

PARENTS SPENDING LESS ON EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE KIDS, NEW SURVEY REVEALS

Submitted by: Talking Tots

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Talking Tots Reveals Only 10% of parents will cut spending on their children in 2009

Lytham, 12 November 2008: Britain might be in the middle of a credit crunch, but 80% of parents would rather spend less on new clothes or eating out than cutting back on their children's activities.

A survey of 1,000 parents conducted by pre-school activity group Talking Tots (<http://www.talkingtots.info>) found that half of parents expect to increase spending on activities such as toddler classes, swimming and baby yoga next year. A further 40% of respondents said they expected their spending to remain the same. On average, parents spend £650 a year on preschool classes and activities, with 10% of parents spending more than £1,000 a year.

Tracey Park, founder of Talking Tots, says: "There's no doubt families are feeling the effects of the credit crunch, but so far it seems toddlers are being spared from the cutbacks. Mums see toddler classes as a really important way to help children learn new skills, as well as providing an opportunity to socialise and make friends."

Activity classes provide important benefits to children, says Sue Atkins (<http://www.positive-parents.com>), parenting coach and author of *Raising Happy Children*: "Classes are more than just a way to entertain the kids for an hour. They have a real impact on children's development, and are a wonderful way to bond, build confidence and learn social skills such as taking turns, listening and sharing."

If money is tight, Sue advises focusing on classes that provide a rounded experience. "Remember you are your child's greatest teacher and you don't have to spend a fortune. Look for one or two activities that offer children lots of fun, the chance to develop over time, and which are well organised, and remember that your child will get as much pleasure out of a walk in the park or a visit to the library as they will from more expensive outings."

Key Survey Findings

* 90% of parents attend at least one organised activity with their children each week.

* The most popular pre-school activities are swimming (attended by 60% of toddlers), communication and development classes (attended by 40% of respondents) and singing groups (35%)

* When asked what they would be prepared to sacrifice to pay for their child's activities, 81% of parents would stop eating out, 75% would reduce spending on toys and presents, while 64% would spend less on new clothes.

* The most popular free activities for young children are visiting the park, story time at the library, nature walks at the beach or woodland, mother and toddler groups, and play dates with friends. More

unusual activities included visiting art galleries and taking children geo-caching, a sort of high-tech treasure hunt.

Tips for Parents

For parents looking to save money, Sue Atkins advises only attending a pre-school activity if it:

- * develops or encourages specific new skills in your child
- * is run by professional, well-trained staff
- * is progressive, and develops as your child matures
- * is based on playing, exploring and learning in a fun atmosphere
- * encourages children's social skills such as turn-taking, confidence and empathy

About Talking Tots:

Full survey results, images and interviews available on request. Contact the press office on (01253) 731 986 or email press@talkingtots.info

Talking Tots (<http://www.talkingtots.info>) is the UK's fastest growing pre-school activity group, providing classes that help children aged 12 months to 4 years to communicate with confidence. Talking Tots recently won the "Best Innovation" award in the 2008 What's on 4 Little Ones Awards, and was highly commended in the "Best Toddler Development" category.

About Sue Atkins:

Sue Atkins is a Parent Coach, former Deputy Head with 22 years teaching experience, mother to two teenage children and is an NLP Master Practitioner and Trainer trained by Paul McKenna. She has written many books on self esteem, toddlers and teenagers and has a collection of Parenting Made Easy Toolkits available from her website. She is also the author of "Raising Happy Children for Dummies" one in the black and yellow series published worldwide and available from her website. For more information, see www.positive-parents.com

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