

Security and stability are the key factors in buying baby equipment. First, look for the seal of approval from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and examine items carefully to make sure they are stable and without safety hazards. Additional guidelines have been established by the Juvenile Products Manufacturers and you may want to see if the product conforms to these voluntary standards.

Equipment and Equipment Safety



Strollers and Carriages

Having a stroller will make long walks a lot easier. If you're going to be packing the stroller in the car, you'll want to invest in a high quality, lightweight model. These strollers are known as umbrella strollers because of the handles which look like umbrella handles. They have lightweight aluminum frames and weigh as little as five pounds.

If you live in the city, and you'll primarily be using the stroller for walks over cracked sidewalks and curbs, you may want a standard size stroller for its sturdiness. The larger models will also hold more packages than umbrella strollers, and they often have trays that hold toys or snacks, sunshades, multiple-position reclining seat backs, and plastic windbreakers to cover the sides/

You can get both the collapsibility of the lightweight umbrella-handle strollers and the postural support and durability of the larger, heavier models by buying one of the new medium-weight models.

Strollers are not without hazards. In one recent five-year span, there were more than forty thousand stroller related emergency room visits in the United States.

The major cause of injury is babies falling out of strollers and hitting their heads. Baby's fingers can become entrapped or crushed in the scissoring action of the joints as the stroller is being folded. Babies have also been injured by falling into protruding sharp edges of bolts or other metal parts. Also many strollers, particularly umbrella styles, are unstable and can fall over backward when a baby stands or attempts to stand in the seat.

The Juvenile Manufacturers Association has established a voluntary safety standard for strollers and carriages. Since these standards are voluntary, not all stroller

BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is a great resource for recall information. You can sign up for their email and get links to agencies that deal with products they do not have jurisdiction over such as car seats, cars, food, cosmetics and more.

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

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manufacturers have adopted them. And don't get lulled into thinking that the standards are what they could be. There are no provisions for the restraining belt or latch. While the standards require brakes, there are no safety measures to prevent another child from accidentally releasing them. Also there is no protection offered from the scissoring from joints or from sharp holes in the metal tubing that could capture a child's fingers, nor is there any specification for how securely caps or other protective devices must be attached to the stroller's tubing and hardware.

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Strollers and carriages that do meet safety standards:

Shouldn't have any exposed coil springs that could pinch, or otherwise injure a child.

Should have a locking device that prevents accidental collapse.

Should come with safety belts that are attached securely to the frame or upholstery.

Should be stable and unlikely to tip over when on an inclined surface with a child inside.

Should have permanently attached warning that reads "Caution: Secure child in the restraint. Never leave child unattended."

When shopping for a stroller, look for the following features:

Steering ease

Try pushing the stroller around to see how well it turns corners, and how easily it maneuvers if you only use one hand. The stroller should handle well without veering to one side. A stroller with a single crossbar is easier to handle than one with umbrella type handles.

Stability

The stroller should be stable and unlikely to tip over when in use. If the stroller has a reclining seat, it should not be able to tip backward when the baby lies down.

Collapsibility

Don't hesitate to try opening and collapsing the stroller before you buy it. You should be able to fold the stroller and open it up again in one or two steps as you hold your baby. If a stroller is going to be difficult and time consuming to operate, you need to know that before you buy it. Make sure there's a locking device so the stroller can't collapse accidentally.

Seating

Compare the thickness of vinyl upholstery on several different models by pinching it. The vinyl should be thick and all seams should be well finished. The crotch belt, in particular, should be reinforced where it joins the seat. The seat should be shallow enough to provide back support for a six to eighteen month old baby.

Reclining feature

Very young babies tend to hunch forward in a sling type stroller seat. Tots, too have a hard time napping in an upright position. It's useful to be able to move the stroller seat into a reclining position. If the stroller does recline, it should have sides to prevent the child from rolling out, even in the lowest position.

Seat belt

The seat belt should actually make contact with even the smallest baby's waist. The belt material should be strong, and the latches either heat-welded or sewn with multiple seams. The latch should be simple enough for you to operate and yet require enough pressure to open so a curious tot couldn't release it accidentally.

Front padding or tray

Some strollers have plastic trays. Those that feature small balls fastened by plastic or thin wire aren't satisfactory, since the balls could splinter or be ingested if they were pulled loose. If a bumper pillow replaces the tray, check underneath to see that it's securely fastened to the front bar. Pads often pull off, tearing out the screw bed so they can't be refastened.

Sunshade

Some strollers come equipped with a sunroof, though often the roof is placed so high that it's useful only during the noon hour. If you plan to use the stroller in the sun, you may want to invest in a flexible-arm umbrella shade, which is offered as an option by some manufacturers.

Wheels and suspension

Wheels with plastic spokes do not hold up well. Opt for steel or aluminum hubs. Suspension systems are seldom available on medium-weight models, but heavy-weight models may offer springs or other types of shock absorbers, which will give your baby a less jarring ride.

Brakes

Brakes should offer a position grip on the tires so they can't be dislodged. The child should not be able to release the brakes while seated in the stroller.

Baby carriages conjure up images of prams and nannies and walks in the park. A carriage allows you to take long, leisurely walks, even when the baby is very small. Its high sides and hood help protect the baby from side-drafts and bright sunlight, and the soothing bounce from the carriage springs often helps babies sleep.

However, before you run out and buy a carriage, consider a few things. Carriages are quite expensive, and you'll use a carriage for the first few months. They weigh quite

a bit, making them awkward to use and awkward to store. If you bring one along for a trip, you'll have to collapse it to get it in the trunk of your car. Unless you live where there are winding country roads, traffic and curbs present maneuverability challenges for carriages.

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jostled during maneuvering.

Folding ease

The most economical unit is a two-piece carriage that doubles a carry bed. Try collapsing and setting up the carriage to see how easy it is to handle. Examine the

If you decide to purchase a carriage, look for the following features:

Fabric

Choose a thick, moisture resistant fabric, such as one coated in vinyl that can easily be wiped clean.

Steering

Try rolling the carriage around to see how easily it maneuvers. When you press on the bar, you should be able to raise the front wheels high enough to get up and over curbs.

Mattress

If the mattress pad is covered in vinyl, test the thickness of the vinyl by pinching it between your fingers; it should be difficult to crease. Check the finishing on the pad to see that the seams are tightly sewn with no danger of unraveling. The pad should fit flush against all sides of the interior of the carriage.

Brakes

The brakes should hold firmly, preferably on both back wheels, and should not disengage even when you attempt to push the carriage forward. The brake handle should be easy to reach without having to let go of the carriage handle.

Interior safety

There should be no sharp edges from frame hardware inside the carriage bed that could hurt a baby's head if she's

safety locks to make sure they will prevent the carriage from folding accidentally and will hold the carry bed securely. There should be no sharp edges that could hurt the baby's fingers or your own.

Frame safety

Avoid carriages that have a sharp scissoring action of metal against metal x-joints. These joints could cause crushed fingers when collapsed.

Whether you choose to buy a carriage or a stroller, you can protect your investment from rust by coating chrome areas lightly with petroleum jelly.