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Tech: Desk Toys

For kids and cubicle-bound workers, makers offer gadgets that plug into USB ports

By John Jurgensen

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For one growing category of electronic toys, batteries aren't included -- or even necessary. Instead, the gadgets are plugged into a computer's USB port, the outlet typically used to connect a printer or MP3 player. The toy industry has been focusing on electronics to energize sales. As of October, sales of "youth electronics" accounted for 3.4% of total toy sales this year, up from 2.7% during the same period last year -- the largest increase of any category, according to the NPD Group. While some USB toys are made with computer-savvy children in mind, many are aimed at office workers livening up their cubicles. Below, three popular examples.



Stewie Izmo, \$28

urbanoutfitters.com

On the hit cartoon "Family Guy," Stewie Griffin is a toddler who makes biting remarks in a British accent. Here, his sarcasm is aimed at computer users when they strike certain buttons on the keyboard.

**USB Microscope QX5, \$80**

thinkgeek.com

Images of objects under the lens, which magnifies up to 200 times, are displayed on the computer screen and can be retouched and saved as pictures or video. The lens on the microscope can also be removed to examine larger objects.



USB Missile Launcher, \$40

thinkgeek.com

The computer's mouse is used to aim and fire foam ordnance. Online retailer ThinkGeek.com advertises the gadget as a WMD ("weapon of much distraction") and says it's one of the store's top-selling toys.

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