

Newsweek

The Tip Sheet

Smart Strategies for Your Money, Health, Family, Technology, Design, Real Estate, Travel



THE LIST

Our top picks for the week ahead.

BUY the 2005 Hess Truck. This year, it's an emergency truck with rescue vehicle. Kids will love the dual searchlights and sirens (\$20; www.hesstoytruck.com for info).

EAT white truffles. It's peak season, and this year's crop is the most fragrant in years. Those willing to splurge can order them at sabatino.com (\$107 per ounce). Then shave over pasta or risotto.

READ 'The Art Book for Children' (\$15.95; www.phaidon.com). In clear, simple language, this hardcover teaches kids how to examine paintings and sculptures, with examples from Picasso to Pollock to Giacometti. Even adults will learn a thing or two.

GIVE Latke Larry (\$17.95; latkelarry.com) for Chanukah. He'll sing you a happy tune (voiced by actor Jerry Stiller). Proceeds go to charity.

RENT 'Murderball,' an absorbing documentary about a group of men who play wheelchair rugby. But their story is about more than the sport.

TECHNOLOGY

TIME TO GET PLUGGED IN



WEB CAST: This Spider-Man game plugs into your TV

BY RAMIN SETOODEH

HARD-CORE GAMERS lined up around the block last week for the new \$400 Xbox. But the toy industry is targeting the rest of us—children, teens and adults—through a more primitive technology: plug and play. These games come with a joystick and connect directly into your TV, banking on the idea that you don't need an expensive console to be hooked on Ms. Pac-Man.

That sounds about right. The gadgets have brought in \$40 million in sales through October of this year, up 150 percent over the same period in 2004, reports the NPD Group. The draw: prices starting at about \$20, and the fact that the controllers are easy enough for parents and younger kids.

Toy stores have spent the past few years pushing retro titles, like Centipede and Mortal Kombat, which have a vintage appeal for older gamers. The new Wheel of Fortune (\$19.99; amazon.com) is a perfect illustration of why the category has its fans. The game offers fewer bells and whistles than the outdated Nintendo 64 edition, but its sim-

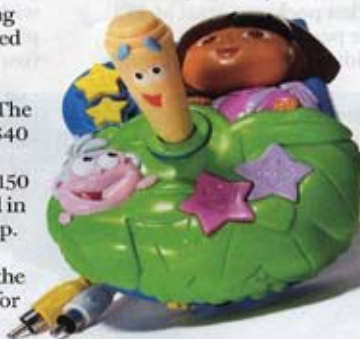
pler levels and sound effects give it a timeless arcade feel. Also fun: the Classic Sports Game (\$19.99; bestbuy.com), which takes three handhelds—a football, baseball and basketball game—and combines them into one unit.

But the future of plug and play rests with younger fans. More manufacturers now want to bring in tweens with original content and cooler controllers. The Hot Wheels Racing Game (\$21.49; amazon.com) lets players swerve

around like pros. The graphics look outdated enough to be from Sega Genesis, but it's a good starting point for first-timers. The same goes for Nicktoons (\$19.99; amazon.com), with games featuring Jimmy Neutron and SpongeBob.

The girls' market is also beginning to grow. DreamLife (\$44.99; hasbro.com) lets them enter a world where they're old enough to shop at the mall. Barbie I Love Pets (\$19.99; bestbuy.com) leads players on an animal-saving journey. Dora the Explorer (\$24.99; shop.nickjr.com) has her own adventure, too.

Newer titles are rolling out



Check out our list of the 10 best children's museums coast to coast

Read a Q&A with the captain of the quadriplegic rugby team in 'Murderball'

Get tips from the host of 'What Not to Wear' at Newsweek.com on MSNBC

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY DAMEN DONCK FOR NEWSWEEK. COURTESY OF THINWAY TOYS. PHOTOGRAPH BY DAMEN DONCK FOR NEWSWEEK (3)

more inventive ways to let kids navigate. A thrilling Spider-Man game (\$39.99; amazon.com) requires you to suit up with motion-activated gloves that send a signal to the TV, allowing Spidey to mount walls or sling webs. It also comes with a chest plate that vibrates every time you're hit. Other winners: a Stars Wars game that includes a wireless light saber (\$29.88; target.com), Wild Adventure Mini Golf (\$44.63; walmart.com) has a putter, and Whac-A-Mole (\$29.99; amazon.com) arms you with a small mallet to smack the hairy arcade guys. With devices like these, who needs 3-D games?



LOW-TECH FUN: (Clockwise from upper left) Wheel of Fortune, Classic Sports, Dora the Explorer, Star Wars and Whac-A-Mole