

Your baby's crib should be a haven of safety and comfort. He/she will certainly spend many hours here, both at play and at sleep. A good crib, you will find, is a place where you can keep your baby safe while sleeping or taking some time for yourself.

Guidelines for Crib Safety



Set the mattress at the lowest possible level to give maximum side-bar protection.

Always keep the drop sides of the crib up to safeguard against accidents caused by faulty hardware or forgetfulness.

Use bumper pads for the first five months.

Use the crib for sleeping only. Never allow jumping or playing in or around the crib.

Place the crib away from walls and furniture to eliminate the danger of entrapment in case the baby falls from the crib.. also make sure the crib is not near curtain or blind cords, which could entangle or strangle a child, and make sure these cords are out of baby's reach..

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Keep loose clothing or soft toys out of the crib, they could cause suffocation. As the baby gets older, remove toys that could be used by him as stepping stones for climbing out.

Once your baby appears able to climb out, buy hospital netting to cover the top of the crib or consider another sleeping arrangement, like putting the mattress right

BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

Crib accessories such as cushions, quilts and comforters with their bright colors and designs can certainly beautify any room. They may seem harmless at first, but the dangers they pose to infants are very real. Nearly 2,000 cases of infant suffocation each year are caused by cushions, quilts and comforters.

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down on the floor or on a small frame designed for a baby mattress.

Do not use plastic bags as mattress covers, especially dry cleaning bags or others that could cause suffocation.

Remove mobiles once a baby can sit up, since a baby could be hanged on the side straps of one. Mobiles are designed for visual stimulation, not for handling.

Changing Tables

Changing tables provide a safe place to diaper and dress your baby. However, if you don't want to spend the money, an alternative will do.

To be functional, a changing table should be at a height comfortable for handling a baby without having to lean over. It should have a waterproof pad and enough space for open storage of shirts, plastic pants, and diapers, or you'll waste time gathering needed items for each change. There should be a safety belt that is wide and easy to use [but not so easy that the baby can release it]. Never use the table without using the safety belt-it takes only a few seconds for the baby to fall when your back is turned. However, don't trust a "belted" baby to be safe if left unattended.

Commercially available changing tables usually have a long, slender padded area for changing and an area of open shelves underneath for storage. Most of these changing tables fold for storage.

When buying a changing table look for one that has high sides around the changing area to prevent your baby from rolling out. The covering on the foam pad should be of thick, smooth vinyl, which will make it easier to clean. Make sure the table is sturdy and doesn't wobble or flip over easily. Many parents find it extremely frustrating to assemble these tables and get the legs balanced, so we suggest you purchase yours pre-assembled. Shelves should be spacious and open and very easy to use, many popular models have small, narrow, half-open boxes for shelves, which can be very hard to use. Look for a model that features stable side shelves for holding washcloths and other items. Attachable side pails for soiled items are also very useful.

A changing table is only useful for about the first two years, so if you're on a tight budget you may want an alternative. You can use a wide table or even the padded top of a dresser instead. You can buy a special top that secures to a dresser to convert it to a changing table. But if you are going to use a top of a dresser, don't put your baby's things in the dresser- it's dangerous to go rummaging through drawers to find things while holding the baby steady with one hand. You will want some kind of an open shelf system nearby, instead. Some parents construct a wall to wall shelf in a closet at the appropriate height and top it with a vinyl covered pad; you might also use a portable crib, raised to its highest position.

When using a changing table, keep diapers handy and ready for use, but keep all pins closed and out of the baby's reach. Have a container of water handy. A roll of toilet paper attached to the wall and out of the baby's reach and a wastepaper basket nearby will make the arrangement more workable.

Drawers and Shelves

What you use for drawers and shelves is up to you. There are lots of nice baby chests on the market. Don't feel you have to buy one; it's largely a matter of taste and budget. If you've already opted to buy a changing table, there may be enough space on the shelves below it, and you won't need additional storage. If not, consider putting a used baby chest, or perhaps a used dresser that you can refinish for your baby's room.

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If you are buying a new chest, shop as you would for any other piece of furniture. Look at the workmanship inside and out. Are you planning on having a large family? If so, you may want to invest in a high quality chest to use for each infant. If you're not planning a big family, will you want to use the chest as the child gets older? If so, you may want to buy something that will eventually look good in an older child's room.

If you are using a chest of drawers, it is a good idea to install safety latches so a small child can't pull the drawers out and have them fall on her. Also, once your baby is walking, you'll want to be sure you don't leave things like pins, on top of the dresser that your child could reach or pull down on herself.

Bassinets

If you are looking for a bassinet, here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

Make sure it's stable and not shaky.

There should be no sharp edges.

Check for any hinges or clips that your baby could catch her fingers on.

Since many bassinets are wicker or rattan, you'll want to be sure there are no sharp or rough edges that could be scratchy or itchy for a baby; adding a bumper pad to the inside might help. If the bassinet folds up make sure the legs have an effective locking mechanism, so they don't accidentally fold when the bassinet is being used. Also, periodically check to be sure all screws and bolts are tight.

Remember that a bassinet's usefulness is limited because your baby will quickly outgrow it. If you must watch your budget, you probably don't wish to buy a bassinet.

Rocking Chairs

Some mothers could not do without a rocking chair; others couldn't care less about them. Again, it's a matter of personal choice, taste, and budget. You can buy one new or used. If it's going to be in the baby's room, you'll probably want a style that fits in well with the décor and other pieces of furniture.

The major thing to consider if you're buying a rocking chair is comfort. Will it be a comfortable place for you to nurse? How will it feel to sit in the chair and hold your baby? You'll probably want one with an armrest.

A drawback to having the rocking chair in your child's room is that once he can crawl, there's a possibility he might get caught in the frame or push the chair and get his head by it. There's also the possibility that he will put his tiny fingers under the rocker while the chair is moving. For this reason, you might want to remove the rocking chair from his room once he is crawling and walking, or be certain you are keeping a careful watch on his activities. Or you can make special stops that keep the chair from rocking forward and backward.

Cradles

Cradles have a romantic aura about them, perhaps because they are historically associated with mothers and babies. They provide a gentle rocking motion, which can lull a baby to sleep.

If you're buying a cradle, or if you inherit one, look for the following safety features: the slats should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart, like crib slats. Cradles are commonly suspended by hooks, which can sometimes stick out and can injure your baby as you put him in or take her out of the cradle. Make sure the hooks don't protrude. A locking mechanism is a definite plus; it will prevent an unattended cradle from rocking and possibly cause a sleeping baby to become wedged against the side of the frame due to the shifting weight.