

FAIR PLAY

Wild Card Guide

Welcoming a Child Into the Home



In partnership with:



Welcoming a child into the home can be exciting, scary, overwhelming, and fun - all at the same time. That's why it has its own WILD card in the Fair Play deck. We want to support you every step of the way, from prepping for the actual journey of bringing a child home (whether that's through childbirth, fostering, or adoption) to dividing the household tasks once they've arrived and beyond!

This guide is for both new parents and those who already have children. It doesn't matter where you are in your parenting journey - welcoming a new child into the home can be an intense experience for everyone involved! Whether this is your first time as a new parent, or you've done this many times before, remember to be patient with yourself and give yourself lots of grace.

During pregnancy and while preparing for your child to arrive, the dynamic of your family shifts. How you relate to yourself and your partner may change as you take on the new role of parent (or fall back into the role of parent to a newborn once again!).

Don't hesitate to explore the feelings that come up about your new role and responsibilities. Take time to explore these questions internally. In addition, consider discussing them with your partner and with friends who have been through this journey recently.

- How might your relationship with your partner change?
- Who can you talk with about these feelings, worries, and stresses? (Check out the resources at the bottom of this guide for additional support!)
- What fears or worries are coming up for me?

1 in 5 birthing individuals will experience a Perinatal
Mood and Anxiety Disorders.

1 in 10 men will experience postpartum depression and
18% of men develop clinically significant anxiety disorder.

(Paulson & Bazemore, 2010)

[Postpartum Depression: Symptoms, Resources & Support](#)

[Postpartum Anxiety: Symptoms, Resources & Support](#)

You may come face-to-face with your own feelings of inadequacy to nurture and care for another human being. You may experience feelings of panic and trepidation. No one gender is predisposed to nurturing and caring for newborns more than another, despite cultural myths that might tell us otherwise. All new parents may need time to identify their own special bond with their child.

Reflect:

Think about your experiences of being a nurturer – whether that was growing up with a sibling or family member, your partner, or other people in your life – and try to identify the nurturing qualities you already have that will help you be a nurturing parent to your child. Don't be afraid to ask others for their insight as well. You might be nurturing someone without even realizing it!

Welcoming a child into the home can also bring potential changes in terms of career goals, priorities, and work/home focus. Some shifts in career goals are often necessary. Make sure you find time to talk with your partner proactively about how you are both approaching work & care. Having an open conversation is important!

- What are you willing to compromise – or not compromise – as you begin your “parenting career?”
- Will you still pursue the same career goals, or do you need to make changes?
- Can you allow parenthood to become an avenue for self-worth and feeling good?

For Dads/Non-Birthing Partners

Some parents, who did not give birth to their child, may fear that their newborn children don't really need them, particularly if the other parent is breastfeeding. This is not true. It's important to proactively make new ways to take part in building this important relationship. Be aware that you are not destined to repeat the mistakes that your own parents might have made. You can make the choice to do things differently.

You can nurture your child in many ways – bottle feeding them, bathing them, talking to them, and having lots of skin-to-skin contact are just a few methods of bonding with them. Take time to build this significant lifetime relationship.



mb_ferrante @mathewferrante advice to every new dad... if mom is the milk truck, you should be the dump truck 🤪

5w 109 likes Reply ...

At this stage, here are a couple of questions to think about:

- What are the gifts that your own parents gave you and what are the liabilities that you would like to protect your child from?
- Who else can you draw upon to build your own idea and image of the parent you want to be?
- If mom/ birthing parent is breast feeding, how can I, as the Dad/non-birthing parent, support the whole family? What tasks can I take ownership of while my partner owns feeding the baby?

NOTE: We recognize that children live in diverse family structures and arrangement. The words “dad” and “father” are meant to be inclusive of any adult primary or significant caregivers, including, but not limited to birth fathers, adoptive fathers, foster fathers, stepfathers, extended family members, close family friends, partners, grandfathers, anyone considered by the parent(s) to be ‘like a father,’ etc. We recognize that the non-birthing parent in your family may not be a father at all, but may be a mother or a parent, and that, if there is a birthing parent in your family, they may also identify with any gender. Regardless of your gender identity and presentation, you are valid as a parent and a caregiver. We're so glad you're here!"

Tips for starting a conversation with your partner/family members:

- **Have these conversations when emotions are low, and cognition is high** – ideally before you're in the moment when the important decisions need to be made. Schedule a time to check-in so you both can have time to mentally prepare. Bring your favorite food, like tacos or ice cream, to help keep it fun!
- **It's not about things being perfectly equal** – it's about proactively talking about how to find a reasonably fair balance, whatever that looks like in your family. There's no need to keep track and split things up exactly 50/50! What is fair is not always equal, and what's equal is not always fair.
- **Resist the urge to make decisions based on how other families have handled the transition to parenthood** – only you know what's best for your family and relationship.
- **This is not a one-and-done conversation** – you will need to revisit these conversations, time and time again, especially during the postpartum period, once you have a better understanding of what work certain tasks/cards involve.
- **The transition to parenthood is one the biggest transitions you'll make as a couple** – resist romantic ideas like, "We should be able to just figure this out naturally." Even if things change along the way, you'll benefit a lot from having these conversations in advance.
- **Your home is your most important organization** – talk about your roles and responsibilities during both the prenatal period (pregnancy)/prep for welcoming a new child and the postpartum period/when the child comes home.
- **Communication will be key during this period** – if you haven't already, get in the habit of holding regular check-ins now. Try to stick to 10-15 minutes MAX for each check-in and set a clear agenda/focus, just like you would for work. (See example below.)

100% of men who took paternity leave **were glad they took the leave** and would do so again.

90% noticed an improvement in their relationship with their partner.

20% Felt that the risk of a career setback was the main downside but that the benefits outweighed the worry.

(McKinsey & Company, 2021)

You do not have to do this alone!

Reach out to a [Fair Play Facilitator](#) for support.

Partners who make regular time to exchange feedback about the Fair Play system achieve maximum efficiency and happiness! In fact, it's the number-one predictor of long-term success.

1. Ideally, schedule your check-in when you and your partner are alone, and at a time that can be easily replicated week after week (or more than once a week if needed).
2. Recognize that you both are human and have a lot of feelings that might be on the table. Check-in with how each person is feeling overall.
3. Start to break down what cards/tasks might be in play pre-and post-baby.
(See the list below for ideas!)

Questions to Consider:

*These questions are applicable to both those in partnerships and those who are solo parenting

- How do you handle the (insert card) right now? How might this change after the child arrives? Start to think about what this transition might look like and when/how this transition can happen.
- What do you think will be the hardest part about owning the (insert card) card?
- Which cards do you anticipate being particularly important in the first few weeks after the child's arrival? (See the list below for help!)
- How does the (insert card) card relate to our values as a family?
- What cards can be paired together to streamline tasks? What cards don't work well together? (e.g., if one parent is doing bath time at night, what can the other parent be doing during that time?)
- What cards can you take out of your deck? **It's important that you aren't playing with all 100 cards!** It's okay to keep things simple as you take on this new journey. You can always re-deal and bring in new cards once things are more settled. Having it all does not mean doing it all!

Remember that you don't have to have it all figured out right away. Continue practicing coming to the table and having check-ins. Making it a habit now will make it much easier to continue after welcoming the child into your home!

Fair Play Cards to Consider:

The [Fair Play Deck](#) contains 100 cards. Here are our top 30 cards to consider when prepping to welcome a child into the home. Some cards and questions might not apply to your family's needs, and that is okay. The purpose of this list is to help guide important conversations with your family.

Please keep in mind that this list is not meant to overwhelm you, only to guide you. Only tackle a few cards at a time!

*Daily Grind (DG): These are the cards that are non-negotiable and highly repetitive tasks that often have to happen at a very specific time.

Dishes (DG)

- Are you going to use bottles? If so, are they going to be hand washed or put in the dishwasher? How many bottles are you willing to let pile up before doing a load? How many bottles do you need to have ready to go at all times?
- If your partner is pumping, do you know how to properly deconstruct all pump parts? Are you planning on sanitizing everything?
- If so, for how long? What bottle & pump parts cannot be sanitized?



Meals (DG)

- “Meals” includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. Can any meals be outsourced? Can local support provide a meal train?
- What are your standards? Do you freezer prep before the child gets here, storing meals to be thawed and eaten later? How much take-out is too much take-out?
- You also will now have a new mouth to feed! Will you be breastfeeding? Formula feeding? Or combo feeding?



- If you choose/are able to breastfeed, you might also be pumping! Do you know what type of breast pump you are going to use?
- It's important for both partners to understand how pumping works so you can support one another. Some questions to consider: How will you store extra milk? Which pump parts can and cannot be sterilized?
- Helpful Resources - [How to Pump Breast Milk for Your Baby: Babylist's Ultimate Guide](#), [The Best Breast Pump for Every Budget](#)

Middle of the Night Comfort (DG)

- During those first few months with an infant, no one will get much sleep. But who is going to take the middle-of-the-night feedings and changes, and how often will this card be re-dealt? Do you switch off nights, or switch off every hour?
- If your partner is breastfeeding, take the chance to bond with your child post-feeding by changing their diaper and soothing them back to sleep. This also helps to balance the workload.



Calendar Keeper (DG)

- Are there any upcoming doctor appointments for parent or child? Who will be attending these appointments? Are there any home studies coming up? Who needs to be aware and prepared for these?

Groceries (DG)

- You probably won't have time for large, extravagant meals. What snacks can you keep on hand for those late-night feedings and early-morning changings? Get input from all family members on what food/snack will be easiest for them.



- If you are welcoming an older child into the home, do they have special snacks that will make them feel more comfortable during the transition?
- Formula Feeding: Whether you are strictly formula feeding or combo feeding, it can be a bit overwhelming to try to figure out how much formula you are going to go through. Stocking up and knowing which stores have your specific brand of formula will help.
- Breastfeeding/Pumping: If you or your partner is breastfeeding, you are going to need all the protein-packed snacks to keep your energy up.

Laundry (DG)

- Get ready for the never-ending laundry story to begin!
- On top of your regular laundry, you will have to add baby laundry, sheets, blankets, towels, burp clothes, and more. Are there any special blankets or items that need to be hand washed? Do you need to change the detergent to something gentler? What needs to be air-dried? (Pssst - those bamboo PJs you love so much almost definitely do!)
- How will you take care of blowouts? Do you have enough clean clothes and burp cloths to get you through the night?



Diapering & Potty Training (DG)

- What kind of wipes and diapers will you be using? (Disposable diapers or cloth/reusable diapers?)
- Reusable diapers: You'll want to make sure to connect with whoever is holding the laundry card to make sure you have a game plan for how to properly store/wash/restock.
- Where will you have changing station(s), and who is in charge of keeping them stocked?
- Helpful Resource: Babylist Guide - [How Many Diapers Do I Need for Baby's First Year?](#)



Childcare Helpers (DG)

- Do you have family members or friends who can step in? What are your expectations?
- Will you hire a doula, night nurse, or nanny during the transition? How will you choose who you hire?
- If you plan on putting your child in daycare, when and where will they go? (It's important to decide on this as soon as possible so you can get on the waitlist.)
- Helpful Resource: Babylist Guide: [Best Websites to Find Childcare Online](#)



Medical & Healthy Living (DG)

- This card can feel overwhelming, so it's important to prep as much as possible in advance.
- What pediatrician will you use? Who is scheduling the first appointment and follow-ups? Who will be attending these appointments?
- What products do you need to help you feel safe? (First aid kit, baby monitor, childproofing supplies).
- Who will be obtaining the birth certificate? Do you know how to order it and where to pick it up?
- It's important to collaborate with whoever is holding the Special Needs & Mental Health card to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- Helpful Resources - [Best First Aid Kits for Babies 2023](#), [An ER Doctor Answers All Your Questions About Keeping Your Baby Safe](#)



Returns & Store Credits

- How will you handle returning unwanted/duplicate baby gifts? Will they be returned or donated?



Thank You Notes

- How do you want to handle thanking people for their gifts and generosity? Physical cards? A quick text? Or a phone call?
- Helpful Resource - [Babylist Registry Hacks](#)



Cash & Bills (DG)

- The costs of welcoming a child into the home can really add up. Do you know what your budget will be? How will you handle last-minute costs?

Clothes & Accessories

- How many onesies, pajamas, and blankets do you need to have on hand?
- How will they be stored? Baby clothes do not have to be folded unless it's important to you!

Packing & Unpacking

- What goes in the hospital bag? If both partners will be attending, you both need supplies.
- What will go in the diaper bag? Who is in charge of keeping it stocked?
- If you are fostering/adopting, how will you handle their belongings? Who will keep track of what is included in their bags?

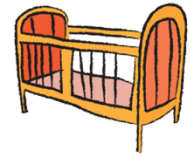


Health Insurance

- Who will be adding the child to the health insurance? Make sure to coordinate with whoever is holding the Cash & Bills card to make sure hospital bills are paid on time.

Home Furnishings

- Will you have a nursery? A nursing space? Changing stations? What needs to be included in these spaces? How do you plan on collecting the items needed?
- Helpful Resource - [Basics You Need for Baby's First Year: Month by Month](#)



Spirituality

- Will you practice spirituality with your child? Will you need to plan a bris, baptism, or dedication?

Parents & In-Laws

- Who will be allowed to visit in the hospital? What about when you get home? Who can help with setting boundaries?

Watching (DG)

- Infants need a lot of attention. Who is holding the baby? Playing with the baby? How can each of you have opportunities to bond?
- If you have multiple kids, who is watching the older kids while you bond with your new child? Can you get outside help (family/friends/nanny)? What activities can be pre-planned to help keep everyone occupied and happy?

Auto

- Do you have a car seat picked out? Who will install it?
- How do you plan on getting to and from the hospital?



Partner Coach

- How can you best support your partner through this transition? What helps them feel confident? Physical touch? Pep talks? Having space for themselves? This is a great time to practice those open communication skills.

Marriage & Romance

- How can you maintain connection and have realistic expectations? Do you want to consider starting a relationship with a couple's therapist?

Hosting & Extended Family

- Referencing the Parents & In-Laws card, how will you hold boundaries?
- Who can visit in the hospital or at home? What are visitors allowed to do? (e.g., holding the baby, kissing the baby, etc.) How would you like them to prep for the visit? (e.g., washing hands, wearing masks)
- How will you manage expectations and unexpected visitors?
- Helpful Resource - [The Best Ways to Support a New Parent Physically and Emotionally](#)

Cleaning

- What is your current standard for cleaning the house? Do you need to lower the expectations for a while? Is outsourcing an option?
- Connect with whoever is holding the Hosting and Family & In-Laws card. Are there cleaning tasks you'd be comfortable asking guests/visitors to handle?



Bathing & Grooming (DG)

- How often will you plan on bathing the child? What products do you need to keep their hygiene in check?

Bedtime Routine (DG)

- It's never too early to start a bedtime routine at whatever time you consider to be "bedtime" for your baby. What steps do you want to include in the bedtime routine?
- Where will the baby sleep at night? What about napping during the day?

Self-Care

- Self-care is crucial for everyone involved!
- How do you plan to heal after birth? Do you need to order/prepare a postpartum station in the bathroom? How can the house be set up to help you with gentle movement?
- Even if you are a non-birthing parent, you are entering a completely new life stage. Make sure to take some time for exercise and carve out some time alone.

Adult Friendships

- You might be feeling really overwhelmed with visitors, but it's important to see people that mean the most to you and spend time 1:1 together. It might look a little different, but it is still so essential – perhaps it's just sitting out on the porch and catching up, video chats and phone calls, or a short walk to get some fresh air. Seek out other new parents at a similar stage as you to make new connections. There are many different types of parenting communities!

Unicorn Space

- Unicorn Space is the active & consistent pursuit of self-expression in any form.
- Having a Unicorn Space is crucial to your well-being and having a sense of self, but we don't totally recommend starting something new during this time. Just don't let it get pushed to the side for too long. You deserve time to focus on the things that make you *you*. Especially when becoming a parent, we start to lose track of our sense of self and the things that make us interesting. So, while this might not be the exact time to start something new, you can still begin to get curious about what your Unicorn Space might be or how you might reconnect with it when you are ready!



Learn more about Fair Play & the Fair Play Card deck: FairPlayLife.com

Need Additional Support? We are here for you!

Find a Fair Play Facilitator!

We understand that implementing the Fair Play system into your home can be difficult, and now you don't have to do it alone. [Schedule a consultation with one of our facilitators.](#)

Babylist

At [Babylist](#), we help expecting parents get exactly what they need for their new baby. Our mission is to build happier and healthier families.



Fathering Together is Re-imagining Fatherhood

Our mission is to turn dads into positive change agents. We can't do this alone. We convene panels, organize events and groups, and work daily to change the narratives of fatherhood. Together we can prepare the world for our children's smiles, laughter, and energy. Together we can become emotionally courageous. Together we can be physically present. Together we can make the world a more equitable and connected place. [Learn more and join a community.](#)



The Company of Dads

The Company of Dads is a platform for Lead Dads - those fathers who are the go-to parents juggling work and family while supporting their working spouses. It was created by Paul Sullivan, who for most of his 13 years at The New York Times was a Lead Dad to his three daughters and wife who runs her own asset management firm. The Company of Dads does three things. Media: Producing a weekly podcast, newsletter, and features like "Lead Dad of The Week". Community: Growing a network of Lead Dads both online and in person. Speaking and Coaching: Collaborating with companies to adapt their parenting policies for The Next Normal, with a focus on employee resource groups and middle managers. [Check out the Lead Dad Library full of resources!](#)



Join a New Dad Survival Group from Birthsmarter!

In this cohort-based group, join new-ish dads for four weekly meetings online and in a private chat community between and beyond meetings. Each week you'll have time for real-time troubleshooting and community building. [Join a group now.](#)

Postpartum Support International

PSI connects individuals and families with perinatal mental health resources and support, including but not limited to support groups, local resource coordinators, and a provider directory. PSI fosters awareness of mental health issues related to childbearing. [Learn more here.](#) Helpline: 1-800-944-4773

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Child Welfare Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more. [Learn more here.](#)

This guide was made in partnership with Babylist, Fathering Together and The Company of Dads.

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