

BEFORE YOU FREAK OUT

Everyone has a PDF of “essentials” that they will tell you you absolutely need, everyone’s list will be weirdly different, and the total cost will be astonishing — you will suddenly realize why people have baby showers. The things on this list are all things I enjoyed having during the first month of my baby’s life, but they are by no means essential, aside from a few items — I have highlighted these in yellow. I got into this bizarre mindset during my pregnancy that I had to have absolutely everything ready months in advance, as if I were about to embark on some long journey on a container ship where I couldn’t just like, walk to the drugstore or buy something on Amazon. You will be MORE THAN FINE as long as you have diapers, wipes, a way to feed the baby, some burp cloths, a few PJs and swaddles, and a safe place for them to sleep. The rest is extra.

Also sooooo much of this stuff will only be useful for a few weeks or months, which means it’s very easy to buy secondhand or borrow from friends/family. Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist and Park Slope Parents Classifieds are your friends.

Sleeping

Crib (and Mattress and Sheets)

We had a Babyletto “Origami” mini crib that we used while the baby nurse was sleeping in his room, since there’s not enough space in there for both a twin bed and a full sized crib — it was perfectly nice and not insanely expensive, but only lasted 3-4 months before he got too big for it (I had assumed it would last a lot longer). If you have limited square footage and a baby nurse coming and want something bigger/sturdier than a bassinet, this is a good thing to get secondhand. If you have the space for a full-sized crib from the get-go, just buy that.

We now have a full-sized Babyletto “Scoot” crib with a Naturepedic mattress and it is quite elegant. I love the crib sheets we bought from Malabar Baby. Choice really just depends on your vibe/budget/general design direction for the nursery. People also like Jenny Lind—I’d start by looking at what’s on Pottery Barn, Crate and Barrel and Maisonette to get a sense of the overall range (they all carry multiple brands). I have heard not-so-great things about the Nestig convertible even though I was bombarded with Instagram ads for it for a while.

Moses Basket

We used the [pretty wicker one on a rocker from Design Dua](#) for sleeping next to our bed when the baby nurse was taking her break and for naps in the living room. It’s definitely not essential but it’s VERY cute and nice to have a separate, safe spot for him to sleep that’s easy to transport around the apartment. Will only last you 3-ish months. I got ours on Facebook marketplace.

Swaddles

The Halo [sleep sack swaddles](#) are great and very easy to use, we also like [this style](#) from Aden and Anais. Stick with the Velcro kind—the old school blanket styles (like what they have in the

hospital) require expert technique and they are very easy for babies to bust out of if you don't do it perfectly.

Monitor

We have the Nanit and love it, it connects to your phone from wherever and you can invite different caregivers to be a part of the account (either from anywhere or only when connected to your home wifi). It also has a night light, sound and white noise built in so you don't need anything separate. Note that you don't unlock its full functionality (stats, summaries) unless you spring for the floor stand. We also have a little [clip-on gooseneck thing](#) that we use when traveling to attach to the side of the travel crib.

Feeding

What you need really depends on what you end up doing—exclusive breastfeeding, formula, combo feeding, pumping, whatever. I'd wait to order too many multiples of anything until you know what you're going to do and what your baby takes to (and also keep in mind your vision of what you're going to do may differ from the reality). If you plan on nursing and/or pumping, I recommend making an appointment with an [IBCLC lactation consultant](#) to learn how to use the pump(s) and to help you come up with a plan/schedule. You can even do a prenatal appointment. I met with Emma from Ora Feeding two weeks postpartum (which is how long the hospital said to wait until incorporating pumping) and she was great and did a house call that was covered by insurance. This is what I used during the first month-ish (breastfeeding/pumping).

BREASTFEEDING-SPECIFIC

Breast Pump

Get a Spectra through insurance. Don't bother with the other brands/extra hand held stuff *for now*. Meet with a lactation consultant to help you find the correct size flanges! The ones that come standard are almost certainly too big.

Nursing/Pumping Bras

I love [the ones I got from Hatch](#). They're both clip-down for easy breastfeeding access and have the inner loop for holding a breast pump flange in place hands-free. Sturdy, comfy and relatively nice looking. I wore them 24/7 for months, and it was nice to have 3-4 to always have a clean one on hand. I also like the nursing tanks from Bodily.

Disposable Nursing Pads

The [Lansinoh ones have saved many a shirt](#). I kept them in at all times and always regretted when I forgot. Don't bother with the washable ones — you'll have to buy a million or be constantly hand-washing them and they don't stay in place very well.

Nipple Balm

Essential as a lubricant for pumping and helpful for soothing chapped nipples. I use [this one from Earth Mama](#) and it's great. I keep one jar in the medicine cabinet and another in the little "cupholder" on the breast pump.

A Nursing Pillow

I used a Boppy while breastfeeding for the first couple months. Helpful and comfortable.

FOR BOTTLE FEEDING/COMBO FEEDING

Bottles

We use Pigeon bottles, because the lactation consultant said they were the best for transitioning between breast and bottle and we've had no issues with them—they also seem to be the "hot" bottle for Brooklyn parents. People also like Dr. Browns and Philips Avent. Get a few of the four-ounce size to start out with—if you're planning on mostly breastfeeding, you don't need more than four. If you're bottle feeding from the jump, I'd get at least eight. We initially went with all glass, but if you plan on feeding on the go, I'd also get a few plastic ones (nothing like shattering a bottle mid-feed on a park bench! Also really sucks to fill a carry-on bag with a bunch of glass bottles...). Note that there are different nipple sizes (I had no idea!) — a lactation consultant or your pediatrician can help you figure out what's best for each age range. We started with the SS size. Babylist also has "try it kits" where you can test a few different style bottles, which is nice.

Bottle Brush + Drying Rack

We use the ones from Oxo — nice to have a separate clean brush + place to put stuff, and the brush makes cleaning easier and more thorough.

Sterilizer/Dryer

Not 100% essential if you're throwing stuff into the dishwasher, but nice to have, especially if you're running it a couple of times a day or exclusively bottle feeding. We have the Philips Avent one.

Burp Cloths

Get at least 10-15. We have a bunch of the muslin ones from Comfycubs on Amazon and got a few Bonpoint hand-me-downs that I also love because they're 3x the size. The Mon Ami ones are also very cute.

Terry Cloth or Cotton Bibs

Useful if you're bottle feeding, not needed for breastfeeding. We ordered a bunch of Gerber ones from Amazon.

Formula

Even if you plan on exclusively breastfeeding, it's nice peace of mind to have some backup in the cupboard. And you will need it if you plan on weaning sooner than a year (I fully weaned at

four months). We use Hipp because we have family bring it over from Europe, but also like Earth's Best Organics and Bobbie.

A Formula Dispenser

We have the Oxo one with three little compartments — very handy for pre-measuring and mixing bottles when you're out and about. Before I got this I was bringing random plastic baggies everywhere... and my nanny was like, "There is a better solution."

Diapering

A Dresser

Doesn't need to be baby-specific or a "changing table," you just need a work surface dedicated to diaper changing that's at a comfortable height for you. You can add a caddy or tray for the top to hold all your supplies in an organized way.

Diapers

We went for a Coterie subscription. They are the softest, they perform very well and they are by far the most elegant (sorry but this matters to me...). Pampers Pure are also great and less expensive. Huggies are nice too. The scent of regular Pampers gives me hospital PTSD.

Wipes

Coterie (I gotta say, the package is very sturdy and the wipes are the most generously sized) or Honest Company. Water Wipes are ok but they are smaller and flimsier and not as effective.

Big Tub of Baby Aquaphor

To prevent diaper rash.

Big Tub of Triple Paste

To treat diaper rash.

A Diaper Cream Spatula

Not essential by any means, but I do use ours every day—that way you don't have cream all over your fingers every time you apply it (although the baby nurse taught me a trick to just wipe them off on the inside of the clean diaper you are changing them into).

Changing Pad

We have the Keekaroo. It's wipeable and non-porous which I think is a no-brainer — you don't want to add any more laundry to your pile, trust me.

Diaper Pail

Get the Munchkin. The Ubbi was fine for newborn poops, but once you start solids, it just cannot handle the smell. The Munchkin is great.

Disposable changing pads/"Chucks"

Basically puppy pads — very useful when out and about if there's not a super clean/ideal place to put them down for a change.

Extras of everything to take on the go

Smaller squeeze tube versions of Aquaphor and Triple Paste, extra wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.

Disinfectant Wipes

Keep some of these on hand in the nursery for when you have a projectile poop situation. It will happen. Maybe even at 3 AM!

Clothes

You will be gifted a LOT of clothes, and they grow out of them quickly, so don't go overboard. But nice to have a few of each of the below in Newborn, 0-3 Months, and 3-6 Months on deck.

Bodysuits

Anything cotton—this is baby's baselayer/loungewear. The ones from Petit Bateau are my favorite but every baby brand makes these — I honestly got a bunch from the Sofia Richie/Amazon collab (lol) and they're great. So are the Gerber ones—I have purchased the pack of five white ones in every size so far and those are his basic white tees.

Footed PJs

We love the ones from Kissy Kissy, Babycottons, Roller Rabbit, Magnetic Me, Spilled Milk and Kyte. Don't love the ones I got from Pehr — sizing was weird and the wrist cuffs are way too tight.

Knitted Sets/Sweaters/Daytime Onesies/Footed Pants

We got a bunch of fab hand-me-down clothes from my brother's kids and some amazing gifts from family in Italy. Favorites have been from Petit Bateau, Le Crochette, Oso and Me, Misha and Puff, La Coqueta, Pepa London, Kissy Kissy, and Makie. Also don't sleep on Baby Gap, Zara Kids or Mango Kids! Their stuff is incredibly cute and the price is very right.

Hats

You'll probably be gifted a bunch of these but they're important! Warm wool or cashmere for winter, nice wide brim for summer.

Socks

The Bombas ones stay snugly on his feet and are very cute. I also have a bunch of Baby Gap ones.

A Warm Layer for Cold Days (If baby is born in fall/winter)

A friend gave us [this Engel suit](#) and we used it every day to keep him warm and cozy in the stroller. It's SO cute and made him look like a little elf. Sizing runs big.

Bathing/Grooming

Bathtub/Bath Seat

We got the Angelcare seat because everyone recommended it but our baby nurse was anti (I guess because it requires filling the whole tub, which she didn't love for hygiene purposes?) so we also got the Frida tub. I personally prefer the Angelcare, he looks way more comfortable in it and it's way easier to clean and deal with.

Kneeling Pad

Any one made for gardening or whatever. Just something comfy for kneeling on the bathroom floor. Unless you have the counter space to bathe him in the Frida tub on a counter, then ignore.

Baby Washcloths

Honest Company ones are good. You'll need these to do sponge baths while the umbilical cord stump is still on, and they're useful for proper bathtime too to get into all the stinky crevices.

Baby Shampoo/Body Wash

Mustela or California Baby are great.

Hooded Towels

Not essential but very cozy and cute. We have the Lalo ones with the blue trim.

Cotton Balls

For cleaning their face in the mornings/during sponge baths. The ones from Cliganic are very robust and fluffy.

Baby Safety Q-Tips

For cleaning out dead skin, spit-up that drips into their ears, and earwax.

Electric Nail Buffer

Their nails grow like crazy and they are SHARP! Much easier and safer to file than to use a clipper when they're tiny. Do it while they're asleep. Every baby brand makes one, they're all pretty much the same.

Body Lotion

For a little post-bathtime massage and to keep their skin soft and moisturized. We like Mustela, California Baby and Tubby Todd. Cerave or Aquaphor brand also great.

A Soft Bristle Brush

If they have hair!

Strollers/Travel

Stroller

We went for the Uppababy Vista V3 with the bassinet attachment (bassinet lasted 3-4 months, then you switch to the seat). It's a Cadillac—massive but a pleasure to use and handles very well. People also like the Cruz, which is a bit smaller (the coolest, most well-adjusted moms I know went for a Cruz). There are a million options out there and people are very opinionated — I'd check out one of the baby emporiums (Albee Baby on the Upper West Side or Babesta in Tribeca) to try out a few and see your options in person. There's also an Uppababy "dealership" on Smith Street. Think of your stroller as your car—it's not just baby transport, it's stuff transport. The Vista is enormous but we routinely fill the basket with groceries, stuff from the farmers market, picnic supplies, bottles, blankets and toys, whatever. I now also kind of think of it as my nanny's "office" — she takes him out for several hours a day and it's nice that she can keep all of her and his stuff accessible and organized in the big basket.

People also often get a separate travel stroller but we haven't invested in one yet — have heard good things about the Joolz Aer and the Yoyo.

Carseat

We got a hand-me-down Doona and it's a life changing and genius invention — useful for when you need to take an Uber or a taxi somewhere because it just uses the seatbelt to be secured and doesn't require a base. It pops up into a small portable stroller which is ideal for travel or when you're moving around town a lot. Don't know how I'd manage getting him through an airport/to a faraway doctor's appointment without it.

Carrier

We have the Artipoppe because it's comfy and not ugly. We use it a lot! Sometimes leaving the house with the stroller is just too cumbersome, and it's nice and cozy to just wear the baby. We also got a Solly Baby wrap for the very early days (a structured carrier isn't safe just yet) but it's a bit tricky to get right and only really work for when they're really tiny and floppy.

Travel Crib

We have the Nuna Paal and it's great because there's an "upper level" for when they're less than 15 pounds, so you don't have to deadlift them all the way to the ground every time you put them down. Also very easy to fold and comes with a sturdy carrying bag. It's also quite nice looking, which I consider a bonus—we have it in the "biscotti" color. Consider getting an extra sheet (regular mini crib sheets also fit). People also like the Guava Lotus and the Baby Bjorn.

Other/Extras/Fun Stuff

An Instant-Read Rectal Thermometer

Important, just get whatever they have in the baby care section at the pharmacy.

Infant Tylenol

Peace of mind to have on hand in case of a fever.

Night Light

Useful for late night feedings/diaper changes, and also nice to bring to the hospital with you. We have a little “pebble” one from Amazon.

Bouncer

A Baby Bjorn is a nice place to put him after feeding (so he’s sort of upright to avoid spit up) and the bouncing action is soothing for them. Get the little toy rail too. It’s also just a useful place to safely “dock” the baby while you’re getting other stuff done like unloading the dishwasher or making coffee. We keep ours in the kitchen and he hangs out in there happily.

Play Mat

You will spend a lot of time just hanging out on the floor—so the baby can wiggle around, do tummy time, and generally learn how to use their limbs. People like the one from Lovevery but I think it’s kind of fugly. We just plopped him down on a puffy cotton quilt with some toys around him at the very beginning, which was totally fine. Eventually I got a Totter & Tumble mat (the William Morris prints are divine) once he got more mobile/squirmy and it has become a permanent fixture of his room. Helps that you can wipe spit-up off of it.

Toys

Just get a few cute rattles or silly things you like—the baby won’t be able to grab anything yet and truly won’t care. You will also likely get a bunch of stuffed animals and funny baby toys as gifts! We do like the activity center from Little Big Friends but he didn’t really get into it until around 2-3 months old when he started reaching for and batting at things.

Black and White Cards/Books

These seem dumb but babies really do enjoy looking at them and they are allegedly good for brain development. There are lots of cute ones.

Pacifiers

Come in handy. He seems to like the Dr. Browns ones more than the Philips Avent, but we use both.

Muslin Receiving Blankets

I have a few from Atelier Choux (SO CUTE) and they are a great multipurpose tool—they can be a swaddle, a sun shade for the stroller, or a lightweight blanket for on the go. I also like bringing one to every pediatrician appointment so that I can just fold him up in it between weight checks/measurements if the room is a bit chilly.

Postpartum Supplies

See below re: stocking up on a bunch of stuff. The only things I really ended up using after my C-section were XL pads (just regular period pads) and then I switched to pantliners after a couple of weeks. And the Frida angled peri bottle. If you have a vaginal birth you may end up wanting some extra witch hazel pads/numbing spray or a donut pillow but you will get plenty of that stuff at the hospital and can restock at the nearest pharmacy/on Amazon if needed.

Things You *****DO NOT***** Need to Buy/Stock Up On YET!!!

Bottle Warmer - It's nice to have but you can also just fill a mug halfway with hot water and stick the bottle in it for a minute or two. If you're mostly breastfeeding and only offering the occasional bottle, I'd skip.

Wipe Warmer — you will be changing diapers in lots of places other than your changing table, so why bother?

Blankets — you will be gifted at least 15. I promise. They're also not "sleep safe" so you're mostly using them in the stroller or as a soft surface to lay them down on during playtime/tummy time.

A "Diaper Bag" — We just use a large zip pouch and I transfer it between the stroller basket and whatever bag I'm using that day.

Shoes — babies aren't walking anywhere and you will also get a bunch of these as (kind of annoying) gifts.

Extra hand-held breast pumps/a million breastfeeding/nipple-healing supplies (silverettes, cooling pads etc) — Just wait until you know how your body is going to react until you order a bunch of stuff. A lot of the stuff I was told was "essential" is still sitting in my closet untouched.

A High Chair (YET) — We have the Tripp Trapp with the infant attachment but he basically never sat in it — I think you can wait until the baby is sitting up and eating before getting a high chair + all the other eating accessories (plates, sippy cups, silicone bibs, etc). It will just take up space for the first four or five months (or longer, depending on what your pediatrician says re: starting solids). On the other hand, a friend whose apartment is laid out quite differently than mine says she used the infant attachment all the time in her kitchen — I'd say if you have a smaller space and a bouncer, you don't need both.

A Special Bath "Rinser" — Just use a plastic cup or a large natural sponge. It works better and is easier to keep clean. Dumbest \$10 I ever spent.

A Bottle Washer — wash by hand with a bottle brush or use your dishwasher—I am willing to bet you that it has a sanitize setting, and if you use "free and clear" detergent you won't get that soapy taste on the silicone parts.

All the postpartum supplies that Tiktok/Instagram convinces you that you need — I over indexed on all the Tucks/Frida Mom/Perineal spray/cooling pad/donut pillow stuff and I didn't need any of it because of my C-section (1/3 of births in the US are C sections, so don't rule it

out!). The only thing that ended up being very useful was the Frida Mom peri bottle, because of the angled head. I continue to use it as a little bidet! But they will give you more than enough of everything you need in the hospital, and you can order extras on Amazon before you head home if you need to. Resist the consumerist urge!