**Toys That Weren't Meant to Be Toys**

**Play-Doh was originally a wallpaper cleaner: Joseph McVicker, head of Kutol Products Company in Cincinnati, Ohio, heard from a local teacher that students were struggling to use stiff modeling clay in the classroom. He realized Kutol's wallpaper cleaning putty made a squishy substitute and shipped some to schools in 1955. Within a year, McVicker and his uncle founded Rainbow Crafts Company to sell the newly named Play-Doh in 1.5 pound chunks of off-white. Soon the putty was sold in primary colors, too, building it into a crafting staple.**

**Slinky was inspired by a battleship spring: In 1943, naval engineer Richard James attempted to design a spring for stabilizing sensitive equipment aboard ships in rough waters. Accidentally knocking one off the shelf, he watched the spring "walk" down a stack of books and tables before standing in a coil on the floor. James shared the trick with his wife, Betty, who scoured the dictionary for a name, settling on Slinky for the spring's sleek, sinuous gait. With a $500 loan, the Jameses had 400 Slinkys made and in 1945 gave their first department store demo., They sold their entire supply in 90 minutes.**

**Frisbees started as pie plates: The Frisbie Pie Company, founded in 1871, was known as much for its pie tins as for the tasty pastries they carried. The game of tossing empty Frisbie tins through the air quickly spread from schoolyards near the Connecticut factory to college campuses like Yale University's, until they became so synonymous with flying disks that Wham-O toys loosed its own plastic Frisbee line in 1957.**

**Silly Putty was meant to be a rubber substitute: In the early 1940s, Japan's Invasion of rubber-producing Asian countries sent American scientists scrambling to devise a replacement. Engineer James Wright's combination of boric acid and silicone oil proved too weak as a rubber but could bounce higher and stretch farther. Wright sent samples to scientists around the world in hopes that one could find a practical use for his "nutty putty." None could. But in 1949, marketing consultant Peter Hodgson did. He bought production rights, renamed it Silly Putty, and stretched this wartime curio into toy history. *(Brandon Specktor, in the September, 2015 issue of Reader's Digest, on pages 134 and 135)***

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