

the cartoon bear. They named their sweet, innocent creation Teddy's Bear and placed it in their store window.

Shoppers were delighted with Teddy's Bear and wanted one of their own. In order to keep up with public demand, the Michtoms helped found the first teddy bear manufacturing company.

Since then, teddy bears have been produced in abundance. Today, all types of teddy bears are manufactured, some for kids and some for adults, specifically collectors.

Although your niece might become a teddy bear collector some day, it may not be your intention to start her down that path. You simply want to find her a fuzzy friend that will comfort her in the same way your teddy bear comforted you. If your niece were older, you could ask her what kind of teddy bear she wants. She might have a specific color or character in mind. Because she is so young, however, you are just going to have to play it by ear.

Start your search by researching all of the current teddy bear fads, as well as popular brands and characters. You may come across something that will suit your niece perfectly. Whether you do or don't, you need to go shopping. That way, you can see the merchandise firsthand and test it out.

Set a budget and stick to it. If you don't want to spend more than \$50, then don't. Go into each store armed with your budget and start looking at what's available. Chances are you will want your niece to be able to cuddle with the teddy bear, so be careful of the size. Don't get her a gigantic teddy bear that she will have to lug around. She probably won't play with the bear much.

Pay attention to the details of the teddy bear. Make sure it is soft. Generally, the plusher the bear, the more likely the child will play with it. Check the label and see if the teddy bear is washable. If your niece grows to like her bear as much as you liked yours, it will become dirty from use and need a good wash from time to time. Avoid purchasing a light-colored bear; stick to darker colors to camouflage stains.

Finally, do a touch test. Squeeze the teddy bear and yank it. Treat it as your young niece will and make sure the construction is sound. You don't want the stitching to come undone, or the eyes or nose to fall off after just a few weeks of play.

Buying the right teddy bear for your niece will take some time. Don't rush the process, or you could end up with an inferior product that comes apart within weeks of your niece playing with it. By then, it will be too late for you to return or exchange the bear. 📺



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