

# Fair and Expo Favourites

The New Year has ushered in numerous toy shows and trade fairs showcasing both innovative technology in children's products and new twists on classic toys. Highlights include the proliferation of AI and GPT-assisted tools, products aimed at streamlining parenting, and a resurgence of reliable favourites such as miniatures, slime, and robotics.

The last few years have been tough on the toy industry, as periods of decline outpace periods of growth. In 2023, the U.S. toy industry saw a decline of 8% compared to the same 12-month period in 2022. This decline was attributed to factors such as continued inflation, depleted consumer savings, and rising consumer credit card debt, leading shoppers to focus more on "must-haves" and cut discretionary spending. That's why now, more than ever, the toy industry needs to look towards well built essentials and innovation. In an unpredictable economy, consumers put far more consideration into purchases, particularly when it comes to toys and family fun.

Most of the products we've seen at fairs this year have opted for one of three approaches:

- small, easy to produce products that are kind on customer wallets
- high-tech (usually AI enhanced) toys that are expensive but offer something new and interesting
- nostalgia

**We've hand picked a list of some of our favourite gizmos, gadgets and toys from the fairs of 2024 so far. These products stood out for their creativity, charm and unique approach engaging parents, kids and teens.**

## Tonies — Yoga Tonie

### Mindfulness audio products... with llamas

While Tonies has been around for over 10 years, the company's creativity and innovation are still booming. The most recent addition to the Tonies canon is Sara Llama, a cute, well-balanced yogi aimed at teaching children yoga and mindfulness. Sara is great at encouraging stillness and teaching kids how to manage their emotions. Making relaxation time fun can be hard, but Tonies have managed to do it in a way that maintains attention and draws kids in.



## MSI Claw

### Handheld gaming continues to thrive

Gone is the need for big units with massive fans and modular set ups. Instead, PC gaming of late has been more stripped back and accessible. Aside from the success of PC gaming laptops, there has also been a move to more portable set ups. That's where the MSI Claw comes in. Debuted at this year's CES, the MSI Claw rivals the Valve Steam Deck (portable PC gaming's best-seller). It boasts the newest processors, the most advanced AI tech (a common theme), and ergonomic design. We love that PC gaming is becoming more accessible and it can only benefit the industry to have more PC portables to choose from!



## Nex Playground



**Motion tracking gaming is back for another go around**

This fun 3-inch cube boasts very similar games to the EyeToy, as players dance, shoot baskets, and face off in various party games. The technology for motion tracking has improved exponentially, particularly (through AI) over the last 20 years and the games on the Nex Playground feel more intuitive and fun than they ever have before. It's nice to see more gaming brands lean into family friendly ventures and we hope to see more motion sensor games in the future.

## Godzilla R/C



**'Fire breathing', remote controlled, monster movie tie-in!!!**

This remote control behemoth is a whopping 2 feet long and walks, stomps and whips its tail. It also produces steam which billows out of its mouth and lights up. It's not the most innovative technology, but it is certainly the most impressive R/C item we have seen in a while.

## HyperX's Accessories



**Big progress for small hands**

The HP owned brand debuted a plethora of new accessories: the Cloud Mini Headsets, the Clutch Tanto Mini Wired Controller, and the Pulsefire Haste 2 Mini mouse. What's interesting about these products is that they are all designed with children in mind. Not only are they smaller, but products like the mini headset, also have additional features like volume limiting capabilities to ensure kids have a safe experience. Gaming products are so often aimed at teens and adults that it's nice to see brands like HyperX cater to the younger gaming demographic.

## Moxie Robot



**The next generation of AI robot friends...**

Moxie AI is an innovative tool designed for child development. It serves as a friend, tutor, and mentor to children, utilising advanced technology to support the acquisition of key developmental skills via interactive play. The companion also monitors progress through an app, offering a secure environment for children to enhance their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive abilities. Robots for kids have been around for a while, but the advancement of AI means we are really seeing these things come to life (both literally and figuratively).

## Loona Companion Robot



**The next generation of AI robot friends, with wheels!!**

Both Moxie and Loona were awarded honorary Innovation Awards at this year's CES. Unlike Moxie, Loona is more focused on games and chats, rather than development. It comes preloaded with ChatGPT, enabling users to realise natural human conversation and forge "companionships". The adorable little android also features gesture recognition, voice commands, and graphic programming, enabling users to customise instructions.



### CircuitMess Nibble



Retro gaming meets electronic engineering

Nibble turns learning electronics and coding into fun with its retro game console design. It has a simple assembly guide and comes loaded with four nostalgic games. Nibble offers kids the chance to learn STEM without feeling like they are learning STEM. It's a great way to start kids on their coding adventure and show them what is behind the electronics they use on a daily basis.

### Rubik's Cube 50th Anniversary Retro Cube



**"Don't call it a come back".  
Even-more-retro gaming gets a new outing**

Invented in 1974 by sculptor and professor of architecture Ernő Rubik, the Rubik's cube has been frustrating families and encouraging fanatics since its inception. The 50 year anniversary set doesn't boast anything out of the ordinary, but that's maybe the beauty of it. It borrows from the past, opting for more muted colours, boxier edges and slower turning.

### TikiSmart Accident Monitor



Wee-wee wi-fi widget

Fresh off a successful crowdfunding campaign, TikiSmart turned heads at CES with its innovative child safety system. This unique setup includes a wearable tracker for kids, designed to alert parents if their child nears potential hazards, like water or a steep drop. The package comes with a receiver, bracelets, and tags to mark danger zones, instantly notifying your phone and broadcasting an audible alert if your child gets too close. An optional "repeater" can broaden the system's range, similar to a Wi-Fi extender. While TikiSmart may stir mixed reactions, its appeal to families with pools, ponds, or fire pits is undeniable, offering a new layer of home safety.



In wrapping up this vibrant journey through 2024's early fairs and expos, it's crystal clear that innovation is redefining the toys of the future, while also paying homage to the past. From the quaint charm of the Rubik's Cube's 50th anniversary edition to the groundbreaking AI companionship offered by Moxie and Loona, each product we've encountered carries a promise of a more engaging, intuitive, and accessible tomorrow.

The importance of brands conducting thorough market research and pinpointing the perfect target audience cannot be overstated — it's the beacon guiding these innovations to the shores of consumer hearts. We look forward to the ongoing integration of tradition with technology, and the vast opportunities for brands to engage, entertain, and inspire across generations throughout 2024.