

Having a baby means it's time to shop! But where do you start? **JESSICA JANE SAMMUT** sets out the 10 things that should be at the top of your list

Finding out you've got a bun in the oven is a moment of great elation. But what happens when you realise your bundle of joy is going to need more than just love? Panic! There's so much choice when it comes to selecting baby gear that it can be totally overwhelming. Take it easy and shop smart with this guide to the essentials.

1 YOUR BUB'S COT

Any new cot purchased in Australia will adhere to the Australian Safety Standards, which are strict guidelines on cot measurements, design and safety, so you can rest easy. If you're purchasing a cot second-hand, check out the government's guidelines at www.productsafety.gov.au. You may like to consider a cot that transforms into a toddler bed for later, too. Another option is to purchase a moveable bassinet for your little to snooze in for the early months and have a cot for later. When you're decking out the cot, "quilts, pillows, bumpers, doonas and

sheepskins go against all the safety standards according to SIDS," says Nicole Pierotti, of advisory service www.babysmiles.com.au. If you'd like to use these items to spruce up the nursery that's fine, just make sure to remove them when putting bub in the cot. See www.sidsandkids.org for more on safe sleeping.

2 THE NAPPY BAG

The nappy bag has the potential to make or break a trip out with your little one. If it can hold all you need (think nappies, wipes, cream, a change mat, bibs, food and drink, spoons, toys, spare clothes, muslins, sun lotion, plus all your essentials) and can be attached to the stroller, you're going to find getting out and about much easier. "The ideal baby bag is lightweight, roomy, with lots of pockets," says preparing-for-bub expert Vanessa Sutherland of www.babyconsultant.com.au. Just be careful not to overload a nappy bag when you place it on a stroller, as it can cause it to tip over.

3 CHANGE-TIME ESSENTIALS

You'll be faced with a huge range of options when it comes to change-time items. The first decision you'll want to make is whether you're going to use cloth or disposable nappies, which is an entirely personal decision. "With regard to disposable nappies, start with a premium brand, and as you get more confident with changing your baby, you can test drive a few others if you want to," Vanessa advises. When it comes to cloth nappies, it's often worth trialling some before you invest in a whole system. You'll also want to arm yourself with good-quality, thick wipes that will be gentle on bub's skin and a soothing nappy cream. Keep in mind, you're likely to receive lots of baby skincare gifts as well.

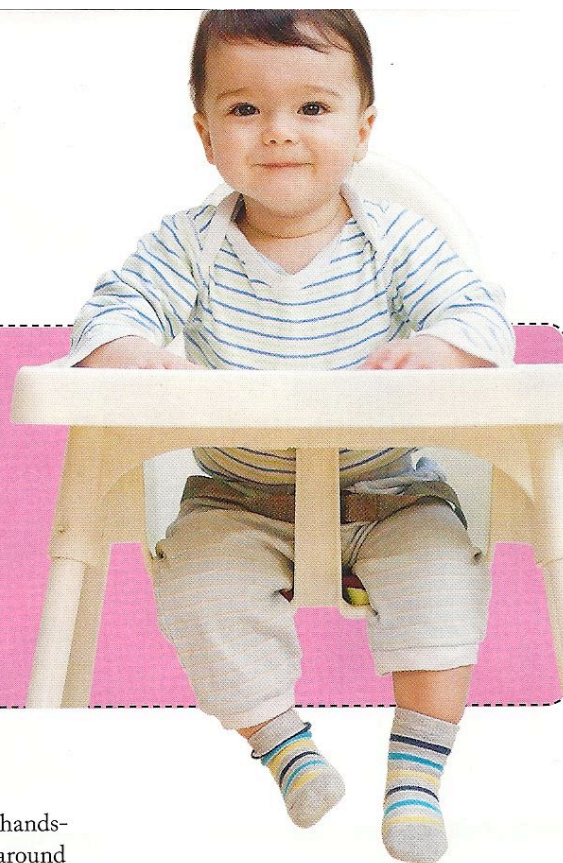
THE TOP

10 baby ESSEN

4 A HIGHCHAIR

Highchairs come under a voluntary standard, so there are many to choose from. "Select a highchair with splayed legs for greater stability and a five-point in-built harness," suggests Susan Teerds, CEO of Kidsafe Queensland. In terms of practicality, easy wipe-down is crucial. The fewer nooks and crannies there are for food

to get stuck in the better, and seat padding and straps should be able to be washed with ease, ideally in the washing machine (to make life easier). When bub is young, a recline will be necessary in the seat as well as a supportive back. Tray removal is also helpful if you want to have the option of sitting your little one at the family table.



5 THE CHANGE TABLE

Again, there are so many styles to choose from, but practicality is key. "You should always ensure that the table is stable, with decent space, has raised sides to prevent your baby rolling off and a place for storing all your baby change items," says Nicole. An easy-wipe change mat is also a good idea to avoid having to constantly wash covers. And some parents may even choose to eschew a traditional table and simply use a mat to change bub on the bed, floor or other firm surface (just be careful of your back).



7 YOUR CARRIER

Baby pouches are a terrific hands-free solution when getting around with a little one and they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. "In terms of safety, you'll need to make sure that the material of the carrier is breathable so your baby does not get too hot and that the sling is supportive of a newborn's neck and keeps bub in a position where her airways are unobstructed to avoid suffocation," Susan says. In addition, mummy comfort should be considered. You need to know how supportive to your back the design is, as well as how easy it will be to get your infant in and out of the carrier.

attach to a stroller, meaning bub isn't woken for the transfer from car to buggy." Once you've decided, look for a seat that has a five-star safety rating and get your restraint professionally fitted.

9 FEEDING GEAR

Whether you breastfeed or end up needing to bottle-feed, you may be looking at equipment including breast pumps, bottles and sterilisers. Today nearly all products are BPA-free and designed with mum and bub in mind, so the good news is you can't go too wrong when selecting. Electric pumps may be worth spending money on over manual pumps if you plan to do a lot of expressing, and bottles and teats may involve a little trial and error when your baby's on the scene. A breastfeeding pillow is also something you may find invaluable when it comes to bringing bub to the right level for a relaxed feed.

8 THE CAR SEAT

The first choice to make when choosing a car seat is whether to buy a convertible seat or a baby capsule. "A convertible car seat will last from when your child is a newborn to around four years, providing real value for money, whereas a capsule may become too small for your baby at around six months," Vanessa says. "Having said that, a capsule can often

6 CLOTHING

A good guideline is to start with about six each of bodysuits, onesies and singlets, plus two hats and some booties. It's tempting, but don't buy too many clothes in tiny sizes, as your little will grow out of them faster than you think. Plus you're bound to get plenty as gifts. "Choose soft, washable fabrics that have a wide neck so they're easy to get on and off," says Nicole. Fiddly buttons and ties are best avoided, as they can be uncomfortable and a choking hazard. "Generally dress bub in loose clothing, one more layer than your own," Susan advises.

10 THE PRAM

Our Australian Safety Standards mean that all new prams purchased in Australia have a five-point harness, a brake and a wrist strap for safety. So what should you look for in terms of additional features when you're purchasing? "Finding a pram that is lightweight, simply foldable and effortlessly manoeuvrable is key," Vanessa says. And you need to think about your lifestyle. Will it fit easily

into your car boot? Will it enable you to nip around the often tightly spaced aisles of shops, or hop on to a bus? Can the pram go 'off-road' if you plan on going for walks along unpaved paths? Is it designed for jogging if this is something you plan on doing with bub? The number of littlies the pram can accommodate is also something to consider if you're thinking of having more, and you may wish to choose a pram that allows bub to face you so you can see her when you're on the move. ★