

# MONEY SAVERS FOR NEW PARENTS



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## TIPS FOR RAISING A BABY WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK



Children may be priceless, but they are also expensive. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, raising a child to the age of 18 will cost the average family nearly a quarter million dollars.

The first year of parenthood alone can be a shocker. Between diapers, formula, car seats, nursery furnishings, sitters and clothes that they outgrow weekly, you may wonder how you'll ever afford to raise your child to adulthood. With some planning you can keep those first-year costs down and maybe even put something away for college.

## STRATEGIES FOR SAVING



### CLOTHING

Your baby may look darling in designer duds, but they won't last long. Between spit up and growth spurts, you'll find that most outfits do not get a lot of use. Don't be shy about accepting hand-me-downs, shopping garage sales, and end-of-season sales for next year's clothes.

**One mom's tip:** If you can't buy clothes out of season look for clothing on eBay®. They often have new items with tags, NWT, which someone else overbought for their child. I bought a new 3T bathing suit for \$4.00, which normally would have cost around \$20.00 in-season. "Lots" are several clothing items of the same size and season; these are often the best buys per item for both new and used clothes on eBay®.

–Theresa Rezentes, *Mother of Simone*

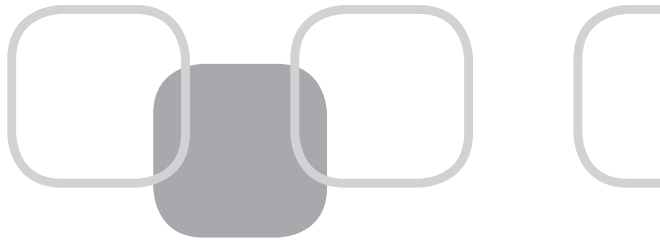
## FEEDING

Breastfeeding is considered the healthiest option for your child and best of all it is free. In fact, it can save you as much as \$1000 the first year compared to the cost of formula. In addition, you may save money on doctor bills since breast milk has been shown to keep babies healthier. If you must return to work, you may want to consider renting or buying a breast pump, the savings on formula will easily offset the cost.

If you find that you need to buy formula, talk with your doctor about your options. Some brands are cheaper than others, but make sure that you have your doctor's "OK" first. You may be able to get samples and coupons while you are still in the hospital and be sure to sign up for coupons at the manufacturer's websites. Be careful about stocking up ahead of time unless you can return unopened formula; it may take several tries to find a brand that works for your infant.

When your child is ready for solid food, pureeing your own fruits and vegetables costs pennies compared to baby food in cans and jars. You can freeze these in ice cube trays then put in containers for individual servings when you need them.

**One mom's tip:** While the shopping warehouses don't accept coupons, I have found they will accept the discount checks sent by formula manufacturers; this saved me money when I bought the bulk-size cans of formula. – *Gail Marriott, Mother of Christopher*



## DIAPERING

While many parents cringe at the thought of washing old-fashioned cloth diapers, the savings may make you reconsider. According to Good Morning America financial contributor, Melody Hobson, cloth diapers and laundering will run about \$1160 the first 2.5 years, while the cost of disposables is likely to be closer to \$1800. If you must go with disposable diapers, many parents find the cheaper store brands to be just as reliable as the more expensive brand name ones. You can also buy inexpensive inserts that will turn a regular diaper into a more absorbent nighttime one. Whatever you end up buying, stock up when diapers are on sale. You don't have to wait until after the baby arrives to start buying diapers. Stock up ahead of time; you will need them!

**One mom's tip:** Make your own baby wipes using thick paper towels, water and baby soap. Also, try different brands of diapers; the most expensive are not necessarily the best! – *Karen Huenefeldt, Mother of Grace and Jackson*

## TOYS

Almost any experienced parent will tell you, the more expensive the toy the less likely your child is to play with it. While you may feel that you are shortchanging your baby if you don't buy him/her the latest educational toys, the truth is your child can do just fine with less, especially until they get older and start wanting what everyone else has. Garage sales and thrift stores are full of toys that were very expensive but got little use. Buy those!

**One mom's tip:** Don't buy books or videos, borrow them from the library. If your library doesn't carry them, check with friends or start a mommy-group "library" so you can all share the same expense as well as the books. Most parents only need certain books for a short amount of time. – *Deb Thornton, Mother of Faith and Allison*

## ACCESSORIES

Open any baby catalog and you will find all kinds of gadgets promising to make your baby happier, smarter, or your life as a parent easier. While some may turn out to be useful, others probably won't get used at all. You may find for example that your baby does not like the \$100 swing or the \$75 baby sling that you thought that you had to have. If a friend recommends one of these items that worked for their child, ask if you can borrow theirs for a few days before you buy. When you do buy new items, ask about the return policies and save your receipts in case you need to return or exchange them.

**One mom's tip:** I would say that 50% of the non-essential things that I bought for my daughter the first year were a complete waste of money: the baby sling that she hated and that hurt my back; the changing table and baby wipes warmer that were never used; the sun protection suit that was supposed to protect against UV rays, was worn only once; and the list goes on. Keep it simple. – *Gerri Detweiler, Mother of Sydney*

**Save Money**



## DAYCARE

The cost of daycare can easily top a year at a public university. If you are certain that both parents will work after your child is born, start researching daycare options. Ask for recommendations from everyone you know. Visit the daycare during the day, consider commuting times and expense, and don't be afraid to ask about discounts or scholarships. If your job schedule isn't very flexible, make sure you also line-up sick-child care. Your local hospital may be able to recommend a program of that type or ask other mothers what they do.

Some parents find that by the time that they factor in the cost of daycare, it's cheaper for one parent to stay home full-time. Others may want to start their own daycare to bring in extra income; be careful about committing yourself to watching other children until you are in a good routine with your first child. Another option may be to scale down to part-time work, or take an evening or weekend job if your spouse works during the day to minimize the amount of time you need to pay for child care.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Consider sending baby announcements online. It will be fast, cheap, and even easier. Free online baby announcements are available at [www.happygreetings.net](http://www.happygreetings.net) or type “cheap baby announcements” into an Internet search engine.

## DECORATING

Fixing up the nursery is exciting, but you don't have to go overboard. Investing in a good, safe crib is important; never buy a used crib unless you check it out for safety recalls first. If it is cracked, chipped or damaged, do not use it. You probably don't need a lot of fancy bedding for the crib. In fact, it is recommended for safety purposes that babies under the age of 12 months do not have pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, or other pillow-like stuffed toys or products in their cribs. A fitted sheet and perhaps bumper pads that can be snapped into place (these need to be taken down when your child is old enough to pull themselves up) are all you need.

Before buying a changing table, consider whether you will actually use one. Some parents end up using simple changing mats in other rooms rather than changing the baby in the bedroom on a table.

Before putting furniture in a child's room test it for possible lead contamination using a kit from your local hardware store. Also, consider a theme for the room that can be easily adapted to grow up with your child, so that you don't have to re-do it in just a few short years.

## BABY-SITTING

If you are not lucky enough to have family members who jump at the chance to watch your child, consider making friends with other parents who would like to swap sitting duties with you. Check out *Smart Mom's Baby-Sitting Co-Op Handbook; How We Solved the Baby-Sitter Puzzle* by Gary Myers, for details on how to start a babysitting cooperative.

## HOUSING

Many couples think they need a bigger home when they have children, but trading up to a larger, more expensive home right away may be a mistake. A higher house payment may make it more difficult for one parent to quit work and stay home with the baby, as well as putting a lot of pressure on the budget. It is better to wait for a year or two after your child is born before making that decision.

## FREEBIES

Sign up for the “baby club” if your local grocery store offers one, visit the websites of manufacturers for baby items, fill out the registration cards that come with the things you buy for your newborn, and pretty soon you will be inundated with free samples and coupons.





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