The Ultimate Baby Bottle Guide
10 TYPES OF BOTTLES TO SUIT YOU & BABY

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You found the bottle aisle. Yes, there’s a whole aisle. The fluorescent lights shine on your eyes as they scan shelves and shelves and shelves of bottle packages. Little boxes, with circles shouting ‘BPA-free!’ and ‘Anti-Colic.’

You glance at your watch. If you’re pregnant, you’re thinking, I’ll need to pee again soon. If you’re a new mama, you’re thinking, My baby’s going to need to eat again soon. Five minutes.

You scan the bottle slogans and see words like ‘natural’ and ‘safe’ and ‘venting.’

The pictures of the bottles mostly look the same: clear tubes topped with nipples held by the hands of smiling, cherub faces. Baby whimpers or your bladder tugs. Two minutes.

What did Amanda say she used? No time to look up reviews. There’s flows? Which flow? Venting? I don’t know what the heck venting is.

You just want a bottle, a bottle your baby will like. You don’t want your baby to have gas or cry after feeds. You’ll clean bottle parts if you have to. You’ll spend an extra dollar if you have to. If that bottle will make your baby happy.

But which bottle is it?

There are so many bottles and so many bottle features for you choose from today. That’s why we created The Ultimate Baby Bottle Guide: 10 Types of Bottles to Suit You & Your Baby—to help you choose the best bottle for your family not based on features, but on your family’s unique needs.
There are so many good reasons to breastfeed: the bonding, the antibodies, the anytime, anywhere always warm availability of breast milk. But for a lot of good reasons—mom works, goes to yoga, or needs to supplement—combining breastfeeding and bottle-feeding helps a lot of families not just survive but thrive in that all-important first year.

If you plan to nurse as well as feed your baby with expressed breast milk or supplemental formula, baby might be more adept at going back and forth from mom to bottle because of the right bottle as well as the right timing.
When should you introduce a bottle?

If there is one, just one piece of advice Dr. Tanya Altman has for new moms, it would be this: Even if you’re feeding baby exclusively with breast milk, offer your baby a bottle once a day after breastfeeding has been established and/or by three or four weeks so you have some flexibility and the option to bottle feed.

“Every week I see a mom in my office who is in tears because she has to go back to work and her baby is refusing bottles,” says Altman, the pediatrician mom behind Mommy Calls: Dr. Tanya Answers Parents’ Top 101 Questions About Babies and Toddlers, and the medical editor of Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5.

“Of course baby’s going to prefer you,” says Altman.

And that’s good. But if you need to work and baby won’t feed all day, that might mean she’ll want to eat all night, a cycle that can lead to a hungry bambina and a stressed, exhausted mama.

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Which nipples help you combine breastfeeding and bottle-feeding?

This is the age of a hundred nipples: orthodontic nipples, latex nipples, anti-vacuum nipples, soft, warm silicone nipples, slow, medium and fast flow nipples, and wide, breast-like nipples.

“If you will be breastfeeding your baby but occasionally using a bottle, you may want to consider buying bottles with wide-base nipples that more closely resemble a mother’s breast,” says Heather Corley, a mom of five and baby product expert who shares her insights on About.com. In her article How to Choose Bottles for your Baby, she says, “Some babies have a hard time switching from the wide latch of breastfeeding to a narrow bottle nipple.”

Breastfed babies need to open their mouths wide for a good latch, but little nipples can let them get lazy and
eventually prefer the easier route to milk.

In her article Why Bottles Make This Mama Happy, Yummy Mummy Club writer Hailey Eisen says she appreciated how a bottle that mimics the shape of mom’s breast and the breastfeeding process (the flow and feel of a bottle) helped her achieve her breastfeeding goals (to keep nursing but eventually get out for a yoga class or, gasp, “a civilized dinner”).

“Since my baby is primarily breastfed, it was really important for me—at first anyway—that the bottle I used would not cause ‘nipple confusion,’” says Eisen.

But Altman says not to get too hung up on nipple confusion.

“There are some bottles where the nipple may resemble a breast, and for some babies, that can really help ease the transition back and forth. Some babies can go back and forth either way.”

Again, says Altman, the key to getting your baby to take a bottle at all, is to offer it early and regularly.

It’s that kind of advice that inspired Dawn Dais to write The Sh!t No One Tells You: A Guide to Surviving Your Baby’s First Year.

Her now three-year-old daughter, the inspiration for the book, loved her bottle, “… loved that damn thing.” Her second? On a bottle strike.

“My son, who is 11 months old, loves his boobs. Loves them. So much that any imitation boobs are unacceptable to him,” says Dais, a writer, designer and marathoner who couldn’t leave her son for more than a few hours until he was seven months old and on solids. “His resulting emotional breakdown meant that I probably shouldn’t plan any more event obligations until he was 12 years old.”
If you ask a mom what it was like to have a baby with colic, she might say she cried as much as he did, and he didn’t stop crying (except to sleep) for almost four months. Or she’ll say it was exhausting and stressful and just so hard. Because it’s supposed to be a special time.

So you can imagine why the mom of a colicky baby might embrace a bottle that claims to reduce colic. And moms who even get a taste of an inconsolable baby who has gas, spit-up, or night-time fussiness might also be drawn to these bottles, many with venting systems designed to ease gas and spit-up as well as the symptoms of colic by reducing the amount of air that gets into your baby’s tummy through milk or formula.

Bottle technology has come a long way since Dr. Tanya Altman brought home her second son almost six years ago and discovered he had colic.

“My second baby was colicky and fussy, so I experimented a lot with bottles with him, but that was six years ago, and bottle technology has changed a lot since then.”

Today, physics is at work on many baby bottles that incorporate venting systems designed to keep air bubbles away from the nipple and help prevent gas, fussiness, spitting up and even colic.

Can a bottle with venting really reduce colic?

“I haven’t seen any scientific studies that show specific venting or tubing can help ease colic,” says Altman. “But it does make sense that if you reduce the air baby is swallowing, you’re going to make it more comfortable for them.”

So, how does bottle venting work, and are some venting systems better than others?
The Low-Down on Top, Bottom and Straw Venting Systems

**NON-VENTED**
Babies draw the milk or formula out of the bottle by sucking. That creates a negative pressure in the mouth area that can lead to earaches as well as the ingestion of air that can cause painful gas and exacerbate colic symptoms. Air enters bottle again when baby stops sucking.

**TOP-VENTED**
The nipple has tiny slits in it that let air pass through into the bottle after a vacuum is formed. Since there’s still a vacuum and air bubbling into the milk through the top, baby might still get gassy. Air will oxidize your baby’s milk or formula, taking away important nutrients.

**STRAW VENTING**
Bottles with straw venting allow outside air to go into the bottle through a part that looks like a straw. Since air can go directly to the bottom of the bottle, the idea is that air won’t pass into the milk or formula. Straw venting bottles have additional parts to clean.

**BOTTOM VENTING**
Bottles that are vented at the bottom use a valve system to block air from getting near your baby’s milk or formula, and completely eliminate negative pressure. Milk that’s free of air means your baby can have calm feeds and soothed tummies as well as more nutrients.
These are just some of the phrases you’re bound to hear in the first few weeks and months after your bundle of joy arrives.

Unlike a lot of the old wives’ tales you’ll hear as strangers try to guess the gender of the being in your belly, these expressions are actually spot on, and nowhere are they more true than when it comes to your baby’s preferred flow of milk or formula.

Like many new moms, Dawn Dais didn’t put a lot of thought into bottle types before her daughter was born, and flow was an afterthought.

“We just used what they gave us at the hospital,” says Dais, who didn’t have enough milk at the start to feed her “tiny” daughter. “After that, it was more about finding the right flow than anything else. We experimented with different flow types to find one that didn’t choke her. We used slow flow for quite a while.”

When you’re introducing bottle to baby, slow flow is usually a pretty safe bet according to Dr. Scott Cohen, father, award-winning pediatrician, and the author of the bestselling *Eat, Sleep Poop: A Common Sense Guide to Your Baby’s First Year*.

“When you do buy a nipple, start with a level one, which mimics the flow of the breast and minimizes your child’s risk of choking or gagging. As your child gets older and stronger, gradually introduce a faster-flow nipple.”

How can you tell when your child is ready for a faster flow?

“Just pay attention to whether your baby seems frustrated by the slow flow and wants to drink faster,” Cohen says in *Eat, Sleep, Poop*. “If this is the case, she may be ready for a faster-flow nipple.”

Stay-at-Home-Mom Survival Guide blogger Jaimi Erickson’s twins are five months old but still like the slow flow.

“The twins are mainly breastfed, but when we do offer them a bottle, we use a very slow-flow nipple... One twin is better at drinking from a bottle than the other, but since we already use a pretty slow-flow nipple, we haven’t tried others.”
How do you give your baby a bottle with the right flow?

Flows for Ages and Stages

Several bottle makers offer nipples with different flows. They’re usually marked by the flow—newborn, slow, medium, fast—and/or by age or stage: 0-3 months (Stage 1), 3+ months (Stage 2), 6+ months (Stage 3), and 9+ months (Stage 4).

Newborn
0-3 months
Stage 1

Slow
3+ months
Stage 2

Medium
6+ months
Stage 3

Fast
9+ months
Stage 4

Multi-flow Adjustable Bottles and Interchangeable Flow Bottles

Finding the right flow for your baby can make all the difference in the world. More than any other bottle feature, flow can be a deal-breaker for baby.

The best way to ensure your baby always has the right flow without spending heaps on bottles is to use a bottle that lets you adjust the flow using a dial on the nipple, or use a bottle brand that sells interchangeable nipples with different flows so you can continue using the same base and swap out the nipple as baby’s flow preferences change.
BPA: You might not know what it stands for (or how to pronounce the full form), but you probably do know it’s a nasty chemical you’d rather not have in your baby’s bottle.

When you’re choosing a baby bottle, you’ll probably be looking for a package that says ‘BPA-free,’ but that’s not the only bottle material that could impact your child’s safety.
Glass

Glass bottles have seen a revival since consumers became aware of the potential risks of exposure to BPA.

While eco-friendly and free of polycarbonate (PC/BPA container), glass bottles have the same two downsides they’ve always had: they’re heavy (sometimes too heavy for baby to hold on his own), and they can break, posing a hazard to your baby, you, and others.

Dawn Dais, who surveyed some of the same sarcastic MOFL’s (Moms on the Front Lines) that appeared in her book, had this comment about glass bottles from friend Deborah Romani:

“I liked the glass ones... until they got old enough to chuck them at me or on the floor.”

Silicone vs. Latex

A handful of advanced bottle manufacturers are using food-grade silicone in the nipple and the body of the bottle because, in addition to being soft and warm like a mother’s breast, it has a handful of safety properties.

Unlike latex (the traditional nipple material), which, over time, can get scratched and harbor bacteria, silicone isn’t porous so it’s less prone to bacteria. You’ll also save money because silicone nipples can last up to three or four times longer than latex.

Corley says moms might not consider these other perks of silicone nipples:

“Clear silicone nipples don’t pick up smells or tastes, even after many uses, and they don’t carry the potential for allergies that latex can. Silicone nipples are also more difficult for baby to chew holes in, so there is less risk of choking on a piece that is chewed off.”

Two other huge bonuses about using silicone: they’re heat resistant and they can be cleaned in the top rack of your dishwasher!

BPA

BPA, or bisphenol A, is a chemical that prevents bacteria contamination andhardens plastic. For a long time, it was a pretty common ingredient in the make-up of bottles, sippy cups and pacifiers.

In the last few years, concerns have sparked about the possible risk to infants’ development and reproductive function when they ingest BPA. Because baby bottles are sometimes exposed to the high heat of formula or milk, there’s greater concern about the use of BPA in baby bottles since the chemical could leach into the feeding liquid.

Canada has banned the use of BPA in baby bottles, and in the United States, many bottle manufacturers have stopped using BPA.

While some levels of government and health organizations feel the amount of BPA ingested by infants would be too small to pose a risk, most parents don’t want to take the chance. Fortunately, there’s a range of great BPA-free bottles available.
This is the easy part. Baby bottles generally come in two sizes: small (4 or 5 ounces) and large (8, 9 or 10 ounces).

For the first few weeks and maybe even months of life, your bottle-fed baby will probably drink between two and four ounces in one feed. By the fifth month, most babies will be drinking 4 to 6 ounces of milk or formula from a bottle at each feed.

If you want to get a bit more value from your bottle, you can start with 8 ounce bottles filled less than half way, or choose a bottle with a multi-flow or interchangeable nipple so you can extend the life of your bottle and meet your baby's feeding needs as your baby grows.

A tip from bottle moms: Make sure your bottle has colored, easy-to-read numbers so you can see how many ounces of milk you’re pouring. It’s one less thing to think about when you’re sleep-deprived and/or making bottles in the dark.
Your baby will always want to be held, or fed. And then your little bundle will fill that diaper...all the way up the back. Laundry. So, you’ll get your baby changed, nuzzle noses, and then he or she will get sick on both of you, and you’ll have to change both of you, and...wash more laundry.

In the first few weeks of baby’s life, there just won’t be enough time in the day. It’s no wonder, then, that so many moms opt for bottles that are easy to clean.

For Dr. Tanya Altman, a busy pediatrician and mom to two, cleanability played a big factor in her own hunt for her family’s perfect bottle.

“For me, that was a bottle that was non-breakable, that was easy to clean, and dishwasher safe. And then I liked to get as many as I could because I didn’t like to do dishes several times a day.”

A handful of bottles revered for their anti-gas and anti-colic effects have unusual shapes or parts. Heather Corley advises checking to see if an odd-shaped bottle is dishwasher safe, or if there are special brushes that’ll fit inside for cleaning.

“The bottle won’t be helpful for long if you can’t get it clean.”

“The bottle won’t be helpful for long if you can’t get it clean.”
Heather Corley, the baby product writer and mother of five, says she has a theory about buying baby bottles: “Buying dozens of one baby bottle style before your baby arrives is the best way to ensure that your baby will hate that brand or style of bottle.”

What does she advise, then, for budget-minded new parents who don’t want to get stuck with a cupboard full of unloved bottles?

“If you think you’d like to use a certain brand or type of bottle, buy one or two at first and see how your baby responds,” says Corley. “You can always buy more bottles later on, or try out new brands if baby isn’t happy with your initial choices.”

Most bottles are in the $10 range, and include a nipple and a collar, but there are discount brands offering bottles for as low as $5, and high-end trendy bottles that near a little closer to the $20 mark.

Before you hit the bottle aisle, decide which features—anti-colic bottom venting, cleanability, breast-like nipple, for example—are deal-breakers for you, and how much you’re willing to spend on them. Keep in mind that if baby does like that bottle, you’ll probably want to buy a handful of them so you’re not constantly washing dishes.

For Jaimi Erickson, that military wife and mother of four (including a set of twins), price was important to her, next to needing simple bottles without a lot of parts to clean.

“I tried to shy away from really expensive bottles or bottles with a lot of extra little parts,” says Erickson, who nurses one twin while her husband bottle-feeds the other when they’re out in public.

Remember, you and your baby and your bottles might be spending a lot of time together, so it’s worth hunting for and finding the bottle that’s right for your family, but you also need to be smart about your spending because there are aisles and aisles of other things your baby ‘needs.’
Baby meets bottle. Baby falls in love with bottle. Baby turns one. Then what?

While some pediatricians recommend introducing sippy cups, straw cups and even plain cups somewhere near the one-year mark, many bottle-lovers will carry theirs around much longer. For some infants, the separation is easy. For others, it’s a little harder to let go of that ‘bah.’

Fortunately, a few clever bottle manufacturers have caught on and make that transition from bottle to sippy cup easy with bottles that become sippy cups when you swap out the nipple for a cute little lid.

Dr. Tanya Altman says for babies who are attached to their bottles, this feature can make the good-bye bottles milestone that much simpler.

“If you have a bottle that easily transitions into a sippy...I find many toddlers will take to it much more quickly and easily.”
#9 Green Bottles
BOTTLES THAT ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

For some families, finding a bottle baby likes in the first place is a small feat. Finding one that’s eco-friendly as well would be a nice bonus.

‘Green’ products have touched every inch of every shelf of grocery and department stores, including the baby aisle. When you’re out bottle hunting, read the package to find out which materials it’s made from and consider some of these other ways you can bottle-feed in a more sustainable way.

How can you go green with a baby bottle?

- Choose a bottle that’s free of BPA, lead, and PVC.

- Opt for bottles that don’t use disposable plastic liners to reduce waste.

- Consider using glass bottles. While glass can shatter and pose a safety risk to little fingers, some bottle makers have created bright silicone sleeves to absorb shock and keep glass bottles from breaking.

- Consider bottles that do double or triple duty. Choosing a bottle with adjustable flows or interchangeable nipples with different flows, means a longer useful life of a bottle. Look for a bottle that transitions into sippy cup for toddler stages. You’ll waste less and spend less.
For a long, long time, bottles had only one look: boring. Today, the bottle aisle is starting to show a little color.

The thing is, if your baby even has one bottle a day for, let’s say, 11 months, you’ll be looking at that bottle more than 300 times. Wouldn’t it be nice to look at something that’s as cute as your baby?

Spice up your diaper bag and help those old ladies guess whether it’s a boy or girl with a bottle that has a bit of color built in.

One bottle manufacturer has even designed a bottle you can accessorize with metallic looking or colored rings to differentiate between bottles with multiples and put a little bling on your bottle.
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A leading medical authority for the popular press and entertainment industry, Dr. Tanya Remer Altmann is a best-selling author, parenting expert and media spokesperson. A working mother and UCLA-trained pediatrician who practices in Southern California, Dr. Tanya is a designated spokesperson for the American Academy of Pediatrics, communicating complicated medical issues into easily understood concepts. *Mommy Calls: Dr. Tanya Answers Parents’ Top 101 Questions About Babies and Toddlers*, hit several best sellers’ lists after its release last fall. She is also Editor-in-Chief of the American Academy of Pediatrics' parenting book *The Wonder Years* and Associate Medical Editor of their bestselling *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*.

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Dawn Dais is a freelance writer, designer, and filmmaker from Sacramento, CA. Her two previous books, *The Nonrunner’s Marathon Guide for Women* and *The Noncyclist’s Guide to the Century and Other Road Races*, were published by Seal Press, have topped Amazon.com bestseller lists, and have been featured by countless TV and print media sources. Her uniquely sarcastic yet inspiring tone has entertained and guided an enthusiastic core of readers towards their various ridiculous athletic goals. Dawn’s most recent book *The Sh!t No One Tells You* will be out in June 2013, and is a funny and informational book about the joys of parenthood. Dawn lives in Sacramento, CA, with her family.

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Jaimi Erickson is mom to four (including one set of twins) as well as a military spouse, former teacher and the author of the blog *The Stay-at-Home-Mom Survival Guide*. She shares motivation for moms, tips related to homemaking, and simple-to-create learning activities for infants through early elementary-aged children—all to help moms find joy despite the challenges of motherhood. Connect with Jaimi via Facebook, Google+, and Pinterest.
Additional Sources

Heather Corley

About.com: *How to Choose Bottles for Your Baby*
http://babyproducts.about.com/bio/Heather-Corley-14113.htm

As a freelance writer, mother of five and aunt to ten, Heather Corley has used many of today's baby products for her own family, and she understands the desire to choose useful, high-quality products and gifts for the kids you love. Heather aims to provide practical information to help you make smart, safe and fun choices.

Dr. Scott Cohen

http://www.commonsensepediatrics.com/

Dr. Scott Cohen is an award-winning pediatrician, father, and the author of the best-selling *Eat, Sleep, Poop: A Common Sense Guide to Your Baby's First Year*. His program, called *Common Sense Parenting*, helps educate patients and families on how to raise healthy children stress free.

Hailey Eisen

Yummy Mummy Club: A *Guide to Bottle Feeding Your Baby: Why Bottles Make This Mama Happy*
http://www.yummymummyclub.ca/blogs/hailey-eisen-our-happy-place/20131214/a-guide-to-bottle-feeding-your-baby

Hailey Eisen, a Toronto-based writer and editor, is the founder of *Pink Pen Communications*. She's the mother of two very busy and delightful little girls.
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