

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a white sweater, holding a baby wrapped in a green blanket. The baby is wearing a light green outfit and is sleeping peacefully. The woman is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

Birth, Baby & Beyond

**A comprehensive guide to pregnancy,
birth, and parenting planning.**

A DOULAS OF BALTIMORE PUBLICATION

"There is no one right way to have and raise a baby. Our doulas help as you find your way."

—Doulas of Baltimore founder Emily Pelton

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We are Emily Pelton and Deborah Bailey!

Since 2002, Doulas of Baltimore's founder Emily Pelton has been a source of support and knowledge for over a thousand new and growing families in the Baltimore area.

In 2018, Emily expanded Doulas of Baltimore to partner with Deborah Bailey, a long-time doula (and mentee of Emily's!) and business owner.

Together, we have cultivated a talented group of 20 professional doulas who work with growing families across the metro Baltimore area.

Remember:

This guide should be used as a "choose your own adventure" style resource. Know that anything within these pages is optional and up to you! Print and use the worksheets or ignore them entirely. Our goal is to support you in the choices you make and prepare you to welcome your new baby home.

Section 1:

Before Pregnancy (or First Steps)

What to consider before you conceive

Often times forgotten, the most effective Postpartum planning begins before pregnancy.

Talking through these questions and details by yourself or with your chosen partner can be key in making decisions that serve you and your growing family well. Consider each of the following topics:

Parental Leave

Explore what options you and/or your partner have for parental leave once your baby has arrived. How long can you take? How will it affect your finances? Do you need to save to fund your leave?

Childcare

Do you and/or your partner have a preference for an in-home provider such as a nanny or a family member vs a childcare center? When would you need care? When should you start your search and decide?

Providers and Birth Locations

What factors are important in a birthing location? Do your current providers deliver and would you want to continue care with them? Are there any risk factors or other considerations that could have implications on your prenatal care?

Parenting Topics

It's important that even if you and your co-parent differ in parenting styles or preferences that all parties are considered and respected. Use our helpful Parenting Preferences Discussion Guide on the following page to help navigate the conversation.

**Currently pregnant? You still have time!
Walk through these topics now.**



Section 1:

Before Pregnancy (or First Steps)

Parenting Discussion Guide

Parenting Opinions Guide

Read each statement and record “A” for agree, “D” for disagree, and “?” for unsure. Use these statements as starters for your conversations. We recommend using this guide when both parents are in a calm, rested headspace and feeling open to discussion without overwhelming emotions. Remember: **There are no wrong answers and no timeline, if you’re feeling activated step away!**

Statement	Partner A	Partner B
Having a baby would make me feel fulfilled.		
It is important for a couple to plan together how many children they will have.		
It is more important to be a good parent than to be a good partner.		
Children hold a relationship together.		
Having a career is more important than raising children.		
Adults give up their freedom once they have children.		
Couples should agree on discipline attitudes before having children.		
Anyone who wishes to be in the birth space has a right to be there.		
I wish for our baby to be breastfed.		
One parent should stay home with the baby while they’re young.		

Section 1:

Before Pregnancy (or First Steps)

“TBR” (to be read!) List

Reading in Pregnancy

Not just a healthy passtime, reading during pregnancy can offer comfort, answers, and opportunities for further discussion with your birth partner, doula, and your providers.

We've included a few of our favorite suggestions and space for your own finds.

Title	Author	Finished?	Rating
Expecting Better	Emily Oster		☆☆☆☆☆
Cribsheet	Emily Oster		☆☆☆☆☆
The Informed Parent	Tara Helle and Emily Willingham, PhD		☆☆☆☆☆
The Whole-Brain Child	Daniel J Siegel, MD		☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆
			☆☆☆☆☆

Section 2:

Early Pregnancy

Questions to ask during your first trimester



Who will watch the baby?

Securing infant care, particularly in a daycare center setting, can be stressful. It's never too early to get on a waitlist if there is a center you prefer or to begin the search for a quality nanny. If family will be watching baby, begin outlining important considerations for them.



How will we announce the baby?

How and when will you share your news with friends and family members? Is it important to you to announce together? Will you wait a certain amount of time or would you prefer to share right away? Who will you involve in your pregnancy and in what capacity (ex. grandparents in delivery space)? Will you share on social media or keep it offline?



Where will the baby live?

Will you room in with your baby, put them in a nursery, or both? Will baby gear have storage in your main living spaces? Where will you store larger items like strollers and car seats? What car will you use most often as a family? Is the car seat you're choosing compatible?



Who will provide prenatal care?

Ask your provider about what to expect in terms of future appointments. Which ones should your partner accompany you to? Will you see one provider for all of them or is it recommended to see different practitioners each time? Which approach do you prefer? Are testing, scans, etc all done in your office or do you need to go elsewhere?

Section 2:

Early Pregnancy

Childcare Preferences Worksheet

Provider Preferences

The baby will be cared for... (circle one)

In home by a nanny

In home by a family member

In a daycare center

Other: _____

Location Preferences

The daycare will be... (circle one)

Closer to home

Closer to work

Other: _____

Policy Preferences

Pick Up/Drop Off (circle one)

Comfortable with rigid time limits

Prefer more flexibility

No preference

Sick Days (circle all that apply)

Required 24-Hour Fever Free

Required 24-Hour Symptom Free

Notify parents of outbreaks

Staff Training/Certifications

(circle all that apply)

CPR/AED Certified

Comfortable with teachers under 18

Prefer college educated or equivalent

Days Off/Cancellations (circle one)

Prefer to mirror school district

Site-specific

Methodology Preferences

The following methodologies are preferable:

Montessori

Waldorf

Play-Based

Outdoor/Nature-Centered

Other: _____

Section 2:

Early Pregnancy

How to use the Childcare Provider Scorecard

Most of these lines are self-explanatory, but we've defined and explained a few of our criteria. Print one of these scorecards for each provider you visit to refer to when making your final decision!

Recommended ratio is at least 1 teacher to every 4 children under the age of 2

Section 2: Early Pregnancy Childcare Provider Scorecard

Provider Name: _____

Provider Location: _____

Number of Children per Classroom: _____

Number of Teachers per Classroom: _____

Parents allowed to drop in? Y / N

Art at child's eye level? Y / N

Snacks/meals provided? Y / N
If yes, which? **Breakfast / Lunch / Snack**

Heard laughter/play? Y / N

Being prepared for unexpected drop-ins is a great indicator that children are well cared for even when no parents are around.

Overall Cleanliness
☆☆☆☆☆

Teacher Engagement
☆☆☆☆☆

General Smells
☆☆☆☆☆

Safety Measures
☆☆☆☆☆

Safety Measures include:

- Approved drop off/pick up list
- One secured entry/exit
- Background checks on teachers
- CPR/AED training updated regularly
- Closed circuit cameras

Sick Policy: _____

Weather Policy: _____

Notes: _____

Overall Score ☆☆☆☆☆

The CDC recommends noting smells such as cleaners (indicating regular sanitizing) or off smells like old food/diapers (could indicate neglect of space)

Make sure to note things you'll want to consider when you sit down to review all the scorecards! This could include: monthly cost, care style (Montessori, Nature-Centered, etc), distance from home/work, etc.

Hearing laughter and play with art at child's eye level indicates a caring and child-centric culture.

Section 2:

Early Pregnancy

Childcare Provider Scorecard

Provider Name: _____

Provider Location: _____

Number of Children per Classroom: _____

Number of Teachers per Classroom: _____

Parents allowed to drop in? Y / N

Art at child's eye level? Y / N

Snacks/meals provided? Y / N

Heard laughter/play? Y / N

If yes, which? **Breakfast / Lunch / Snack**

Overall Cleanliness



Teacher Engagement



General Smells



Safety Measures



Sick Policy: _____

Weather Policy: _____

Notes: _____

Overall Score



Section 2:

Early Pregnancy

Preliminary Research + Birth Planning



Your birth plan is a helpful document that helps you quickly and efficiently communicate your preferences with your doula, medical providers, and anyone else who may be helping you. Creating an effective birth plan may seem tricky (after all, there are so many things to decide!) but we can simplify this process pretty quickly.

Your preferences are important and it's important to be sure that your birth provider is comfortable with your choices prior to labor. Let's talk about what makes an effective birth plan.

An Effective Birth Plan...

- ✓ is clear and Concise
- ✓ is 1-2 Pages
- ✓ highlights your most important preferences.

Things you can leave out:

- Where you'll be birthing (you'll already be there!)
- What you'll do laboring at home
- Excessive negative language ("do not xyz" - positive language goes far when it comes to birth planning!)

Working with (not against!) Your Provider

Remember that your care providers are there to support you the best way they know how! Most care providers are very willing to try and be flexible with many client requests, even if they cannot meet all of them.

Pro Tip: bring a working copy of your birth preferences outline to a prenatal appointment. Requesting your care providers to review it with you helps to ensure your requests are noted ahead of time. You can then ask them to place a copy in your chart as well.

Section 2:

Early Pregnancy

Glossary of terms

Some common terms and abbreviations that may be used in your research may be unfamiliar to you. Below we've included some we think you'll see and the definitions for quick, easy reference.

Add other terms you find helpful on the lines below!

AROM

Artificial Rupture of Membranes, also referred to as "breaking water".

PROM

Premature Rupture of Membranes. When your water breaks before labor has begun.

Pit or Pitocin

A pharmaceutical commonly used to induce labor. Also regularly used prophylactically after birth to reduce the risk of Postpartum Hemorrhage.

Cytotec (Name Brand) or misoprostol (generic)

A pharmaceutical commonly used during labor induction to ripen the cervix and bring on contractions. This is a synthetic form of prostaglandin.

Foley Catheter

A thin balloon-like catheter that is inserted into the cervix and slowly filled with Saline to soften and open the Cervix.

Cervidil

A medication that is inserted into the vagina to assist with cervical ripening and softening. Can be pulled via string should complications arise.

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Plans to make during your second trimester



Birth and Postpartum Doulas

Especially if you are considering overnight newborn care, early in your second trimester is the ideal time to lock in support. Hiring a birth doula in your second trimester ensures time to cultivate and maximize that relationship.



Plan a Babymoon

Get away together, even if only for one night, to reconnect and recharge before your little one arrives.



Start Your Birth Planning

Begin research on what your birth provider offers, what their standard procedures are, and where you might ask for alternatives.



Your Baby Registry

What do you need for this baby? Start with friends and family members with younger children and your doula - what items are necessary, which will make your lives easier, and what can you skip all together?



Handle Large House Tasks

Make the most of your second trimester energy burst and get started on things like rearranging your home to accommodate baby gadgets and painting/staging the nursery. Third trimester you will thank you for it!

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

10 Essentials for Parents of Newborns

There are thousands of products marketed to parents... how do you know which ones are worth your money and which ones to pass on?

Leave it to the experts! Here's our top 10 must-have baby items for new parents based on our experience. We've ordered these from least expensive to most expensive, making sure to leave out anything we don't love.



Bumco Baby Bum Brush

\$5.99

This clever, inexpensive essential keeps the diaper cream/ointment off your fingers on the baby bum where it belongs!



Itzy Ritzy Sweetie Soothers

\$8.99 for two

The cutest colors and designs plus a straight nipple with a wide base to minimize interference with breastfeeding? Yes please.



Nose Frida Nasal Aspirator

\$14.99

Bulb syringes are gross (how do you clean that thing?). This is more comfortable for baby, more effective, and so much less gross!



Muslin Burp Cloths

\$15-18

Because there are SO many uses for an absorbent cloth as a brand new parent! At least these also come in cute colors!

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

10 Essentials for Parents of Newborns



**Hatch Rest Go
Portable Sound
Machine**

\$34.99

We love the Hatch for daily use. Now we have an on-the-go favorite sound machine too!



**Summer Infant
Gentle Support
Tub**

\$39

This tub is ideal for the tiniest babies all the way through the first year!



Ollie Swaddle

\$59

This is a tough one as there are SO many swaddles we love and lots of variables for which one we prefer! We've never had a client (or baby!) not LOVE the Ollie, so that one wins our recommendation!



**Ubbi Diaper
Pail**

\$69.99

Hands down the best diaper pail out there!



Solly Baby Wrap

\$70-85

Buttery soft and lightweight, this is our favorite baby carrier for the newborn stage!



**Skip Hop Wipe
Clean Changing
Pad**

\$80

Newborns create enough laundry - don't add washing a changing table cover to the pile!

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Birth Planning: The Ultimate Guide

The next pages are our attempt at offering you a complete view of the choices and preferences you may have to communicate to your birth providers. We're starting this mid-pregnancy because, if we're honest, there's a lot to consider! We recommend working through one section at a time - you have plenty of time!

Remember, the ideal birth plan is no more than 2 pages and contains your “non-negotiables” or the topics you feel the strongest about. Too many words gets overwhelming!

Preparing for an Induction of Labor:

- Do you have preferences on time of day for arrival for your scheduled induction? When does your provider/birth location prefer to schedule inductions?
- Do you have a preference for IV placement?(Non dominant hand or arm is recommended)
- What are your preferences regarding cervical ripening if necessary (Cytotec, Cervadil, Foley catheter, etc)?
- How would you prefer pitocin to be utilized? What are the recommendations from your care providers regarding pitocin dosage?
- Do you have a preference regarding monitoring during your induction (wireless, telemetry, traditional abdominal bands, internal, etc)?
- How do you feel about artificial rupture of membranes (breaking of your water)?



Hospital Considerations

- What environmental factors would you prefer to enhance your labor experience? (Do you want to have the ability to walk around the room, use a birth ball, have the lights dimmed, specific music playing, etc?)
- Would you prefer a hospital gown or to wear your own clothing during labor?
- Who will be present for your birth? What will be their roles?
- Is there anyone you'd like to limit access to your room? (Such as, “Please, no students.” or “Please do not allow my sister-in-law, Jane Doe, access to my hospital room.”)

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Birth Planning: Vaginal Delivery

Our best reminder here is that an answer of, “I don’t really have a preference” or, “Whatever my doctor/midwife thinks” works just fine if you happen to read a question that you don’t have strong opinions on!

Active Labor:

- What are your preferences regarding food and drink during labor? How does that align with your providers and birthing location?
- Would you like to receive IV fluids during your labor? If necessary, would you prefer medications (antibiotics, anti-nausea meds, etc) administered orally, via IV or as injections?
- What are your preferences regarding pain relief options? Consider things like when/if you would like medication offered or suggestions regarding the timing of receiving pain medication or if you prefer not to be offered (rather to ask) for medication.
- Do you have a preference regarding fetal monitoring? What are your options for monitors at your birth location (wireless, telemetry, traditional abdominal bands, internal, etc)?
- How do you feel about labor augmentations such as cervical ripening medications, Foley catheter, Pitocin, artificial rupture of membranes (breaking of your water), etc?
- What is your preference regarding the frequency/timing of cervical exams during your labor? What information (such as changes in dilation, effacement, baby’s station) would you want to know after an exam?

Pushing/Second Stage:

- When and how would you like to push? How do you feel about coached/guided pushing (usually counting and cheering)? Pushing instinctively?
- Do you have preferences regarding looking/feeling for the baby during pushing (use of a mirror, touching baby’s head when crowning, etc)?
- When and why might assistive tools like forceps, vacuum or episiotomy be utilized by your providers? How do you feel about these tools and under what circumstances would you be comfortable utilizing them?
- Would you prefer the use of foot/leg rests or having your partner,/doula/nurses, etc support for legs during pushing?
- Do you have any cultural, religious or personal preferences during your birth (such as silence when the baby is born, being the first to touch your baby, etc)?
- Would you like to have photographs and/or video taken during delivery? Who will be taking them and with what device? Any limitations on what you would/ would not like photographed?

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Birth Planning: Vaginal Delivery

Immediate Postpartum:

- What are your preferences regarding the umbilical cord clamping and cutting (when and who specifically)?
- Do you have a preference regarding expectant vs managed third stage (delivery of the placenta)?
- Would you prefer your baby placed immediately on your chest, or cleaned up, examined, etc. before being handed to you?
- What are your preferences for the immediate postpartum? For example, “I would prefer my baby to remain skin to skin for the first hour and delay any routine procedures until after this time”.
- How much information would you like to receive regarding your immediate maternal postpartum recovery (for example, any tears or lacerations that require repair, amount of bleeding, etc)?
- Do you have any requests regarding your placenta; would you like to see it? Do you plan to keep it?



Newborn Care:

- What are your plans for feeding your baby? Would you like to speak to a lactation consultant or have access to a breast pump during your postpartum stay? Would you like to have formula provided for you?
- How do you feel about the routine newborn procedures at your birth location? This could include erythromycin eye ointment, Hepatitis B vaccination, Vitamin K injection,, etc.
- If it is necessary for baby to leave your room, where would you like your partner to go?
- When and where would you like your baby first bathed? Who would you like to be involved in this process?
- If having a boy, will he be circumcised before leaving the hospital?

Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Birth Planning: Cesarean Delivery

Cesarean birth IS birth - go confidently knowing you are making a well-informed choice! Your rights, options and preferences matter as you plan for a positive cesarean birth experience, and you are worthy of consideration from your care providers.

A clear, concise outline of birth preferences in your chart and available to your providers is a quick and easy way to ensure you have the birth experience you desire.

When your birthing day arrives, celebrate it! Spend some time dancing, laughing and reminiscing with your partner on positive memories between the two of you. Wear something to the hospital that makes you feel beautiful and strong. Chat cheerfully about the excellent meal you'll have afterward! Make every moment for memories.

Planning, Hospital Arrival & Pre-Op:

- Do you have preferences on time of day for check in? Consider traffic, dietary restrictions, child/pet care, etc.
- Do you have a preference for IV placement? (Non dominant hand or arm is recommended)
- How do you feel about the process of surgery preparation? Would you like each step explained or detailed?
- How does your partner feel confident with their role in the OR? When will they enter, where will they sit and what should they do during the procedure?
- What are your preferences regarding your pre-birth environment? Lighting, music, etc.
- Do you have any limitations regarding access to your pre-op room?



Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Birth Planning: Cesarean Delivery

Operating Room/Delivery:

- Who will accompany you to the OR? Partner, doula?
- Would you like the steps of the procedure be explained as they happen, or would you prefer to focus on your partner/doula?
- Do you want to take photographs during/after delivery? What pictures or memories are most important to you? Is your partner willing/able to capture them? Are you comfortable with asking/giving your phone/camera to a nurse?
- Would you like to play music in the OR if possible?
- Do you have preferences regarding use of a clear drapes, or having the drape lowered at the moment of delivery?
- Do you have any cultural, religious or personal preferences (such as silence when the baby is born, partner announcing gender, etc)?
- What are your options and preferences regarding cord clamping and cutting?
- Are you able to have skin-to-skin with baby after delivery in the OR?
- Would your partner like to join baby at the warmer in the OR when invited or stay by your side?
- Would you like to see or keep your placenta? Are you planning to store or donate cord blood?
- If separation is necessary, do you have a preference regarding whether your partner follows you to the PACU or remains with your baby(ies)? If your doula is present, what would your preference be for her at that time?

PACU/Post-Op:

- Who would you prefer to be with you in the PACU?
What are the limitations of your birthing location regarding recovery room visitors/guests?
- Do you have any specific preferences for medications immediately after surgery?
- Would you prefer to hold your baby while in the recovery room?
- Would you like assistance facilitating baby's first feeding in PACU or would you prefer to wait until you are settled in the postpartum area?
- Would you like photos/videos taken during this time?



Section 3:

Mid-Pregnancy

Birth Planning: Cesarean Delivery



There are a few different considerations that a Cesarean birth has that a Vaginal birth may not have - especially if your Cesarean is unplanned. Walking through these options ensures you're able to make solid decisions that work for you and your baby no matter what path your birth journey takes.

Recovery/Postpartum:

- Who would you prefer to be with you during your postpartum recovery? Are guests/visitors permitted and if so, what will their roles be during your recovery?
- Do you have any specific preferences for pain medications during the postpartum?
- Are you comfortable with the designated surgical site care? Is your partner able to help?
- What would be your preference for discharge? How long do your care providers recommend that you stay in the hospital?

Newborn Care:

- What are your plans for feeding your baby? Would you like to speak to a lactation consultant or have access to a breast pump during your postpartum stay? Would you like to have formula provided for you?
- How do you feel about the routine newborn procedures at your birth location? This could include erythromycin eye ointment, Hepatitis B vaccination, Vitamin K injection, or PKU testing, etc.
- If it is necessary for your baby to leave your room, would you like your partner to go with baby or stay with you?
- When and where would you like your baby first bathed? Who would you like to be involved in this process?
- If having a boy, will he be circumcised before leaving the hospital?

Birth Preferences

This is a sample outline – See next page for a fillable version!

Welcome to the birth of Baby _____

Birth Person: _____ **Partner:** _____ **Doula:** _____

Thank you for your dedication to our family's well being. We understand that childbirth is unpredictable by nature, and appreciate your flexibility during this process in advance. We prefer to discuss all options and recommendations so that we may provide informed consent.

Please observe the following preferences for the birth of our baby whenever possible:

Active Labor:

- I appreciate intermittent monitoring to allow as much mobility as possible
- I prefer to eat and drink throughout labor, in addition to IV fluids
- I would like to discuss pain relief options with my nurse and/or anesthesiologist
- I prefer to limit cervical checks and unless requested, not to be told dilation

Pushing and Delivery:

- I would prefer to push in whatever position is most comfortable for me at the time
- I would like gentle guidance on when and how to push
- I would like access to a mirror during pushing if possible
- I prefer to be the first person to touch my baby

Immediate Postpartum:

- I prefer to have delayed cord clamping and cutting, until the cord stops pulsing
- I would like my partner to cut the cord
- I strongly prefer expectant management and to avoid the use of pitocin if possible
- Please delay all routine newborn procedures until after I have had at least an hour to bond with my baby

Newborn Care:

- I am planning to breastfeed and would like to see a lactation consultant after delivery.
- Please delay all bathing of our newborn.
- We prefer to decline the erythromycin eye ointment.

In case of cesarean:

- Please allow my partner and doula to join me in the operating room if at all possible
- I would prefer leads to be placed off my chest so that I may have skin to skin with my newborn in the OR.
- I would like to play music in the operating room.
- I would like my partner to go wherever the baby goes, and my doula to remain with me in recovery.

Vaginal Birth Preferences

Welcome to the birth of Baby _____

Birth Person: _____ **Partner:** _____ **Doula:** _____

Thank you for your dedication to our family's well-being. We understand that childbirth is unpredictable by nature, and appreciate your flexibility during this process in advance. We prefer to discuss all options and recommendations so that we may provide informed consent.

Please observe the following preferences for the birth of our baby whenever possible:

Active Labor:

Pushing and Delivery:

Immediate Postpartum:

Newborn Care:

In case of cesarean:

Cesarean Birth Preferences

Welcome to the birth of Baby _____

Birth Person: _____ **Partner:** _____ **Doula:** _____

Thank you for your dedication to our family's well-being. We understand that childbirth is unpredictable by nature, and appreciate your flexibility during this process in advance. We prefer to discuss all options and recommendations so that we may provide informed consent.

Please observe the following preferences for the birth of our baby whenever possible:

Hospital Arrival & Pre-Op:

Operating Room/Delivery:

PACU/Post-Op:

Recovery/Postpartum:

Newborn Care:

Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

The final countdown - your third trimester

Fair warning: this will be the longest section of this guide!

There are many things that must be done before a baby arrives and some of them (like packing your birth bag) can't be completed until well into your pregnancy. We'll walk you through the following topics in this section:

Setting up Home Base

Immediately postpartum, plan to spend the first week or two in and around your bed. Set yourself up for success by setting up well-stocked zones. Make the most of your first month home with everything set up in the optimal way, even if temporarily.

Keeping your home running smoothly

Identify how your household tasks are currently split. Who takes out the trash? Who regularly cooks meals? Who does the dishes? Pull from your community to see who can help with these tasks while you're recovering.

Creating your resource list

The best time to figure out resources is before a problem arises. Find who you'll call for newborn-related questions, healing-related questions, and mental health resources. Write them down and keep them nearby.

Easing the transition

A new baby will always change the dynamics in a house. Consider how to make the transition easier for yourself and your partner, your pets, big siblings, and extended family members.

Let's take this step by step...



Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

Hospital Visitor's Guide

Visiting in the hospital is a very tenuous topic - there is no right answer!

Your comfort and preferences are the most important thing with hospital visitors. The important thing for baby's first days are rest and bonding with their caregivers.

Remember: You're allowed to have no visitors at the hospital!

Boundaries to Consider

- Which family/friends should visit in the hospital vs at home? - *Consider limiting planned visits in the hospital as this period of time is hard to predict!*
- Who shouldn't visit the hospital?
- When should close loved ones be notified that baby has arrived? Will you send a text message to a large group or will you place a phone call to a select few?
- Do you want photos posted to Social Media or should guests keep their photos private?
- Are there any specific members of your family who shouldn't be notified that baby has arrived until you're settled?
- Should visitors wear a mask to visit?
- Who will communicate with visitors? - *This should not be the birthing person. Opt instead for your partner, doula, or a phone tree situation.*

Easy Boundary Setting: Send a Text!

Announcements can get muddy without communication! A great way to share boundaries around visits is to send a group text sharing you'd prefer a home visit and then coordinating with grandparents/aunts/uncles separately.

Again, the birthing person should not be fielding these arrangements - they should be focused on rest and recovery! A partner can take communication or a grandparent could collaborate with your partner.

Boundaries are an invitation for those around you to love you loudly and in real life. Extend the invite!

Hi Family!

Baby NAME has arrived! We're so excited to share that PARENT A and baby are doing well.

As we rest and recover in the hospital we won't be accepting visitors. We'd love to set up a time for you to come by the house. Please text PARENT B!

We ask that you allow us to be the first to share this news on social media, thank you for sharing in our excitement!

Love, PARENT A, PARENT B, AND BABY

Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

Setting up Home Base



Resting & Recovery Space

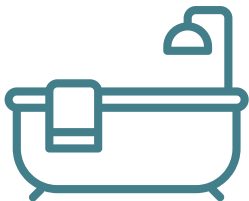
Whether you're more comfortable on a couch or in your bed, having the essentials within reach will make staying put a much more enjoyable experience. We recommend having these key pieces to your space:

- ❑ Refillable water cup/bottle - this is a great thing for your partner, visitors, or care team to check. Ensure this stays full with fresh water and that you're regularly drinking it.
- ❑ Flavor for your water - optional, of course, but this can be helpful for when plain water gets boring.
- ❑ Healthy snack basket - another excellent thing for your support people to check, consider having high protein and balanced snacks that you enjoy near you.
- ❑ Lip mask/chapstick
- ❑ Hair ties/clips - to keep hair out of your face when gazing at your newest little love.
- ❑ Pain reliever of choice - self explanatory! Keep this nearby.
- ❑ Books/coloring books - non-digital distraction can be a welcome reprieve from screens if you're feeling antsy being still.
- ❑ Prenatal vitamins - these are important to keep taking through postpartum healing and breastfeeding.
- ❑ A cozy robe - super convenient for nursing and tossing over comfortable clothes when guests stop by.
- ❑ Extra long phone charger
- ❑ Baby station - this should be stocked with all the essentials needed to care for your newborn including a changing or waterproof pad, clean diapers, wipes, diaper cream, clean clothes, burp rags, pacifiers if you're using them, and swaddles.

Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

Setting up Home Base



Fully Stocked Bathroom

Ensuring supplies are already nearby will make caring for your newly postpartum body that much more simple. We suggest having these supplies on hand:

- ❑ Pads/disposable underwear - change these frequently while you're bleeding post birth.
- ❑ Peri bottle - fill this with fresh, warm water each time you use the toilet and use to clean the labia and perineal area.
- ❑ Postpartum bottom spray/pads - witch hazel-based sprays can offer some soothing, cooling effects.
- ❑ Breast pads - if you choose to breastfeed, pads placed inside your bra can offer protection from milk leaks. Ensure these are single-use or freshly cleaned and change them regularly to protect your nipples from any bacteria build up.
- ❑ Pain relief - yes, here too! Just in case.
- ❑ Other healing items you could consider would be a sitz bath (shallow bath that sits on your toilet), a stool softener, and ice packs meant for your underwear.

Other Things to Consider:

If possible, we recommend the bathroom you use be attached to the room you'll be healing in or as close as possible. The best case scenario, they're on the same floor. Minimizing stairs immediately post-birth is important to facilitate healing properly. This could mean opting to rest in a room on the main level for a period of time instead of a bedroom.

Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

Setting up Home Base



Baby Care Station

Keep baby supplies on each floor for ease of care no matter who has baby. Use a caddy for easy transportation. Each station should have:

- Changing pad or waterproof mat
- Diapers
- Wipes
- Diaper cream
- Extra swaddles
- Burp cloth
- Change of clothes (for baby and shirt for each parent)
- Baby nail file + clippers
- Extra pacifiers



Safe Sleep Surfaces

Keep a space that is firm, flat, and clear of any items to set baby down for sleep on each level.

Tip: consider a stroller that doubles as a bassinet for main levels to limit the number of items you need to keep in the main spaces.



Feeding Station

Where will you feed baby? Would you be more comfortable in a chair or in bed? Will you use a certain feeding pillow? Will you be pumping? Consider setting up multiple feeding stations around the house with supplies in a basket nearby.

Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

Household Roles + Responsibilities

Delegation Guide

For each household task/responsibility, note who currently oversees by marking an “x” in the column next to it. Then, in the “Assigned” column, note who will be overseeing the task while the birthing parent is recovering. Remember: *visiting family members, a designated family member or friend, both of you, or your Postpartum Doula* could go in that column!

Task	Birthing Parent	Partner	Assigned
Laundry			
Groceries			
Meal Planning			
Cooking			
Packing Lunches			
Vacuuming			
Dusting			
Cleaning Bathroom			
General Tidying			
Changing Bed Linens			
Major Cleaning (oven, windows, etc)			
Garbage/Recycling			

Section 4:

Late Pregnancy

Household Roles + Responsibilities

Delegation Guide (Cont.)

Task	Birthing Parent	Partner	Assigned
Lawn Care			
Snow Removal			
Gardening			
Keeping Garage in Order			
Pool Upkeep			
Car Care and Maintenance			
Paying Bills			
Pet Care			
Planning Holidays			
Shopping for Home Essentials			
Overnight Baby Care			
Changing Diapers			
Feeding Baby			
Doctor's Appointments			

Visiting Guide

This is a sample — See next page for a fillable version!

Welcome Home, Baby _____

Our Doula's Name is: _____

Thank you for visiting us! We're so glad you came to support us as we welcome our new baby into our home.

Helpful tips while you're visiting:

- Please wash hands upon arrival and use hand sanitizer while you're here!
- All visitors will need a mask to hold the baby, these are located at the door.
- We are a breastfeeding family and feed the baby any time they'd like.
- We are prioritizing the parent-baby bond and will ask that if the baby fusses they be handed back to one of us.
- Visiting hours are between 10a-3p and we ask that visits be kept under an hour.

Tasks we'd love help with:

- Washing dishes
- Switching or folding laundry
- Refilling water cups
- Refilling snack stations
- Taking out trash
- Stocking diapers/baby care stations
- Walking the dogs
- Tidying living spaces

Important Contacts:

Midwife/OB	NAME	(000)000-0000
Postpartum Doula	NAME	(000)000-0000
Lactation Consultant	NAME	(000)000-0000
IBCLC	NAME	(000)000-0000
Therapist	NAME	(000)000-0000

Visiting Guide

Welcome Home, Baby _____

Our Doula's Name is: _____

Thank you for visiting us! We're so glad you came to support us as we welcome our new baby into our home.

Visiting Boundaries:

Tasks Visitors Can Help With:

Midwife/OB	_____	_____
Postpartum Doula	_____	_____
Lactation Consultant	_____	_____
IBCLC	_____	_____
Therapist	_____	_____

Section 5:

Easing the Transition

Bringing baby home as smoothly as possible



Having a new baby changes everything!

Planning for those changes can create a smoother, less stressful time while you're learning about each other and growing together. In this section we're going to talk about easing the transition...



For You, the Parents

The more you prepare before baby arrives, the better off you will be as a family unit. Preparing yourselves for parenthood is just as important as preparing your home, car, and childcare!



For Your Baby

When you create a plan for helping your baby ease into the world gently, you create a low stress, high support environment.



For Siblings and Pets

Siblings and pets are important members of your immediate family unit too! Prepare them well and create a sense of safety and stability in the home.



For Extended Family

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins... so many people to surround you with love! Create a strategy for sharing how they can best support and uplift you.

Section 5:

Easing the Transition

Parent Health Plan

The care and keeping of you as a parent is vital to the health and safety of your baby. Print a sheet for each caregiver and fill them out then use these as a guide to your planning conversation.

Remember: this is a plan, not reality! Make sure you check in with yourself and adjust as needed.

Healthy Sleep

- I am a...**
- Night Owl
 - Morning Person
 - Either, as long as I get enough sleep

- I would prefer...**
- To take overnight baby care while the other caregiver sleeps
 - To take the morning baby care while the other caregiver sleeps
 - To split overnights
 - Other: _____

The baby and “on duty” caregiver will sleep: _____

The “off-duty” caregiver will sleep: _____

Healthy Self

These things make me feel cared for:

These things recharge my batteries:

- I will make time every day to care for and tend to myself.
- I understand that the birthing parent needs extra rest and recovery time, especially right after the baby has been born.

Section 5:

Easing the Transition

Parent Health Plan (Cont.)

Note: this page is meant for nurturing discussion and support between birthing people and their partners but can be used for anyone supporting the new parent(s)!

Healthy Connection

When things get difficult I tend to...

- Go inward and get quiet
- Complain loudly and have a short fuse
- Meltdown in some way
- Other:

A nonverbal cue that I need support is...

- Sudden change in appetite
- Avoiding eye contact
- Opting out of showers/self care tasks
- Noticeable forgetfulness

These are things you could do to make me feel supported:

Daily Check in Questions:

1. What can I do for you?
2. What went well today?
3. What was a struggle today?
4. What could be more helpful tomorrow?
5. What needs to be done tomorrow to ensure everything is running smoothly?

Section 5:

Easing the Transition

For your baby

In the early days easing the transition for your baby really means setting caregivers up to care for the baby more easily. Let's break down a few of the most important things to think about:

Splitting Responsibilities

Who does what? Bathing, laundry, feeding, napping, diaper changes... there are many tasks that come along with a new baby. When you're considering who will be responsible for which, keep in mind "divide and conquer." It's important for your family to bond and run well, and the most effective way to ensure that is done is to divide tasks instead of doing everything together.

Also consider feeding - will you be breastfeeding? This is obviously a task for one parent. There will be times for both of you to feed baby, but in the early days it's important not to overcomplicate the breastfeeding relationship. Consider taking a couple of weeks to get it down well and then introducing the pump and/or a bottle for other people to feed the baby.

Tapping in help

Schedule times where other adults will help with baby care. Ensure these are trusted family members or a doula who has experience with newborns. Setting a schedule will help make sure someone else is there without you needing to call them in when you are feeling overwhelmed or tired.

Extra care in the first weeks

The first weeks of baby's life will probably seem a bit more labor intensive, as the baby will need to be brought to the birthing parent as they're resting and healing. This could include partner getting up to retrieve the baby from their sleep space and passing them off, especially post c-section when the birthing parent should not be lifting anything.

Fear not! This will subside as time goes on and healing takes place.



Section 5:

Easing the Transition

For siblings + pets

Help transition your first babies and fur babies into their new role as big siblings with a little bit of forethought and some daily effort.



Big Siblings

- Maintaining routine - whether they attend preschool, daycare, spend time with grandparents, or are in school already, ensure that the routine established for the older sibling stays in tact to ensure a sense of normalcy for them.
- We recommend getting undivided one on one time 10-15 minutes twice a day with each older sibling. This could look like reading a book, taking a walk, or playing in the yard together.
- Know you'll use the same voice for talking with the baby that you usually use for them.
- This is where "divide and conquer" comes back into play. Establish who will be responsible for what care tasks for older siblings - consider lunches, naptime, bathing, and bedtime routine



Fur Siblings

- While a bit easier than maintaining a human's routine, pets have their own set routines that is important to follow in order to avoid undue stress on them. Consider adjusting anything that might shift while the birthing parent is healing a few weeks prior to baby's arrival. This might include who walks the dog or who takes them to the park.
- Who will be in charge of routine care? The easy maintenance tasks, such as scooping cat litter and feeding/watering pets, are great things to hand off to helpful visitors when they come over.
- In case of emergency - who is responsible for the pets? Make sure to note their number on your resource list for ease of contacting them.

Section 5:

Easing the Transition

For Extended Family (and Visitors!)

Loved ones around you will likely want to meet your baby as soon as possible!

Remember: YOU set when “possible” is. The most important thing in your baby’s early days is to form a secure bond to their caregivers (parents!) in a supported environment. **Everything else is secondary.**

Boundaries to Consider

- What times should visitors come by?
- Are you comfortable with short notice or would you prefer a scheduled visit?
- How long should visitors stay? Are there visitors you’d feel comfortable with a longer visit vs others?
- Will you be breastfeeding? Do you feel comfortable doing so in front of other people?
- Are there extended family members who may want to be entertained vs a helpful visit?
- Should visitors mask to meet the baby?
- Who will be coordinating visits?

Easy Boundary Setting: Send a Text!

Visits without communication can become a stressful disaster for everyone involved. Head the chaos off at the pass with a quick text message to family and friends from you and/or your partner.

Tip: keep the text message short enough to be read but make sure to include important info such as who to contact, what hours you’re welcoming visitors, and any illness protocol (ex: please stay home if you’re coughing, wear a mask, etc).

Boundaries are an invitation for those around you to love you loudly and in real life. Extend the invite!

Hi Family!

We’re so excited for you to meet our new baby! During this time we’re focusing on rest and recovery so we have a few things we’d love to ask:

We’ll be having visitors over for short visits between 10am-3pm.

Please text PARTNER B to set up a visit time, PARTNER A will probably be sleeping.

Please wash hands upon arrival and don’t forget to wear a mask since it is cold & flu season!

What's next? Further support for your growing family

Congratulations! You've taken a huge first step toward achieving the birth experience that you desire!

If some of the topics or phrases you've come across during this process feel overwhelming, you're not alone. We hear from hundreds of new families how inundated they feel by the massive amounts of information regarding pregnancy, childbirth and parenting. It can be a lot to sift through the information available and figure out what actually appeals to your family.

The good news is that you don't have to do it alone! Doulas of Baltimore can help ease that burden.

We offer straightforward, evidence-based childbirth and parenting education classes in small group workshops (both virtually and in-person) as well as customizable, private, in-home education. Armed with resources, knowledge and a toolkit of decision-making skills, you, and your partner, can go confidently into your birth experience.

Looking for a bit more personalized support throughout your journey? Our team of professional birth doula is ready to help. Hiring your own dedicated birth doula is very much like that steadfast friend who isn't afraid to ask the hard questions, always knows where to find the answers and provides unconditional validation and reassurance....who also happens to be an expert on pregnancy, birth and babies!

We're experts at putting together care plans to support you family through birth and early parenting. [Click here to schedule a FREE consultation and get your personalized plan today!](#)

[Schedule Now!](#)

We look forward to supporting you on your journey!

Emily
Bebbie

