

AN IDEAL BABY REGISTRY »

The list of specific purchases varies from one parent to another. If you are planning to take advantage of a lot of hand-me-downs, for instance, your needs may be slimmer. A mom who plans to breast-feed will have different needs than a parent who's opting to bottle-feed. That said, these are the most important items to consider.

Nursery and Sleep

A safe place for your baby to sleep is the No. 1 registry must-have, says Joe Shamie, president of Delta Children. "Portable cribs and play yards are the next best place for a baby to sleep if a crib isn't available, making them great for short vacations or trips to Grandma's," he says.

- Crib**, along with a mattress and sheets
- Changing table**—or a changing table topper that you can fit on top of a dresser
- Baby monitor**
- Rocker** or gliding chair
- Storage**: closets, drawers, and other organizational systems. "Baby clothes are small, so it's easier to have drawer separators or boxes to keep things organized," says Molly Pross, a baby gear expert and founder of Bump Bestie.
- Baby swing and bouncy chair**: These will allow you to put baby down in a comfortable—and safe—space, says Eva Klein, certified infant and child sleep consultant, mom of three, and owner and founder of My Sleeping Baby. "Otherwise, [parents] could find themselves holding the baby all day, which is exhausting!" she adds.
- Swaddle blankets**: Klein notes that infants sleep best when they're properly swaddled.
- White noise machine**: Opt for one that won't automatically shut off, Klein advises.
- Soothing and play items**: Think: pacifiers and blankets, Pross says. And, you'll want to have some toys and books for baby's first six months, too.

Clothing and Diapering

What will baby wear? You may be surprised by how many times in a day you'll change baby's outfits—and diapers.

- An outfit for coming home from the hospital**—remember, you'll be buckling your baby into a car seat, so choose something slim fitting with legs.
- Clothing**—including footed pajamas, bodysuits, side-snap tops, socks, and booties
- Burp cloths**
- Sleep sacks**
- Hats, sweaters, swimsuits, snowsuits**: These, of course, will vary depending on the season
- Diapers, diaper cream, and wipes**

Feeding

Your needs here will vary depending on if you'll be breast-feeding or bottle-feeding.

- Baby bottles, a breast pump, and bottle cleaning supplies, including a drying rack**: Check whether your health insurance plan covers the cost of a breast pump before adding it to your registry.
- Formula**
- Nursing bras and supportive pillows**: Liz Jeneault, vice president of marketing for Faveable and a Philadelphia-based mom of a toddler, recommends the My Brest Friend pillow. "It definitely helped me when I was super tired and struggling to stay awake! I feel it also helped my baby latch on better," she says.

Bath Time

What will you need for bathing your infant?

- A baby-sized towel and washcloths**
- Bath toys**
- A soft cover for the bathtub faucet**
- An infant tub**
- Shampoo, soap, and lotion**: Look for products specifically made for baby.

Transportation

Even city parents who only rarely drive should get a car seat, says Sarah Haverstick, safety advocate at Evenflo. "You never know when you may need to utilize a taxi or ride-share vehicle," she notes.

- Car seat**: "Infant car seats are often compatible with strollers—which can make walking around town or getting in and out of ride-share vehicles even easier," Haverstick says.
- Stroller**
- Wearable baby carrier**

Safe to Skip

- Outfits**: Yes, you do need clothes for baby, but it might be a good idea to keep the number included on your registry low. "They grow out of them quickly, and I had so many left over," Jeneault says.
- Car seat covers and accessories**: These can present a health risk, Haverstick says, who recommends avoiding extra inserts, cushions, or fluffy harness covers. "You should only use items that are approved by your car seat manufacturer," she says. Using ones that are not approved may compromise the performance of the car seat in a crash, she adds.
- Pillows and soft crib items**: These are also best avoided for safety reasons, Shamie says, who advises parents to skip baby pillows, crib bumpers, plush toys, and other decorative items destined to live in the crib. "To keep your child safe, we recommend keeping a completely bare crib," he says.