10 children's educational awards, and what a badge costs

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Ten awards for kids' learning products, from NAPPA to Mensa Select: who judges, what entry costs, which are gone, and which badges can't be bought.

Most badges on a toy box or an app page were paid for in one way: the maker paid a fee to be judged. A few can't be bought at all, and one famous one no longer exists. This list covers ten awards for children's learning products and content, with who runs each, what it costs to enter, and what the badge tells a parent. It is a companion to the edtech software awards list. Fees and dates were read from each organiser's pages in November 2026; where a page would not load, we say so.

1. NAPPA (National Parenting Product Awards). Judged by: parents, many of them nurses, educators or child-development experts, using a "would I buy this for my own child" test. Cost: the organiser's fee page lists $456 for one product, falling to $351 each at five or more, plus two physical samples. What it means: NAPPA says it is not pay-to-play and that an award is not guaranteed. The fee is still required to be considered, and no win rate is published.

2. Mom's Choice Awards. Judged by: a volunteer panel of educators, media experts, parents, librarians and children, scoring things like production quality, educational value and originality. Cost: the organiser confirms an application fee exists and says it does not guarantee a win; we found no published amount. What it means: a licensable seal for marketing.

3. Academics' Choice Awards. Judged by: a panel of parents, educators, scientists and librarians, by subject and grade level. Cost: not confirmed; the entry pages would not load for us. What it means: a long record of edtech winners such as ExploreLearning Gizmos, Reading Eggs and Boom Learning, though we could not verify a 2024 to 2026 winner list.

4. Teachers' Choice Awards (Learning Magazine). Judged by: teachers, on quality, instructional value, ease of use and innovation. It began in 1994, but the newest release we found was years old, so we could not confirm it is still running.

5. Toy of the Year (Toy Foundation). Judged by: the toy industry; the 2026 winners were announced in February with 113 finalists in 16 categories. The Educational Toy of the Year went to Thames & Kosmos's Coding Chameleon. What it means: a retail honour for physical toys, won mostly by large toy companies.

6. Mensa Select. Judged by: about 400 American Mensa members over four days, for board games only. Usually around five winners a year. We found no entry fee. What it means: one of the few where the players, not a sales team, decide.

7. Common Sense Media ratings and seals. Judged by: its own reviewers. A nonprofit, it says its ratings aren't influenced by creators or funders. Cost: you can't apply or pay. What it means: the hardest to get and the most trusted by schools.

8. Caldecott and Newbery Medals (ALA). The picture-book and writing medals chosen by librarians. Publishers submit books; there is no badge to buy. They apply to books, not apps.

9. Cybils. Bloggers' book awards that began around 2006. Its own site says it is ending, which is one source, so check before you cite it.

10. Parents' Choice (closed). Founded in 1978, the Foundation closed on 31 July 2022. A "Parents' Choice" badge on a product today is from before then. Its place has been taken by newer seal programs.

Two more with published prices

- Kidscreen Awards (children's media and apps): a later fee check found $400 by 10 July, $450 by 31 July and $500 after, though the page did not say which year; the 2026 round closed on 21 August.
- Webby Awards: student entries were $105 to $115 and discounted entries $255 to $265 for the 31st edition; we did not retrieve the regular fee.

Common Sense Media has a Privacy Seal that companies apply for, with no fee stated, which is separate from its editorial ratings.

How the repeat winners win

- They enter the whole line. NAPPA's price drops with five or more entries, which suits a company with many products.
- They announce every badge. Winners appear in per-brand press releases and on retailer pages, so one program makes many news items.
- They pay to be judged, not to win. That is true as far as it goes, and it still means a small maker without the fee never appears on the list.

We could not find a verified multi-year ranking of who wins most, and neither NAPPA nor Mom's Choice publishes how many entrants win. Treat claims of "most awarded" as the company's own.

How to read a badge as a parent

- Ask who paid. A badge from a program with an entry fee tells you the maker spent money, and a person tried it.
- Look for the editorial ones. Common Sense and the book medals can't be bought.
- Check the year. Several seals outlive the program that gave them.

What this means for Peabody

Peabody (stories for kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up, and has not won any of these. We do not plan to buy a seal: we would rather be reviewed by Common Sense and by teachers than put a badge on a page we paid for. The ten above are the ones we would copy the good parts of, a children's panel and a real trial, and then go further by publishing what the panel saw. Read the library and judge for yourself.

Sources

- NAPPA fee page and "get to know" page, nappaawards.com, read November 2026.
- Mom's Choice Awards, "Can you buy a Mom's Choice Award", momschoiceawards.com.
- Toy of the Year 2026 winners, as reported by Spielwarenmesse and Toys 'N' Playthings, February 2026.
- American Mensa, 2025 Mensa Select winners.
- Common Sense Media, "About our ratings"; Cybils, "About"; Wikipedia, "Parents' Choice Award".

Free at peabody.kids/blog/10-childrens-educational-awards-and-what-a-badge-costs