



BORN SHARP

A newborn's nails, that is! You can clip them while he's chill in his car seat.

**BESIDES
DIAPERS...**

Pack a snack for yourself in that bag!

**HEAD FOR
HOME**

Newborns have to leave the hospital in a rear-facing infant car seat, which snaps into a base you install in your backseat.

BABY BOOT CAMP

Polish your parenting game with this **crash course** on the crucial skills you'll need first.

anyone who dropped by my home the week after I gave birth to my first daughter witnessed me stumbling around with the greasy “before” hair of a dry-shampoo commercial, a nursing pillow strapped to my waist, and a half-eaten microwave burrito in my hand. It was not, as they say, a winning look. The good news

about being a new parent: Schedules emerge from chaos. You'll start discerning “I'm starving!” wails from “I'm sleepy” cries. You'll dabble again in personal grooming, and soon enough swaddle on autopilot. To shorten your learning curve, we tapped experts and moms for the insider advice on how to tackle those first weeks like a pro.

BY LESLIE GOLDMAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRISCILLA GRAGG

Trim those teeny nails

On a scale of sharpness, infant fingernails fall somewhere between an envelope flap and a Japanese paring knife. Some people clip just after a bath (nails are softer); others snip their mini Velociraptor while he snoozes. Both work, as long as you're in a comfortable, stable position with good lighting. You may want to enlist your partner's help—one of you holds your baby's palm and fingers steady while the other plays mini-manicurist. Gently pull each fingertip back from the nail to allow room for the clipper or scissors. Don't freak out if you draw blood—accidents happen. Apply a sterile gauze pad to squelch the bleeding, but don't put on a bandage; it's a choking hazard.

Become a swaddle ninja

Labor and delivery nurses can swaddle newborns with blink-and-you'll-miss-it speed. We asked Emily Drake, Ph.D., R.N., president of the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, who estimates she's swaddled thousands of babies in her 20 years of nursing, to share her tricks:

- **Lay out a light blanket in a diamond shape.** Fold the top corner down slightly and place your infant down on his back, lining his neck up with the fold.
- **Pull the bottom corner of the blanket up,** leaving some room for his legs to wiggle, and lay the corner near his shoulders, folding it down as needed.
- **Holding Baby in place, grab the right corner and pull it taut across his body,** tucking it in tightly under his lower back on the left side.
- **Then pull the left corner across and wrap it around the right side of his body,** eventually tucking the ends into the bottom of the roll, burrito-style.

EASY PEASY

Try Velcro swaddles for a fast wrap.



Care for that cord

Clean and dry are what you need to remember for the umbilical cord. That means only sponge baths for the first two weeks or so, until the cord and attached clamp shrivel up and fall off. (Don't worry if it gets splashed with a little water.) Some newborn diapers have a cutout to avoid irritation; if yours don't, just fold the diaper down. In the unlikely

event that you see signs of infection (yellowish discharge, foul smell, or redness), call your pediatrician.

Manage the car seat

- **Before delivery day** Your baby can't go home from the hospital without a rear-facing car seat, so save stress and install before D-day. First, go to safekids.org to find a certified Child Passenger Safety



NIGHT, NIGHT

Arms should be at Baby's sides before you wrap him up!

LOOK AHEAD

Trade swaddle blankets for sleep sacks at about 3 to 4 months. That's when babies want to sleep with their arms free.

(CPS) technician in your area who can teach you to install yours, answer questions, and check your work. Be choosy with online video tutorials. That mom blogger with the huge social following might look like she knows what she's doing, but unless she has "CPS technician" after her name, she's not an expert. Videos posted by car seat companies are a smart option for help.

- **Once your baby is born** Be a minimalist. Ditch head supports and strap covers—any extras aren't necessary for safety. In winter, skip the big jacket and snowsuit before putting your infant in her car seat. "The puffy material will compress in an accident, so the straps won't be tight enough to protect your baby," says Nicole Capozello, a certified CPS technician in Troy, Michigan. Lay a blanket over him instead.

Once your child is in the car seat, do the pinch test: Pull the harness straps over her, buckle the harness, and close the chest clip, positioned at armpit level. Harness straps should be pulled to a snug tightness, so if you try to pinch the harness near the chest, you can't pinch the material together. You should also be able to fit only one finger between Baby's hip and the strap.

Wipe up poop

Before removing a dirty diaper, slide a clean, open one underneath your baby's butt, with diaper tabs on the bottom, facing up. Unlatch both tabs of the soiled diaper and lift up Baby's ankles in one hand, using your other hand to remove the soiled diaper and set it aside. If you have a boy, now is the time to cover his penis with a washcloth to avoid getting squirted.

For girls, make sure to wipe away any poop that might be hiding in the skin folds of the labia. (Any normal white discharge can remain.) Then clean her tush, wiping front to back to avoid introducing fecal bacteria into the urethra (the small opening that leads to the bladder). For boys, address the tush first, then clean under the testicles and wipe the penis as needed.

Place used wipes in soiled diaper. Apply diaper cream and attach clean diaper, making sure the fringe around the leg openings isn't tucked in, which can lead to leakage.

5 Signs You've Earned Your Parenting Stripes

Well done! You've put in the time, and you've got the skills to show for it.

1 You can tiptoe across a creaky floor.

You know to stick to the perimeters, where wood is less likely to squeak and wake Baby.

2 You rock spit-up clothing in public.

When the barista can't stop staring at the concentric stains on your tank, you order your coffee and say, "Hold the milk; I brought my own."

3 You can document.

In 2.2 milliseconds, you can locate your camera app and snap a perfect pic of your 5-week-old "smiling," er, passing gas.

4 You send modern thank-you notes.

Putting pen to paper can be daunting, so you wait until your little one is wearing or playing with a particular gift, snap an adorable pic, then e-mail or text it to the gifter. Aww.

5 You sleep when Baby sleeps.

Cause you're no martyr.



**FOR
HAPPY SKIN**
Slather diaper
cream to
avoid rashes.

**TAKE
YOUR TIME**

To get a good grip on Baby, keep an extra towel next to the tub, so you can dry your hands first.

Extract a slippery baby from the tub

Naked and Afraid isn't just a reality survival show; it's your baby and you when bathtime is over and you're petrified of dropping your most treasured possession. Try this technique from Laura Jana, M.D., coauthor of *Heading Home With*

Your Newborn. Using both of your hands, grasp Baby under his arms, supporting the back of his neck and head with your fingers. Lift him out of the water and lay him gently on his back on a towel on the floor—the easiest spot to wrap an infant up.

Keep away diaper rash

When urine and stool mix together, they create an irritating ammonia acid that can cause skin in the diaper area to become red and raw. Change his diaper frequently and apply a zinc oxide-based cream each

Before you leave the house: Stash four diapers, an extra outfit, and a baby blanket in your bag.

time so you create a protective barrier. (To be sure you use enough, pretend to frost a cake.) Breast milk can also help heal diaper rash. Dab some on with a cotton ball before diapering. "It's anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-bacterial, and moisturizing," says lactation consultant Diana West, IBCLC, director of media relations for La Leche League International.

Letting Baby's bottom breathe a little each day can also prevent and soothe a rash. Have her go diaper-free, say, during tummy time. If you ever see blisters, peeling skin, or pus, call your doc. "It could be a yeast or bacterial infection that will need medication," Dr. Drake says.

Pack your diaper bag

To end up with everything you need without a punishing load, Leslie Newton, a comedian and creator of Newlie Diaper Bags, shares her tips:

- **Curate your diaper collection.** "Four diapers is good; 20 is hoarder-status," she says.
- **Pack a spare outfit.** "My baby had a blowout and I didn't have a Onesie, so I had to wrap a muslin blanket around her until I got home," Newton admits. Speaking of which...
- **Stash a muslin blanket.** It's a quadruple threat: Use it as a light blanket, a nursing cover, a changing pad, or to shade Baby in a stroller.
- **Toss in snacks—for you.** Now is not the time to get hangry. Nuts, bars, a banana—anything you can eat with one hand is ideal. 🍎