

Electronics, online links shape new generation of toys

Modeling clay wouldn't stand a chance in today's toy market.

With fancy electronics and links to cyberspace, many of today's hot toys combine sophisticated play functions with educational missions.

This year, retailers say the hottest toys make the leap to online communities. Products such as Webkinz, Karito Kids and Ty Girlz appear at most every toy store and allow owners to establish cyber-personalities for their dolls.

Each toy comes with a special code, allowing children to join an online community. The online toy worlds offer safe chat rooms and games, where children can earn points as currency to enhance their doll's virtual life.

Karito Kids are the newest Web-linked toys. There are five dolls available, representing China, Kenya, New York, Italy and Mexico. At www.karitokids.com, children can play games and learn facts about different cultures and countries.

