

'A fabulous guide to the adventure that is parenthood'
Faye Barker, ITV news presenter and mum of two

The
Blissful
Baby Expert



Everything you need
to know for easier,
happier parenting

LISA CLEGG

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About the Book

There are few life experiences more joyful than becoming a parent, but caring for a newborn can be daunting, particularly when you're not sure whose advice to follow or what your baby really needs.

In *The Blissful Baby Expert*, Lisa Clegg draws on her own experience of motherhood and her professional life as a nanny and maternity nurse to share her essential, trusted advice. Gentle, reassuring and practical, her book guides you every step of the way from birth to two years. It includes:

- Equipment - what is essential and what is helpful
- Coming home - how to cope and bond in the early days
- Sleep - flexible plans to help your baby settle and sleep
- Feeding - guilt-free breast- and bottlefeeding
- Weaning - when to start and how to do it
- Q&As - common worries and what to do
- Development - what to expect and advice on toys

Every baby is different and this is why Lisa's book isn't a restrictive one-size-fits-all plan. Instead, she gives you the knowledge you need to trust your own instincts, build your confidence and learn to recognise what is best for your baby. With this knowledge, you'll enjoy calm, happy parenting and a blissful, settled baby.

About the Author

I grew up the fourth eldest of 26 grandchildren, so I have been surrounded by babies and small children from a young age. I've always been particularly interested in small babies and I was always the one who volunteered to take any babies off their parents' hands at family get-togethers and parties!

All I ever wanted to do when I left school was to get a job working with children. Many schoolteachers tried to discourage me from going into the childcare sector, reasoning that I was wasting my good exam results wanting to go into a job involving children, which tended to be very poorly paid. I was very determined though, and after leaving school I went straight to college to do the NNEB-Diploma in Childcare and Education, which is equivalent to an NVQ Level 3 in childcare. The NNEB is now known as the CACHE Diploma.

After completing the two-year course I went straight into my first nanny position, where I had sole charge of three children aged six, four and six months. Another baby was born within the two years that I spent working for the family. I loved my time with them and the job made me realise that I definitely wanted to continue nannying, as I enjoyed the personal relationship you are able to build with both the children and their parents.

Feeling prepared for motherhood I continued in nannying up until I had my first baby, Jack, in October 2002.

After a short spell of maternity leave, I was lucky enough to be able to take my baby to work with me and care for him alongside the children. Jack was a very easy baby who happily ate and slept wherever he was. But having my baby in a good routine was even more essential for me because of work. He was breastfed from the start but also offered one bottle of expressed milk per day from the age of two weeks, which meant my husband could get involved with feeding him, and allow me to catch up on some much-needed sleep! Jack continued to be a very happy baby and slotted into my work routine easily.

When he was three years old I began to work two days per week in a nursery and he enjoyed some social time mixing with other children. I worked in the baby room with children up to two years but my care was mainly for babies aged from birth to 12 months. I had always resisted working in nurseries before as I loved the freedom that nannying gave me, but the job offer helped our personal childcare situation at the time, and I surprised myself by loving working with the babies even in a nursery environment.

After my second son was born in 2006, I began doing some maternity night-nanny contracts. I discovered night nannying by accident as I browsed through a childcare job website. Like many people, I knew that some mothers employ someone to come and live in and help them after the birth of their baby. However, I didn't realise that a mother could employ someone just to do the nights, allowing her the crucial part of the day covered so that she could get some sleep. Having just gone through the sleepless nights myself with my second baby, I knew first-hand how torturous it can be when feel like you will never get a full night's sleep again. A good night's sleep means you feel like you can cope with anything during the day!

I absolutely loved the night nannying as it gave me access to the age group I loved working with the most - those tiny newborns - and I knew exactly how the mothers I worked for would be feeling. It wasn't long before I realised that this was the job I wanted to do long term. It meant being self-employed and not having guaranteed work, which was precarious for the family finances but I can honestly say it was the best decision I could have made. I have been busy since that day. I love my job and get so much satisfaction from starting work with a new family, who are usually in chaos with neither parent knowing quite where to start. It's fantastic to leave happy parents that are confident about caring for their happy baby, who eats and sleeps well!

The
Blissful
Baby Expert



Everything you need to know
for easier, happier parenting

LISA CLEGG

Vermilion
LONDON

To Jack, Ollie & Loren - my own three amazing 'blissful babies'.

Foreword

Bringing a baby home for the first time must be one of the most daunting experiences anyone can face. Suddenly there is very small, odd, cute little person who is relying on you to keep her alive. And if, at any point, you neglect one of her very, very many needs and wants, you know about it in the most certain terms.

I was under no illusions that I could wing it when I had my first daughter. I'd never been around small babies, had no idea how they operated and had no desire to rely on something as unpredictable as 'instinct'. I booked Lisa to help me through those first few hellish weeks, and I would say that not only did she teach me to be a proper, instinctive mother, she allowed me to enjoy my tiny baby more than I ever thought possible.

Her methods felt natural, in tune with my baby's natural rhythm rather than trying to impose a stringent routine on a capricious little baby. Occasionally, I would get told by elderly relatives that I should 'let my baby find its own routine'. Yet, my baby seemed so happy on Lisa's sleeping and eating plan while those left to 'find their own routine' seemed to cry all the time.

As a nervous, novice mother, I found it immensely reassuring that I knew roughly when my baby would sleep or eat. It meant that if she was crying, I could immediately rule out at least one or two causes. I'd seen so many of my friends fall into the trap of feeding a crying baby whose real problem was wind, causing their baby real pain.

I was also, though it is difficult to confess in these highly charged times, a reluctant breaster. I wasn't at all sure about the idea at first, even though I knew it would be great for my baby. I fully planned to give up after a couple of weeks. Lisa's methods made it so easy that I ended up breastfeeding for around six months with both my babies.

Ultimately, so many people said I was 'lucky' that I had two babies that fed and slept so well. I put this all down to Lisa's methods. My second daughter is completely wild, a total tearaway, yet she has always slept well, which has made it so much easier to cope with her energetic nature. It is the only predictable thing about her.

I am so glad that other people will now have the opportunity to use Lisa's methods and have happy little babies of their own. It will never quite beat having her in person, but I was very lucky. There is a lifetime's worth of experience of little babies in this book. At its heart is a desire to have a happy baby and a happy mother. My 'babies' are now two and four and the sleep patterns they learned in those early days have, I believe, set them up perfectly for life.

Cherry Reynard, mother to Hannah and Lexi

Introduction

When my children are crying it upsets me too. When they are hurt I want to be able to take away the pain. When they are ill I would happily take their place so that they are well again. This is a completely natural parental reaction, and as parents all any of us want for our children is to see them happy.

To see their smiling faces enjoying something they are doing or laughing at something they have seen is what makes all the hard parts of being a parent worthwhile!

As a mother of three children, I know how important this is in everyday life. Happy babies and children equal happy parents, so it's only right that we as parents try to do our best to enable our babies to develop into happy children from the day they are born!

There are so many baby books on the market telling parents the right and the wrong things they should or shouldn't do with their baby, and it's so difficult knowing which method to use, particularly when they all seem to contradict each other. 'Feed your baby on demand', 'let them find their own routine', are common phrases in books and from our local health visitors and midwives. They are trained to promote NHS and UNICEF guidelines, but it is worth remembering these are precisely that: 'guidelines'. When it comes to raising children, there is no one-size-fits-all as every baby is unique. Mothers are often made to feel like they are doing something wrong, or being unfair to their baby, by wanting some sort of daily routine to give both

their baby and themselves some sort of stability and structure on a regular basis.

There are also books on the market that are very strict with routine – both for the babies *and* the mothers – with barely any room for flexibility. In families where there is more than one child this just doesn't work. With school runs to fit in and mothers having to return to work, routines have to be adapted to suit everyone's needs at times. Life does have to go on and can't always be focused on sticking 100 per cent to the baby's routine.

However, this book has been written to give mothers a daily guideline to follow to make life a lot easier and happier for everyone from day one. All babies are different though and will need slightly different amounts of sleep: some need 15-30 minutes more than others at the various sleep times. Therefore it will be down to the parent to gauge exactly what works for their individual baby, based on the routine provided. I would never be able to give you a routine that will work exactly for every single baby, and anyone who says that is possible is being unrealistic. Babies are not robots and all have completely different personalities, so each routine needs to be tweaked slightly and adapted in terms of the amount of sleep needed to suit each particular baby.

In using this routine as a basis and gently steering babies in the right direction from day one, at the end of each contract I have left happy parents whose babies typically drop their night feed between eight and ten weeks, settle well during sleep times and are in general very relaxed, happy babies. It won't happen overnight but with lots of patience and perseverance – what I like to call the two Ps – you too can have a happy baby who eats, sleeps and plays very contentedly and actually doesn't need to cry, as their needs are always met!

It has worked for many mums and babies, and it was all of them that inspired me to write this book. I wanted to reach

out to so many more parents who are desperate for answers to basic questions and who just need someone to point them in the right direction to keep life with a newborn baby on an even keel. This book is here to give you that starting block, and as a mother of three children myself I understand first-hand how difficult life with a newborn can be when you are not sure where to begin.

Is a routine for you?

Establishing a routine can help you feel more in control of what is happening on a day-to-day basis and keep sleep deprivation to a minimum rather than becoming overwhelmed by it! A routine gives the main carer and the baby a daily structure, which makes life a lot easier and happier for everyone in the long run. The baby will be happier because she never gets a chance to become overtired and irritable, she will be fed regularly during the day and will be getting the correct amount of stimulation. The parent, in turn, is happier because having a routine means other things can be planned to fit in around feed and sleep times.

Achieving small things like having a shower or hanging some washing out, without feeling totally stressed, is not easy if your baby is not in a routine. Most babies generally find their own routine eventually, but much later on, when they are older. To get to that stage without any routine would have likely been a long haul of more sleep-deprived nights and fractious days than are necessary. Babies simply don't need to be so unhappy. The ability to sleep properly is a gift for life and needs to be taught.

Guilt

Many parents refrain from attempting a routine from an early age because of the guilt attached. Guilt comes not just from other people but also from within ourselves. Let's face it: you will always have feelings of guilt. Guilt is all part and

parcel of becoming a mother. It starts from the day your baby is born, and you feel guilty about everything you do or don't do from that day onwards. It is a perfectly normal everyday feeling, particularly for mothers. Generally speaking, guilt doesn't seem to be something that blights fathers. Of course, they love and care for their babies as much as mothers do, and equally would lay down their own life to protect their child. However, in my experience men seem to be able to 'switch off' that worry that constantly plagues us mothers every minute of the day, whether we are with our babies or apart from them for any length of time.

In talking to many mothers with babies and children of varying ages, I don't think the guilt ever goes away. I still feel terribly guilty when I send my 11-year-old son to his room and take away his privileges as a punishment for something he's done, even though I know I have to do it for his own benefit – and my own sanity!

It would be very easy for us all to give in to our babies and children's wants every step of the way. It may make them happy initially in the short term, but in the long run you will be doing their social development no favours at all. In doing this they will begin to expect everything their own way constantly, and be more likely to have behavioural problems when you are at home and out and about. I've never wanted to be one of those mothers whose child is kicking and screaming in the middle of the cereal aisle at the supermarket while everyone walking past looks on in pity.

Tip

What you need to remember is that there is a big difference between meeting your baby's needs and just giving in to her demands and wants!

Although we know in our heads that certain stages our babies go through are normal and part and parcel of them growing up, it doesn't make you feel any less guilty about them. Dropping the night feed, moving her from a basket to the big cot, stopping breastfeeding, moving from a bottle to a cup, leaving her to cry for any length of time. These are all phases that will generate huge feelings of guilt by just considering implementing them, let alone actually doing them!

I find that it helps knowing these feelings are normal and that you are in the same boat as everyone else. Guilt will never be something you can control. It's more something that you learn to live with as you make the changes necessary for your and your baby's well-being. Think of it as nature's way of making sure you look after your baby properly.

Friends and family members can be very judgemental at times about how you bring up your baby. The crucial thing that you need to remember and keep reminding yourself of is that it is *your* baby, and as a parent you can only ever do what you think is best for all of you.

Motherhood is not a battle against other mothers - it is *your* journey with *your* child or children.

It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. As long as you, your baby and the rest of the family living in your house are happy then that's all that matters.

There is no way to be a perfect mother, but there are a million ways to be a good one, and that's all we can strive to be!

Remember: happy babies equal happy parents! Good luck!

For the purposes of this book, and to save constantly writing he/she or mother/father, I have written with my youngest child in mind, a girl, Loren, and me, 'Mum', the main carer.

1

Before your baby is born

The baby equipment market worldwide is worth millions. With so many different brands to choose from, it can be very daunting knowing what essential items to buy, what are 'nice' to have around and those things that will never be used! It's very important to get all the equipment you will need to last you the first three months before the birth. Larger items like highchairs, baby walkers and weaning items can all be purchased after the birth when your baby is old enough to need them. I have listed items under the headings of 'essential', 'helpful' and 'not needed' and then explained my reasons. Family members or friends may offer to buy various items for you, so you can use the list below to give them an option of what to buy.

Getting ready

- Your hospital bag should be packed and ready from around 32 weeks of pregnancy. It is always best to be well prepared just in case you go into premature labour. It would add more stress to an already pressured situation if you had to rely on a partner or family member to try to find and pack all of the items you and the baby needed because you hadn't got your hospital bag pre-packed in an emergency situation. See [Chapter 2](#) for recommended items to pack.

- If there are any important birthdays coming up in the month after your due date that you don't want to forget, then it's a good idea to buy cards and presents in advance. This will save time and effort later, and relieve the pressure on you when you would rather be focusing on your new baby.
- If you can, try to cook some meals and freeze them in advance before the birth. This will make the weeks after your baby is born easier, as you can just defrost a healthy home-cooked meal and pop it into the oven or microwave to heat up, rather than trying to find time to cook something from scratch. Casseroles, shepherd's pie, lasagne, stir-fry and curries are all examples of meals that can be frozen into portions. It will be important to eat regularly and healthily after the birth to help your body recover. It is even more important when breastfeeding as what you eat will also be feeding your baby.

Equipment to buy

The items and equipment I have included in this chapter are the things I found most useful when my babies were born and also things that other parents have recommended to me. There may be other items you feel are essential to your family when your baby is born, to compliment your lifestyle and environment, which you can add to the list. I just wanted to give you a starting block of where to begin, as I remember how daunting the world of baby equipment was when pregnant with my first child!

The basics

Cot (essential)

There are so many colours, makes and shapes of cot on the market. Where do you start? Cot or cot bed? To be honest there isn't a right or wrong one to buy - it will usually come down to the colour you prefer and whether it matches the

nursery. The size will depend on the size of your baby's room. As long as your final choice meets all of the current safety regulations then it will be absolutely fine whether it costs £50 or £500! The current British Standard safety standard that all baby cots have to adhere to is the BS1753.

It is sometimes easier to buy a **cot bed** rather than just a cot purely because it will last longer, although these are bigger than a standard cot so that may be a factor in your choice. Cot beds are more expensive to buy, but once your baby is a toddler you will be able to take the sides off and it will turn into a bed, which can last until your child is around five years old.

Most cots now come with **teething rails** along the top bars. These are clear plastic covers that go over the wood. Once your little one can pull herself to standing, the height of the top bar is just perfect for her to gnaw on. Trust me, they love to do it - as all three of my children did! Having the teething rail makes it a little more hygienic for babies to chew on rather than them just biting the bare wood, as you can give it a wipe regularly. It's worth choosing a cot that already has these, although they can be purchased separately.

It's very important to buy a good quality ventilated **mattress** for the cot that meets the current British safety standard BS1877 and BS7177. I recommend buying a new one for each baby you have and not reusing a sibling's mattress or buying a second-hand one. Remember this is somewhere your baby will sleep every night for 12-13 hours as well as daytime naps for the next two to three years, even longer in the case of cot bed mattresses. She will sweat on hot days and certainly vomit on it at some point. Even though it will be covered with a cot sheet, the sweat and vomit stains can still go through on to the mattress. At least if it's a new mattress the germs are all from your baby only, which is much safer and more hygienic! In some cases you may find that the mattress will actually cost you more

than the cot itself, but it is definitely worth making sure you get the right one. If you go to a big baby superstore they will advise you and recommend the correct mattress for the cot you plan to buy.

Moses basket (helpful and practical)

This is not a completely essential item. If you prefer, the baby can sleep in a big cot from the day she comes home from hospital. You can either put her in a cot in the nursery on the first night home and thereafter, or set the cot up in your room for the first few weeks to make things easier for night feeds. It can then be moved to the nursery once your baby drops her night feed.

However, in my opinion a Moses basket can be a very practical item to have in the first 10 weeks or so. Ninety-five per cent of the parents I have worked for used one – by their own choice, not my recommendation – which they've often borrowed from a relative. I used one for my three children and all of my friends and family did too, all for the same reason.

When you have just had a baby you don't want her in another room at night-time. As a parent you want to keep an eye on your children and make sure they are okay and safe at all times – show me the parent that doesn't spend those early days checking the rise and fall of their little one's chest! Half the time you won't even realise you are doing it! I used to wake myself up as I had been dreaming the baby had been crying, which is what many parents do. Generally you find that the baby is still fast asleep, and you are just hearing things as you are on high alert in preparation for your baby's cries! It's much easier to check her if she is next to you. Therefore, most parents would not be happy to put their newborn in a completely different room to them in those early days or weeks.

Sadly a cot takes up a fair amount of room and wouldn't fit in most parents' bedrooms without using up precious

space, so a Moses basket is the next best option. It's small and portable so can move from room to room, or even downstairs if needed.

In the first few weeks babies do not mind or even notice which room they sleep in as long as their sleep environment and routine remains the same - i.e., same cot/Moses basket, so their comforting smells remain the same. They wouldn't mind if the basket were put in another room on any given night. This may need to happen if a kindly grandparent or friend were to offer some much-needed relief for you at night-time. You can then easily move the basket into a spare room. The same couldn't be said for a cot.

Once the baby is older and no longer needs to be fed in the night, and perhaps has grown too big for the Moses basket, she can be moved to the big cot in the nursery for her sleeps. By this time you are usually emotionally ready for this to happen anyway, as she is not so small any more.

I have never had any babies who have problems settling or sleeping when we do the transition from Moses basket to cot as it's usually done in the first 8-12 weeks depending on the parents' choice and the babies' size. You can get your baby used to her cot and nursery environment by putting her in the cot during the day. Some parents find a good time to do this is when you are getting her bath ready. You could put her mobile on for her to watch while you sort everything out ready to bathe her.

Cot mobile (helpful)

I think a cot mobile is a really good thing to have, and it's a really fun thing to choose too. It can be used as a sleep prompt and indicator to your baby that it is time to go to sleep. You don't need to spend a fortune on one with all sorts of lullabies and lights that make pretty patterns on the wall; in fact I would positively discourage any kind of mobile that creates any sort of light show, as this will just act as a stimulant to your baby. In my opinion the best mobiles to

buy are the basic wind-up ones with three or four animals hanging down. This will spin round as a tune plays when you wind it up before leaving the baby's room, and she will very quickly learn this as a cue to go to sleep. Try to choose one in a strong colour. White or cream mobiles look very neat but your new baby's vision will take a few weeks to improve, so she will enjoy a brightly coloured mobile a lot more.

Pushchair/pram (essential)

Obviously this is an essential item. Choices such as style and colour are individual to each parent. As long as it complies with the safety standard, there is no right or wrong one to buy. You do need to make sure that it lies completely flat for your newborn though and has a five-point harness in the case of a pushchair. Other helpful things to look for are:

- Is there a rain cover included?
- Does it have a shopping basket?
- Does it fold easily with one hand? This is essential if you will be using buses regularly, as you will have a baby in the other arm!
- Does it have a built-in hood/sun shade?
- Does it have a brake?
- Does it have swivel wheels? These make pushing and turning corners much easier!
- Is there a cup holder included or pocket? This is helpful for storing keys/phone/purse etc.

Some parents prefer a pram with the baby facing them rather than away from them. This enables you to chat to your baby as you walk along. Communicating with your baby constantly will aid her language development long term and encourage her to begin vocalising.

Something I also found very useful was being able to click the car seat on to my pushchair chassis. This meant that if I needed to pop into town in the car I was able to do this

without having to transfer the baby from car seat into a pram/pushchair, and then back again, and most probably waking her if she had dozed off!

As this is a very practical item, the choice made will also need to be based on where you are planning to use it and for what purpose. Many large baby stores will be able to give advice and guide you on this.

I thoroughly enjoyed choosing the pram for my three children and had a different one for each of them. In fact, most people don't reuse them for subsequent babies as circumstances may have changed, so choose something based on your current needs and circumstances.

Important tip

Make sure the pushchair/pram that you do decide on actually fits into your car boot easily. As most will be home delivered by the shop, or come pre-packed in a big box that you transport home with your car's back seats down, you may not discover this until a later date. You don't want to use it a few times on walks round your local village, then plan an outing in the car and find that, when folded up, it doesn't fit! Also make sure that you know how to fold it before the baby is born as they can be surprisingly complicated to the uninitiated.

Car seat (essential)

Even if you don't own a car it's always advisable to buy a car seat. Some pushchairs come with them as part of the package, but if yours doesn't then you need to purchase or borrow one that's suitable for a newborn. You will need one to bring the baby home from the hospital anyway, and most maternity wards will not let you walk out with the baby in your arms. They generally ask your partner or family member to bring a car seat in on your day of discharge.

It is safer to buy a brand-new one so that you know it meets and has passed all of the current British safety standards. However, if you do choose to borrow one or purchase second-hand, only do so if you are certain that it has never been in a car that has been involved in an accident before. If you can't be sure of that then it's advisable to spend the extra money and buy a new one.

Some points to remember regarding car seats are:

- Never strap one into a passenger seat that has an active air bag. Turn the airbag off if you need to have the car seat in the front.
- Car seats for newborns are always rear-facing
- Get someone experienced to show you how to strap the car seat into the car correctly. Practise doing it before the baby is born so that you and your partner are both sure you know how to do it properly. Practice makes perfect!

I remember watching a friend strap her son, aged eight months into the car using both the rear passenger belt *and* the front passenger belt pulled into the back! She said she had been sitting in the back with the baby since he was born as she couldn't use the passenger seat in the front without use of the seat belt, which was being used for her son's car seat in the back! She couldn't stop laughing when I showed her the correct way to strap it in - using only one seat belt - and now enjoys car journeys sitting in the front with her husband, with the baby safely strapped in the back!

Baby carrier/sling (helpful)

This is another item that isn't essential but is very helpful to have around. If you are on a budget, it is probably something that you can try to borrow one from a friend to see how much you end up using it. It's a lifestyle item, really. If you enjoy going for long walks in the countryside,

where a pushchair/pram may struggle over rough ground, then a baby carrier is a must-have item. Equally, if this isn't your first baby and you already have other children, then a sling can be very helpful in enabling you to carry a small baby around, but still have hands free on outings, or even to do jobs in the house if the baby is fretful in the early weeks.

The other great thing about slings is that they're fun, they promote bonding between you and your baby, and babies love them!

If you do decide you would like to make use of a sling, then a couple of things to look for are:

- That it's washable
- That the baby can be forward-facing or rear-facing
- That it has good neck support for a newborn

Baby monitors (essential)

A whole assortment of baby monitors can be found on the market. They range from a basic listening device, costing around £20-£30, which includes a baby unit for the nursery and a parent unit for you to hear them, to a more complex video and movement monitor, which can set you back around £200.

In my opinion the best type to go for would be a movement and sound baby monitor. This is what I used for all three of my children and the one I recommend to all of my clients who ask for advice. It is more expensive than a monitor that only registers noise, but well worth the extra money as it monitors your baby's breathing and buys peace of mind, which for most parents is priceless anyway. It comes with a movement mat that is placed under the mattress (cot or Moses basket), which will then cause an alarm to go off on the nursery unit and parent unit if it doesn't detect any movement for a certain amount of time. The sensitivity of the amount of movement picked up can be altered to the parents' preference.

There are a few different companies selling these types of monitors, ranging from £40-£100. Angelcare is the biggest brand name out there and the one I personally used with my children. It is also the one I recommend to all of the parents I work for. Contrary to popular belief, these monitors do not have the alarm going off all the time unnecessarily. The only time they begin to be pointless to use is when the baby begins to roll and move around the cot in her sleep. This means she rolls off and away from the mat, so the alarm will then go off as it's not detecting any movement. It varies from baby to baby and how much they move as to when you get to this stage. We had to stop using the Angelcare with our eldest son when he was five months as he kept rolling off the mat and setting the alarm off. However, for my other son and daughter we continued to use it until they were both over a year old, as they barely moved at all in their sleep and just stayed in the same position. Up until you reach this point, though, they are very effective and I found them to be very reassuring.

As a parent, cot death - or SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) - is one of the main things you worry about, and you pray that your child will never be one of the unlucky ones (see also [here](#)). I loved the reassurance and security of something else 'keeping an eye on my baby', watching over her, in a way, while I slept. I trusted that the alarm would alert me if there was a problem, and I personally found that it made me feel a little more in control of the whole cot-death scenario. I thought that maybe, with the alarm to wake me where I otherwise may have still been sleeping, I may just be able to prevent the unthinkable happening if I were quick enough to get to my baby at the first signs of her not breathing. It is wise to enrol on a basic parent first-aid course before your baby is born or at least learn how to perform infant CPR so that you are aware of what to do if you did need to resuscitate your baby. Again you hope it will

never be needed, but it is very reassuring to know the ropes.

These movement monitors are also particularly helpful and reassuring to use with premature babies, so it's helpful to have one of these in place for when you bring the baby home from hospital.

Breathing lapses are very common in premature babies: about 50 per cent of those born before 32 weeks' gestation experience them. Apnoea monitors are used routinely in most special-care wards as premature babies can sometimes 'forget' to breathe every now and then when they are in a very deep sleep. Having the alarm means the staff are alerted to the baby. Most of the time all it takes is either a quick rub as they are snoozing, or to pick them up, which stimulates them enough to breathe regularly again.

This apnoea immaturity, when it occurs before the baby's original due date is totally unrelated to SIDS. It doesn't increase the risk of your baby succumbing to SIDS or to apnoea itself later on. If your baby continues to have serious and regular breathing issues after her original due date then contact your doctor. Brief lapses in breathing without any blueness or limpness or need for resuscitation, even in full-term babies, is not believed by most experts to be a predictor of SIDS risk, and most babies who do die of SIDS weren't observed to experience apnoea previously. Please see [Chapter 5](#) for more details on causes and prevention of SIDS.

I don't really see the need for video monitoring if you have got the movement and sensor mat. You cannot tell if a baby is breathing or not just by looking at them sleeping on a small TV screen, but again it is down to individual preference.

Nursery furnishings and other useful items at home *Clothes storage (essential)*

The type of wardrobe and/or chest of drawers you choose will very much depend on what built-in storage you already have in the nursery, and how much space you have left in the nursery once the cot is in place. It is helpful to have a set of drawers with a changing tabletop built on, where you can put your changing mat and be able to get the baby dressed without having to bend down on to the floor. This is especially helpful after a C-section.

Nursery chair (helpful)

Again this will depend on space available within the nursery, but if you can possibly squeeze one in then you will find it a godsend for those dreaded night feeds. Most come with a stool to put your feet up too; the one I had was so comfortable I used to walk past the nursery and find my husband dozing in it – without the baby!

There are so many different styles on the market, but try to find one that has arms as it makes breastfeeding your baby a lot easier. It can also be used to support your arm when bottle-feeding and later on as a chair you both snuggle up on for bedtime cuddles and story time.

Curtains and blackout blinds (essential)

It is vital to have both a fitted blackout blind that fits flush with the window and fully lined blackout curtains in the nursery. I know from 10 years' experience that having the room that the baby sleeps in as dark as you can possibly get it, with no chinks of light coming through, will make a huge difference to how well they sleep, both during their daytime naps and at night.

If you choose to have the baby in your room for the first few weeks then you also need to make sure that this room is made as dark as possible. All babies come into a light sleep from around 5 a.m. onwards. If they begin to stir and open their eyes and it is light enough in the room for them to see things, e.g., mobile, pictures, cuddly toys etc., they are

more likely to wake fully. They may then find it hard to settle back to sleep until their normal 7-7:30 a.m. wake-up time. If, however, the room is so dark that they cannot make sense of any stimulating items in the room, then they are more likely just to doze back off to sleep again, and that means you can too! Blackout blinds, or material with sticky-back Velcro to place on the back of the blackout and then attach to the window, can be bought at many large department stores.

Tip

Ensure there are no looped curtain cords that hang down where your baby may be able to reach them as she gets older, as these will carry a high risk of strangulation.

Lighting (essential)

It's important to keep the lights very low for the night feeds, so as not to stimulate your baby too much or wake her fully. The aim will be to feed her and get her settled straight after, and the amount of lighting you use can affect how easily that happens. You will be able to control how well your baby settles, by adjusting the amount of stimulation and light she receives. If there isn't a dimmer fitted to the main light switch then it's a good idea to get one fitted. If this isn't possible then purchase a small lamp and put a 10- or 15-watt bulb in it, or buy a plug-in night light for the nursery to use when you breast- or bottle-feed your baby in the night.

Flooring/carpets (helpful)

A fitted carpet will help to keep the nursery warm in the wintertime. Try to avoid rugs as you may end up tripping over them during the night-time feeds, when the lights are low or off.

Baby bath (not needed)

This is not an essential item as the baby can very easily go into a big bath from day one. Baby baths themselves just tend to be another bulky item for which you will need to find space. They are also very difficult and heavy to try to empty out, unless you put them in the big bath - but then there isn't much point in having one if that's the case!

Bath aids (helpful)

There are a variety of bath aids on the market that are all very helpful in allowing you to have your hands free as you are bathing your baby. Newborns in particular tend to be very slippery as you are trying to handle them in the bath, so bath aids help to hold them in position while you gently splash water over them. The comfort of a bath aid also makes them feel a lot more reassured and secure so they are more likely to enjoy their bath from an early age. Smiling and chatting as you bathe her will also teach her from the start that bath time is a nice enjoyable experience with Mummy and/or Daddy.

I used a very basic towelling-type aid that looked like a mini-slide. It had a metal frame covered in towelling for the baby to lie on. You could wet the towel with the bath water before placing the baby on it to make it nice and warm for her. It could then be hooked on the inside of the bath to dry out when finished, ready for the next bath time.

Changing mat (helpful)

If you live over more than one storey, it's helpful to have two of these: one for upstairs and one for downstairs. That way you don't have to keep moving one whenever you need it. They are inexpensive and this can save a lot of running around in the first few weeks, which is particularly helpful as this is a time when your energy stores are low anyway. My current favourite is one with the slogan: 'Keep calm and

change my bum!’ Humour is always good when dealing with poo.

Bouncy chair/baby chair (helpful)

This is also a very helpful piece of equipment to have. Again there are many different types you can choose from, but some tips to help you choose the right one are below:

- Reclining chairs that can be altered to lie flat for a newborn and gradually raised to different heights as your baby grows and her neck gets stronger are very useful. These are also great if you have twins and need to use the chair to be able to feed both at the same time with a bottle.
- Choose one that has a ‘head hugger’ or neck support insert for when your baby is newborn and their head is still very floppy.
- Look for a chair that has a removable washable fabric. Wet wipes are great for wiping clean small spillages, but a large vomit or nappy explosion may mean the washing machine is the only place for it! Ensure you put it into some detergent to soak first if you are unable to put it straight into the washing machine.
- Choose one with straps. A newborn may not move a lot, but it’s amazing how just wriggling around can mean they slide to the end of the chair if not strapped in. Always use the straps if you are going to be leaving the room for any period of time.
- Consider attached toys. It isn’t essential to have one with these, as many people tend to buy a baby gym of sorts anyway. This can then be placed over the chair for the baby to look up at the toys and eventually reach out to play with.

Musical or vibrating chairs and swinging chairs are not a necessity and can be very expensive. As long as you have a