



Getting Your House in Order

Building the Nursery

They call it nesting, and like birds, moms need the comfort of knowing a safe, warm place is ready when their baby arrives. Dads can really get into this as well, as it offers you an early opportunity to make a tangible contribution to your baby.

If you have a room that can function as the nursery, you've got your work cut out for you. Mom will have lots of ideas – you may have a few of your own – go with a plan that makes mom happy. This plan may change, of course.

If you don't have a spare room available, sit down with your wife and discuss options for how you can accommodate the baby. There are various alternatives; while your child is unlikely to notice the difference whether you build a Taj Mahal or put a laundry basket next to your own bed, mom will. Try to indulge her.

Some practical suggestions:

- Check out the room with the baby in mind. Is the window drafty?
- Visit it at different times of the day to check on where and when light from the sun hits (you don't want the sun to wake your baby or make him too hot).
- Also check on light from street lamps at night which may keep your baby up.

The basic list of furniture for a nursery includes a crib, changing table, chest of drawers, and a rocking chair or glider (with footrest).

Nursery Safety

The bottom line when building a nursery is safety and comfort for the baby. Be careful with used, hand-me-down, and foreign-made baby equipment. In some cases, these items are unsafe for your baby, both because of ever-changing safety guidelines and defects from use (such as missing parts).

Make sure the furnishings are safe for your baby. The Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA) sponsors a safety-certification program; check for their seal. Sometimes an item that was originally thought to be safe is far from it. For information on recalled products, call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission hotline at 1-800-638-2772 or visit their website at (www.cpsc.gov)

Other safety considerations include:

- Pads for the changing table should have straps to keep the baby from wriggling off onto the floor. The table may also be equipped with safety rails.
- Avoid floor-length curtains or drapes; once your baby begins to crawl, he may grab them and pull them down on top of himself.
- Blinds with long pull-cords are also a no-no, especially looped cords, as a baby can easily get these wrapped around her neck.

Also, check out the house for loose railings, outside steps that are slippery in snow, exposed outlets, etc. It's difficult to regain footing while carrying a baby.

Crib Safety

If a crib is used, check it out for:

- Corner posts are dangerous because your baby's clothes can get caught on them. If posts are present, you can saw them off, making sure to sand the splintered edges. If your baby's crib has high posts for a canopy, they may not pose a problem. Use your best judgment.
- Bumper pads protect your baby from head injuries, but some experts warn against them. If you prefer to use them, make sure they fit around the entire crib, and snap into place in at least six places. Remove them once your baby can pull herself into a standing position.
- Use a snug-fitting mattress. You shouldn't be able to fit more than two fingers between the mattress and the sides of the crib, and avoid decorative cutouts that can trap the baby's head or limbs.
- Make sure the slats or posts are no more than 2-3/8" apart so your newborn doesn't get jammed in or slip through.
- If the crib has been painted by its previous owner, make sure the paint isn't lead-based, as babies do tend to chew on whatever's handy.
- Don't overlook cribs at grandma's or other babysitters' homes - the same rules apply.

Checklist: What Else to Have On Hand

Setting up the baby arsenal prior to his arrival is a basic dad duty. A checklist of what you may want in addition to nursery furniture is as follows:

Highly recommended by Boot Camp veterans

- Diaper Genie – eliminates the smell
- Bouncy seat (with sound and lights) – entertains and gets babies tired.
- Swing (battery operated) – puts your baby to sleep
- Soft chest carrier - feels great and puts babies to sleep
- Battery operated stick-on touch lights – convenient, not too bright for a baby or sleeping spouse

- Digital camera and/or video camera (See Resources-Recording Your New Family)

Standard Items

- Car seat (properly installed and ready to go)
- Bassinet or cradle – basically a small moveable alternative to the crib
- Baby bath tub with insert that helps hold newborns
- Mobile to hang over the crib
- Baby monitor – to hear your baby while in another room
- Boppy pillow – helpful for holding the baby while nursing or feeding
- Bathrobe for mom – a nice big, soft one
- Extras of everything – blankets, washcloths, pacifiers, hats, burp cloths, bedding, etc.
- Bottles and extra nipples
- Breast pump for nursing mothers
- Stash of diapers, wipes, diaper rash ointments
- (Apparently an incredible amount of designer baby clothes are also standard.)

Brace yourself for your first visit to a baby store, where it will become overwhelmingly clear that babies were invented as a marketing ploy, and your wife is the willing target. Your role is to pay for whatever she wants, carry it home and put it together (or figure out how it works).

You Buy Something for Your Baby

This may seem ridiculous if you are dealing with a runaway credit problem, but try going out by yourself and picking out something for your baby. Small and inexpensive if fine, as junior won't care. Perhaps some tiny booties, which are amazingly small, or her first baseball mitt, or whatever might mean something to you. Consider it an early bonding exercise.

Build Something for Your Baby

Men tend to like working with our hands, and building things can be reassuring when we're worrying about the challenges of a new baby. If so inclined, refinish a cradle, build a sled, or add a room (just kidding). Previously unfinished projects around the house can be disconcerting with a baby in the house, and you will have a lot less time to finish the job after junior arrives.