



Playing safe

A consumer's guide to the British Standard
for toy safety (BS EN 71 series)

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Toys are valuable tools for children's development. As well as keeping them entertained, toys help children find out about the world, learn new skills and make friends. But the importance of keeping children safe while they play can't be overstated.

Whether your child is playing with a climbing frame, a chemistry set or a plastic car, you need assurance that the product won't cause harm. Fortunately, consumers in the UK are well protected by legislation and the British Standard that underpins it.

BS EN 71 series – the basics

- Since July 2011, all toys sold in the European Union must comply with the European Toy Safety Directive 2009/48/EC, enacted in the UK as the Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011
- The British Standard BS EN 71, which comes in many parts, explains how manufacturers should meet the requirements of the Directive, stating how toys should be manufactured and tested and the safety warnings they must carry
- If toys don't comply, they can be removed from sale and manufacturers face prosecution and possible imprisonment

BS EN 71 series – the details

Before toys reach the shelves, they must undergo rigorous testing to ensure they are safe for children to use. Safety testing a teddy bear, for example, might include tugging its eyes, to make sure a young child couldn't easily pull them out and swallow them, and setting it alight, to check whether a child holding a teddy which caught fire, would have time to drop it before being burnt.

There are lots of different toys to test, from chemistry sets to swings and slides, and things to test for, such as:

- Making sure toys cannot stab, trap, mangle or choke
- Checking the fire safety of high-risk products such as fancy dress costumes, play houses and soft toys
- Ensuring children aren't at risk from elements such as lead, cadmium and mercury when sucking or chewing toys, with limits and test procedures for more than 80 potentially dangerous substances, such as solvents and preservatives
- Regulating the ingredients in finger paints, and requiring that these taste bitter to deter a child from swallowing them

More parts are always being added to the standard to cover a range of safety aspects from new methods of analysing certain chemicals to new specifications for domestic trampolines, cosmetic kits, and board games involving smell and taste. A full list of all the existing standards and work which is going on is available through the BSI website at: standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com

The latest changes

The European Toy Safety Directive strengthened the rules on toy safety and introduced significant changes including:

- Manufacturers and importers face new obligations to ensure that no unsafe toys enter the market
- From July 2013, the accessible parts of toys must no longer contain certain heavy metals such as lead, or chemicals that could provoke cancer, change genetic information or harm reproduction (known as CMR substances)
- Fragrances that are likely to cause allergies are also forbidden from July 2013

Labels and warnings

 All toys on sale in the UK must carry the CE mark. This shows that the manufacturer has declared that the toy meets the requirements of the European Directive and is intended for sale in the European Community.

 Also look for the Lion Mark. This tells consumers that the manufacturer follows the British Toy and Hobby Association code of practice and guarantees that the toy meets the requirements of BS EN 71.

You might see various other labels on certain toys, as required by the Directive. For example:

 Toys that might be dangerous for children under three years old must state: 'Warning. Not suitable for children under 36 months', together with an indication of the risks, such as choking on small parts. They may also include the optional symbol pictured

- Toys such as slides and climbing frames should state: 'For domestic use only', and specify whether they are for indoor or outdoor use
- Food that contains toys should state: 'Toy inside: adult supervision recommended'
- Water toys such as inflatables must state: 'Warning: only to be used in water in which the child is within its depth and under supervision'

Toy Safety Tips

- Young children can choke on small items so avoid toys like marbles or anything with small detachable parts for children under three years old
- Supervise young children when they play with older children's toys
- Avoid toys with long strings and straps for infants
- Check that a child's fingers won't get caught in any moving parts
- Discard any plastic wrapping immediately
- Always follow instructions and warnings
- Check toys frequently for breaks and hazards such as splinters
- Report any safety problems to the manufacturer or retailer. You can also contact your local Trading Standards Officers, who can investigate unsafe products



Frequently asked questions

Q. What is BSI?

A. BSI is the UK National Standards Body which has been developing standards for more than 100 years to make products and services safer for consumers. Standards set out good practice and guidelines for organizations to follow. BSI is the UK member of CEN, the European organization for standardization.

Q. Who developed the BS EN 71 series?

A. It was developed by the European Committee for Toy Safety, which is made up of experts from trade associations, professional bodies, test houses, industry and the BSI Consumer and Public Involvement Network. For further information, please contact consumer@bsigroup.com

Q. Do all toys have to meet the safety requirements in the Directive?

A. The Directive defines a toy as any product 'designed or intended, whether or not exclusively, for use in play by children under 14 years of age'. However, some toys are specifically excluded from the Directive, including:

- Toys with steam or combustion engines
- Playground equipment for public use
- Kits for assembly of scale models
- Sports equipment and swimming aids
- Computer games
- Babies' soothers

These items still have to comply with other UK consumer safety law.

Q. Do any other British Standards cover toy safety?

A. British Standard BS EN 62115 sets standards for the safety of electrical toys, and the BS EN 1176 series relates to non-domestic playground equipment.

Q. Where can I get a copy of the British Standards?

A. Your local public library may be able to help you access a reference copy, or you can buy a copy from BSI at shop.bsigroup.com

Useful information

British Standards (BSI)

020 8996 9001

bsigroup.com

British Toy and Hobby Association

(controls the Lion Mark)

btha.co.uk

Child Accident Prevention Trust

capt.org.uk

Citizens Advice

(for advice on consumer rights)

citizensadvice.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

(provides information about toy safety and keeping children safe)

rospa.com

Trading Standards Institute

(consumer information and links to local trading standards offices)

tradingstandards.gov.uk

The BSI logo consists of the lowercase letters 'bsi' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small red dot is positioned to the right of the letter 'i'.

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