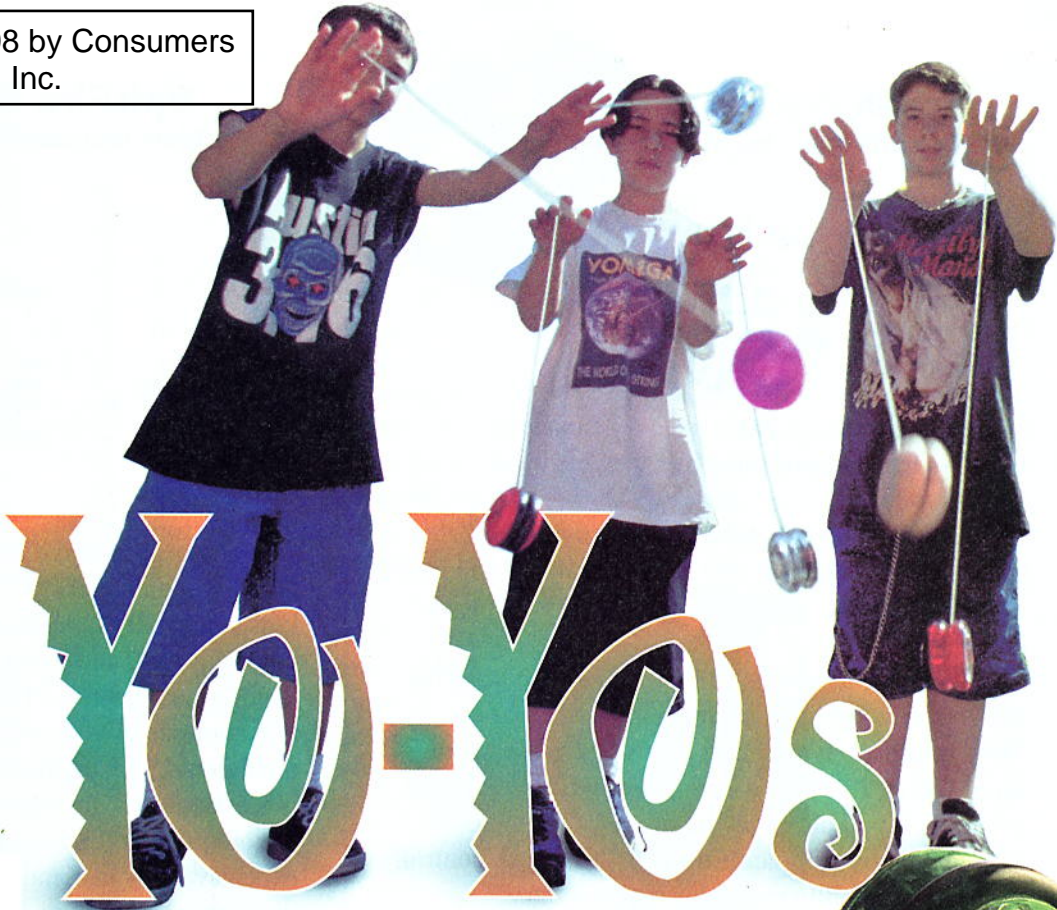


More than 36 companies now make yo-yos in dozens of materials, colors, shapes, and sizes. Many make claims about spins, returns, tricks, and more.

How can you pick the best yo for you? To help out, ZILLIONS asked 18 kids to play-test nine popular yo-yos. Here's what they thought!



Fireball Yo-Yo

Yomega Corp., \$10*

This transaxle yo-yo claims it can spin "three times longer than ordinary yo-yos."

Some testers, like Bob, 16, said the *Fireball* "started off great, but then it wouldn't return." Tyler, 11, complained that it "can hurt when it's coming back to your hand."

Still, most kids said the *Fireball* delivered. They chose it as their favorite more than any other model. Matt, 11, an advanced yo-yoer, called the *Fireball* "the longest-spinning yo-yo I have ever used. It's good for a lot of *around-the-worlds*" (a kind of trick). And "you don't have to throw it hard to make it spin," added Claire, 14. Joshua, 9, liked being able to "take it apart if it gets stuck." He also said it was "good for beginners, and the easiest to do tricks with."



Yo-Yo With a "Brain"

Yomega Corp., \$13

The *Brain* has a transaxle and a clutch (see "Yo-Yo Vocabulary," below).

"The yo-yo with a brain?" said Marissa, 13. "This I have to see!"

Some kids thought the *Brain's* clutch worked *too* well. "It *always* comes back up," complained Marissa. "It's very difficult to get it to sleep," said Sajid, 14. (ZILLIONS engineers recommend a forceful throw.)

But overall, kids liked the *Brain*. Lauren, 14, found it "very easy to use! It winds up easily, and the string never gets tangled. I even made up a new trick with it."

Claire also thought it was "excellent for beginners, cool-looking, and fun to do tricks with."



Yo-Yo Vocabulary

Axle: Shaft between two halves.

Fixed-axle yo-yo: The axle and two halves spin together as a unit.

Transaxle yo-yo: Axle spins separately from the two halves. Often sleeps longer than a fixed-axle yo-yo.

Clutch-return: During spin, weights inside yo-yo compress small springs. When yo-yo slows, springs push out a part that grabs the axle, forcing the yo-yo back up.

Sleeping: Yo-yo spins at end of extended string without returning.

* All prices indicate what we paid. They may vary in your area.

Turn the page for more yo-yo reviews. →

Koosh Pro Yo

OddzOn Inc./Playmaxx Inc., \$10



This plastic yo-yo has a fixed-axle made of wood — which is preferred by many beginners and yo-yo fans.

A couple of testers had trouble with the *Pro Yo*. “I accidentally dropped it, and it fell apart!” complained Lauren. (ZILLIONS engineers, however, found it to be durable.)

But mostly, testers loved it. Marissa found that the *Pro Yo* really “was a great spinner.” Neil, 12, liked its “easy returns.” “It’s the best yo-yo I have ever used,” raved David, 12. “I’m learning new tricks, my friends love it — it will definitely be fun for weeks to come.” “Three thumbs up!” said Elisa, 12. “Comfort, control, style, and durability make this puppy a ‘go.’”

Black Mamba

Abbe Toys, \$16

The package claims that this yo-yo is “easy to assemble.” And for Jackye, 9, it was both “easy and fun.” Will, 15, agreed: “I liked assembling it myself. It also has a good weight and a good design.” But Scott found it “a little bit hard to put together. Read the directions carefully!” he advised.

Overall, many kids liked the *Black Mamba*. Elisa liked that she “could play with it without spending half my time winding it.” (Like the *Brain*, the *Black Mamba* has a clutch to help the yo-yo return.) “It’s easy to sleep and easy to do tricks with,” said Will. Beginner Samantha, 11, agreed the *Black Mamba*’s “great spin made it easy to use, and it helped me become a pretty good yo-yoer!” Claire liked that it was “sturdy. “It accidentally hit the couch, and nothing happened to it.”



SpitFire BC YoYo

What's Next manufacturing inc., \$5



Many people find it’s easiest to learn yo-yoing on all-wood models, like the *SpitFire*. It satisfied kids at a variety of skill levels. “You can control it well, and it fits great in your hand,” raved Jackye. “The package said you could do all the yo-yo tricks with it, and I could.” Libby, 13, found it “more professional-feeling than the *Brain*,” a more popular (and more expensive) yo-yo. Sandy, 15, was “ripping so many cool tricks,” she didn’t realize how much time went by. And Matt said “it actually looks like fire when it spins!”

But not all kids could make the *SpitFire* spin. “It doesn’t spring back up easily or do tricks very well,” griped Elisa. Some kids, like Tyler, couldn’t get it to sleep long enough. But even he admitted it was “a decent yo-yo that works pretty well.”

Is your loop too small?



Push the string through the loop (as shown). *Voilà* — your circulation is restored!

Thanks to these kid testers: Tyler Bosmeny, Tucson, Ariz.; Libby Branham, Edina, Minn.; Glen Czernik, Chicago, Ill.; Scott Flanagan, Virginia Beach, Va.; David Goldin, Newton, Mass.; Lauren Hurd, Grand Junction, Colo.; Claire Jadin, Shiocton, Wis.; Jackye Lagen, Mukilteo, Wash.; Elisa McCarthy, Denver, Colo.; Marissa Newhall, Tequesta, Fla.; Sajid Pothiwala, Norwich, Conn.; Neil Rutledge, Lincoln, Neb.; Matt Shorten, West Chester, Pa.; Samantha Siegal, Acton, Mass.; Joshua Solomon, Acton, Mass.; Bob Steward, Arlington, Mass.; Will Zempel, Peoria, Ill.; Sandy Ziemann, Lusby, Md. Special thanks also to the staff of Dragon’s Den, Yonkers, N.Y., and their yo-yo class members.



Yo Yo Ball

Empire Industries Inc., \$6

Yo Yo Ball — a plastic ball with a rewinding string — claims it “*always* comes back to you.” But for Sajid, the string fell out of its groove five minutes into the test, and “I had no way of fixing it,” he said. Other testers complained that it was hard to get the *Yo Yo Ball* to travel far. “You must jerk your hand a bit, which starts to hurt after a while,” said Samantha.

But some testers said it was great to let *Yo Yo Ball* do all the work, “especially after having to wind all the other yo-yos,” said Sandy. She used it to invent her own tricks.



Pro...Play Yo Yo

Cool Things Corp., \$6

“This yo-yo looks fun because the package says it lights up and makes laser sounds,” said Tyler. But for many of our testers — and our ZILLIONS engineers — this plastic yo-yo (with a *plastic* fixed axle) broke quickly. “It falls apart pretty easily,” noted Scott, after one day of play. Claire fixed hers when it broke, but then the sound stopped working.

That didn’t bother some testers — Tyler was happy his broke! “The noise was sooo annoying,” complained Will, after one day. “Can I throw it away now?” begged Sandy. “I’m ready to take a hammer to it,” Marissa said.



Duncan Imperial

Flambeau Products Corp., \$3

“If it isn’t a *Duncan*, it isn’t a yo-yo!” reads the package’s only claim. The plastic yo-yo has a fixed, metal axle — not ideal for beginners, because the string can slip.

Some testers noticed a few good points. Sajid was able to *walk the dog* (a kind of trick) and thought the *Imperial* had “a traditional feel to it. And once you get used to it, it’s very fun,” he said.

But no matter what their skill level, most of our testers didn’t like the *Imperial*. Jackye couldn’t get it to stop sleeping. “It’s extremely hard to do anything with this yo-yo, even wind it,” said Will.



Creativity for Kids Yo-Yo

Creative Art Activities Inc., \$6

You put this basic, all-wood yo-yo together. It comes unassembled, with paints to make your own design. Most kids agreed with Glen, 12, that the yo-yo was “fun to paint and make.” “I like how it incorporates art with yo-yos,” noted Libby.

But a few days later, said Sandy, “the originality of making the yo-yo myself has totally worn off.” “It’s more a craft than a yo-yo,” added Libby. Will could barely get his to go up and down. And most kids disagreed with the package’s claim that you could do a lot of tricks with it. “The string is cheap, too short, and tangles often,” said Tyler.

(ZILLIONS engineers note that strings can easily be replaced.)