturer. This question is for you to consider on your own. I certainly do not want to talk you out of the thrill of dreaming up a toy idea, developing it through several stages, displaying it out there in front of consumers and then having your first toy sold. It is a real thrill and a total rush to have someone say “Yes” to something you dreamed up in your head. What a feeling!

That said, are you up for what it will take to reach the level you want? The toy business is run by multi-billion dollar companies that control the majority of the sales in North America and across the World. It is not easy!

My wife and I were driving back from a family function and I told her about how I wanted to talk about commitment in a toy project. I didn't want to scare away any potential customers but I didn't feel right giving an “It's Super Easy” sales pitch either. (I am not a slick sales guy anyway, if you didn't guess that already- I make my money selling great toys) So my wife told me about the analogy of a bacon and eggs breakfast. Think about what the chicken and pig gave up for that breakfast when you sit down to breakfast. The chicken was ‘involved’ in the breakfast, but the pig was committed.



Let me tell you two quick stories and then you can decide for yourself whether you want in to the toy business or not.

### Story 1

I was working with my Project Managers at Binkley through a bit of a rough time when things were not going our way. It was during our peak season and one of our Production Managers was bumping our production orders for another huge company that was putting pressure on him for faster delivery. I pulled some punches to see if I could get a commitment from my Production Manager to get our production runs pushed through more quickly. He basically said no and finished his message to me with, “The toy bizness is hard - hee - hee!”

I was furious. I had a dozen customers who would be really upset that their toys were not going to arrive when we had promised and that was unacceptable. I sat back in my office, out of view of my staff and I was totally in despair. Those words kept going through my head. “The toy bizness is hard - hee-hee!”. At that moment I thought, “Yes, the toy business is really hard. It can be cruel actually. How could I get myself and my valuable customers into this?” Since I was not new to this toy business game and we have quite a bit of buying power ourselves I worked through the issues and found a way to get every production order shipped out on time...but the lesson still stuck. You really have to know what you are doing in this business to make it work. Our Project Managers at Binkley still joke about that message coming through (a bitter sweet memory now) but I commend them for trusting me and our system to make it work. Even though the toy business can seem hard, if you work with the right people who know what they are doing it can be a very positive experience as well.

### Story 2

I was sitting in an educational session at the International Toy Fair in New York, NY. A great speaker was on stage giving his presentation and there was a panel of speakers who were there to interject

giving the presentation a great mix of opinions on several toy industry topics. One of the speakers on the panel interrupted and corrected the main speaker that there really wasn't any hope of someone coming along and developing the next big blockbuster toy since it took millions of dollars to break through the development, analysis, manufacturing, advertising, marketing and launching of a new toy and that it should be left to the handful of huge companies that control the toy industry.

The response by the main speaker was priceless. He wasn't fazed a bit by this view since he had the answer on the tip of his tongue. He said the following: (as accurately as I can remember) "You do not have to be next years number one hit toy. You can have next years 1000th top hit toy and still make millions of dollars." He is right. The toy business worldwide is a \$69 Billion (yes, that is billion with a B) industry. If you were an enormous success and grabbed 1/2 of a percent of this market your toy company's sales would be \$340 Million. I feel that I run a fairly large company and that is a very large number even for me to comprehend. So let's look at the same scenario if your company had 0.01% of the World's toy sales. Your sales would be \$6.8 Million Dollars. Now I can understand numbers around that level, but let's say you just wanted this as a side business to your existing career...you may be happy with 0.001% of the World's toy sales. That would leave you with \$680,000 in sales every year. At a comfortable 20% profit that would leave you with \$136,000 per year after your income is taken out of the company.

Now these numbers are all hypothetical and not everyone will want to put in the time to earn this type of money, but if you wondered if you picked a good industry to make some money it, I would have to say Yes!

It is important to remember that these large sums of money are nothing compared to the feeling of your friends and family seeing your toy idea on a store shelf, or on a website and the orders coming in. What a feeling!

I would not want you to submit your thoughts in the area of commitment, but it is something certainly worth considering. How committed are you?

**Notes Doodles Sketches**

## Conclusion

This guide was made to apply with virtually any toy in mind. I feel that this guide could help to itemize and detail products that were not stuffed toys as well simply by substituting ‘material choice’ with ‘plastics choice’ or whatever may be appropriate for your next invention.

## How to Fill Out the Summary Page

In this guide you will find a summary page. I have provided several copies so that you can work on multiple designs, work with a partner or make some revisions. If you need more simply make extra copies for your own use and get to work.

## Logos, Websites and Packaging

You may think that handing your summary page to a graphic artist to make your logo or to a web designer doesn’t seem logical but when the artists sees the big picture that you are going for they can carry forward your requirements down in to the details. Too often I will see a great looking toy sitting on a brochure which doesn’t seem to match with the look and feel of the toy. Or that same toy placed on it’s own website that doesn’t go with the spirit of the original toy. This will be prevented by using this guide as a road map to print materials and online content. Keep the completed summary guide handy when you get back first drafts for your review. Run down the list of your requirements and make sure the main features fall in line with your original idea. When your timeline gets hectic and a vendor requires a fast approval, you don’t have to worry about rushing out a ‘yes’ without being sure of that answer.

## Where are the details - like it’s a bear? Or it’s a mouse?

To make this guide valuable to you I have not included my advice on how to describe the specific character itself. In my experience with thousands of toy inventors explaining the main character is not an issue so I did not focus on that in this guide.

## Listen to the Audio

The audio portion of this guide will have valuable information and examples not included in the written portion. Please be sure to listen to the audio portion of this resource.

## What’s Next?

Only you can decide what you are comfortable with in regards to moving forward. In my experience with thousands of toy inventors the next few steps are as follows;

1) Complete this guide and make a back up copy for safe keeping.

2) Find a toy company to discuss your toy idea with.

3) Get a Non Disclosure Agreement signed before providing details.

I have a free one on our website here; <http://customplustoys.com/clients.shtml>

4) Get a ballpark quote on your idea.

My company starts the quoting process here; <http://www.customplustoys.com/quote.php>

5) Decide on the amount of help you will need.

My company provides complete help from A to Z by creating a prototype, website, promotional materials and more in my Ultimate Service Level Package. I also provide just making a prototype as well which seems ‘cheaper’ but if you needed this guide I would recommend the “Basic Startup Package” that I offer as a minimum.

You can read up on the Service Levels I offer here; <http://www.customplustoys.com/menu.shtml>

6) While your prototype (your first toy sample) is being made you should turn your attention to *selling the toys*.

Too many of my past clients simply sit around and wait to get that first toy in their hand. They then get excited when they see their first toy and go in to production with 1,000 toys for example. I deliver the toys to them and then they call me and say, “Now what do I do with all of these toys?” I have always encouraged and I will always encourage you to start thinking about selling your toys first and then worry about how to make them.



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