EARLY GIFT GUIDE

Elmo once again tops list of Target's 'Hot Toys'

Barbie's Dream House, Furby among popular items

NEW YORK (AP) – An Elmo that gives out hugs, Barbie's Dream House, and a new striped Furby all made Target Corp.'s list of top toys for the holiday season.

Retailers place their bets early on which toys will be hits and then spend heavily to market them to spur sales during the holiday season. It's a crucial time because holiday sales can make up to 40 percent of a retailers' annual revenue.

Toy sales have been weak in North America, Europe and Australia, due to a weak video game market, an uncertain economy and continued popularity of electronic gadgets like smartphones and tablets. BMO Capital Markets analyst Gerrick Johnson estimates total toy revenue will be down 2 percent to about $21 billion.

Among the top picks: Sesame Street's Big Hugs Elmo, a mechanical Elmo that gives out hugs and sings songs; Hasbro's Furby Boom, a robotic toy pet; a Target exclusive Mattel Monster High doll called Power Ghouls; and Spin-Master's Flutterbye Flying Fairy, a doll that can flutter on air.

This year, for the first time the retailer is adding electronics, video games and sporting goods to its top toy list. Several are exclusives at Minneapolis-based Target including LeapFrog LeapPad2 Explorer Disney Princess Bundle, a tablet for kids that includes Disney Princess sticker sheets and digital wallpaper, and a Razor Lighted Wheel-A-Scooter.

To promote its "hot toys," Target is featuring Jonna Mendez, a former CIA agent turned toy expert, who is giving tips to parents on how to figure out which toys kids really want at abullseyeview.com in October and November.

For a full list of Target's 33 top toy picks go to Target.com/KidsGifts

TARGET'S 'HOT TOYS' LIST

9 Months to 3 Years

* Disney Sofia The First 10" Doll (Target Exclusive)
* Fisher-Price Little People Disney Princess Klip Klop Stable
* Furreal Friends Cuddles My Giggly Monkey
* Sesame Street Big Hugs Elmo

4 Years to 6 Years

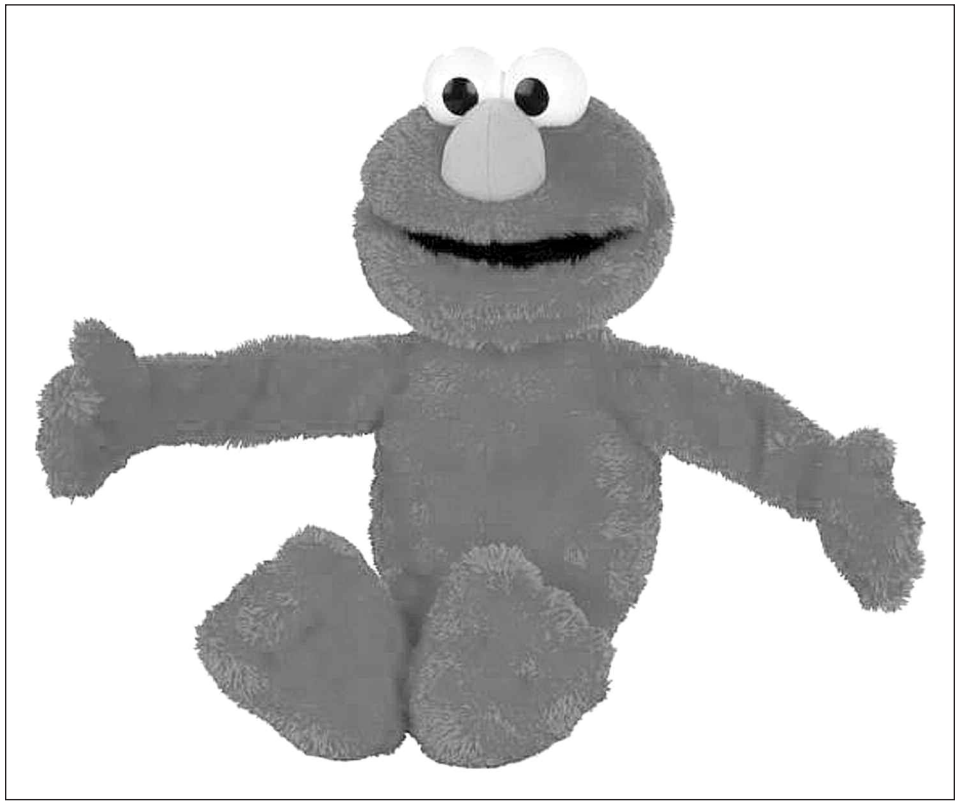
* 4-pk. Disney Planes Die-Cast Gift Set (Target Exclusive)
* LeapFrog LeapPad2 Disney Princess Enchanted Bundle (Target Exclusive)
* Imaginext Justice League Javelin (Target Exclusive)
* Disney Frozen Anna or Elsa Dolls Toddler Dress Gift Sets (Target Exclusive)
* Angry Birds Go Pirate Ship
* Fisher-Price Octonauts Octopod Play Set
* Kidtrax SRT Viper 6-Volt Ride-On Car
* Lalaloopsy Loopy Hair Doll
* LEGO Friends Downtown Bakery
* Barbie Dream House
* MEGA Bloks Hot Wheels Super Stunt Test Facility
* Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles R/C Shellraiser
* Zoomer

7 Years to 9 Years

* Monster High Power Ghouls Doll (Target Exclusive)
* 6-pk. Marvel Titan Heroes (Target Exclusive)
* Razor Lighted-Wheel A Scooter (Target Exclusive)
* 2-pk. Skylanders Swap Force (Target Exclusive)
* LEGO Chima Equilas Ultra Striker (Target Exclusive)
* Transformers Beast Hunter Beast Fire Predaking Dragon (Target Exclusive)
* Furby Boom
* NERF Elite RapidStrike CS-18 Blaster
* Hot Wheels Triple Track Twister
* Flutterbye Flying Fairy

10 Years and Up

* Air Hogs Atmosphere
* Beats Solo On-Ear Headphones
* PlayStation 4
* Samsung Galaxy S4
* Spy Gear Panosphere 360 Spy Cam
* Xbox One



AP photo

'Big Hugs Elmo' is expected to be among the most popular toys this holiday season.

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