

Top ten money saving tips when preparing for your new arrival

Gemma Johnson shares her money saving tips to help you budget for your newborn.

Having a baby is a very exciting time, so exciting in fact the urge to splurge is almost impossible to resist.

My top ten money saving tips will help you save some pennies and take away some of the financial worries.

FURNISH FOR FREE

Try not to buy anything until you have checked with family and friends to see if they have any old pieces going for free, borrow or to keep. Freecycle is a neat little site to find freebies in your area that you can go and collect; it's great way to keep the landfill sites down whilst furnishing your nursery absolutely free.

Top tip: Always buy a new mattress for a cot or Moses basket and always buy a new car seat as it may have previously been in an accident and be unsafe.

BREAST IS BEST!

If you can breastfeed, it is by far the healthiest and cheapest option. Formula milk is a money sponge and is also a pretty fiddly affair with all the bottles and teats. Not to mention the added cost of sterilising equipment.

BEST DRESSED

It's SO easy to spend a small fortune on all those cute little outfits for your newborn.

But babies don't need shoes, they are perfectly happy kicking about in their little socks, plus what parent doesn't love kissing the soles of their baby's feet? I learnt the hard way as they either fell off or after getting my son all changed and putting them back on seemed pointless as I would only have to take them off again.

SAVE your money for when they really need shoes and are cruising around your sofa.

IT'S PLAYTIME

Save your pennies, don't buy toys for newborns. Babies mainly sleep, eat and need lots of cuddling.

Car keys, wooden spoons, Tupperware, TV remotes or a phone handset will be more than enough to keep them fascinated.

PRACTICAL GIFTS

Guess the birth weight? Guess the size of clothing? Now that is a waste of money. Why not ask friends and family to club together and buy you either store vouchers or supermarket vouchers that you can use over 6 months to buy your essentials like nappies, wipes, and formula (if bottle feeding).

You could put a list together of your absolute essentials that would take the financial burden off you if they were bought as gifts? These need not be expensive items and you will be surprised how chuffed your givers will be when they buy you something that you really need.

THE NON-ESSENTIALS

Walking into a baby shop can be overwhelming due to the vast range of items available, but how many of them do you really need? Patterned burp cloths, or would a clean flannel or tea towel do? It is so easy to overspend on non-essentials and before you know it, your budget is straight out of the window. Make a list of what you need and see if there is a cheaper alternative.

SOFT AS A BABIES BOTTOM

Reusable nappies work out the cheapest option and some local authorities will give you a small grant to offset some of the cost. If you are going to go for disposables then supermarket own brands are just as effective as well known brands and much cheaper. Buying in bulk will also save you money, but you do need ample storage space for this kind of purchasing decision.

For your local scheme visit <http://www.babykind.co.uk/incentiveschemes.htm>

QUICK CHANGE

There are many great looking changing tables out there, but the top of a waist high dresser will do the same job and you can use it for storing blankets, sheets and baby clothes. You will get years of usage out of it, whereas the changing table facility will cease being useful once your baby can stand and is cheeky enough to wriggle about and climb.

SQUEAKY CLEAN

Newborns need topping and tailing for the first few weeks and then they can snuggle up safely on your chest getting skin-to-skin contact when you bathe. A kitchen sink is big enough to bathe your baby in if you don't feel comfortable being in the tub. Baby baths are a waste of money as they grow out of them so quickly and I am sure there have been many an instance of "Oops! who left that toy there?" when carrying a full bath ready to empty.

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE

- Your soothing voice as you sing them a soft lullaby.
- Your warm skin and motherly embrace.
- The wonderful stories you can tell them as they grow.
- A baby needs warmth, love, food & security – this really doesn't have to cost the earth!