



DEMO

First chapter only

The No-Waste Baby Registry

Buy Only What Earns Its Place — With Age Stages, Apartment vs House Versions, and Gift Scripts That Work

The No-Waste Baby Registry

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1

The Registry Budget Nobody Gives You



Figure 1. A typical 124-item baby registry set against the 74 items that actually get used—a 40% gap worth roughly \$1,500 in wasted gear

1.1 The Math of Registry Sprawl

The average first-time parent in 2026 adds 124 items to their baby registry¹. They use somewhere between 60 and 75 of them. The other 40 to 50 sit in closets, get re-gifted, end up at consignment for fifteen cents on the dollar, or quietly fill a donation bag at month six.

That is not a small problem. The retail value of those unused items averages \$1,400 to \$1,800. Some of that was paid by friends and family, which counts as a gift wasted. Some of it was paid by you, the parent, after the showers ended and you started filling the gaps. Either way, the money is gone, the landfill is fuller, and the apartment is more cluttered. Nobody wins.

40%

of registry items are still unused six months after baby arrives, according to longitudinal Babylist data on 12,000 first-time parents

The strangest part is that this happens to careful, research-loving parents just as often as it happens to casual ones. The careful parents read every review on the wipe warmer. They still throw it away. The reason is not lack of research. The reason is that the registry industry sells preparation as a virtue, and a registry of 130 items *feels* more prepared than a registry of 70 items. It is not.

1.2 What 40 Percent Waste Actually Looks Like

Walk through any new-parent's home at the six-month mark and the wasted items are easy to spot. The wipe warmer, unplugged. The diaper Genie, sitting next to a regular trash can that the parents use instead. Six hooded towels in a closet because the family

¹Babylist, "State of the Baby Registry Report," 2024 and 2025 editions.

already had seven. A baby food maker that has been used twice. A shoe collection for a child who cannot walk. A swing the baby hated. A bouncer the baby outgrew in eleven days. A changing table that became a folded-laundry table by week three.

Key Insight

The waste is rarely about bad products. Most of these items work fine. The waste is about *this baby, in this home, at this stage* not needing them. The crib mobile is gorgeous. Your baby looks at the ceiling fan instead. The carrier you researched for forty hours is the wrong shape for your shoulders. The waste is a mismatch problem, not a quality problem.

This book is built on one observation: you cannot predict which items will mismatch your specific baby and your specific home in advance, but you can dramatically shrink the surface area of possible waste by ranking every potential registry item against four questions. We will get to those questions in Chapter 4. First, we have to be honest about the financial layer.

1.3 The Real Cost of "I Had to Have It"

The USDA's most recent estimate puts the first-year cost of raising a child at \$13,400 to \$17,200, depending on region and household income². That number assumes reasonable spending. New parents who follow influencer registry lists routinely spend \$3,000 to \$4,500 on gear alone in the first year, and a meaningful chunk of that gets discarded.

²USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, "Expenditures on Children by Families," updated 2024 with 2025 supplements.

Category	Typical Year-One Spend
Stroller system	\$300–\$1,500
Car seat (infant) + transition seat	\$200–\$700
Crib + mattress + bedding	\$200–\$900
Diapers + wipes (12 months)	\$800–\$1,200
Formula (if used, 12 months)	\$1,500–\$2,800
Clothing (size NB through 12 mo)	\$300–\$700
Feeding gear (bottles, pump, high chair)	\$200–\$600
Activity gear (bouncer, swing, mat)	\$150–\$500
Bath, grooming, safety	\$100–\$300
Books, toys, soft goods	\$100–\$400

The discardable 40% lives inside almost every line on that table. The stroller you buy in pregnancy that does not fit in your car trunk. The bottles your baby refuses. The clothes in newborn size that get worn for two weeks. The activity mat that the baby ignores in favor of the cardboard box it came in.

\$1,500

average dollar value of registry items first-time parents discard, regift, or donate within the first 12 months

1.4 Why This Book Is Different

Most baby gear advice falls into two camps. The first is the influencer registry list: “11 things I could not live without,” usually sponsored, usually aspirational. The second is the minimalist counter-take: “you only need four things.” Both are unhelpful. The first oversells. The second undersells, which makes nervous parents distrust it.

This book takes a third approach: a ranked, transparent decision framework. Each item gets categorized as Buy New, Buy Used, Borrow, or Skip. Each category has a reason. Each reason is tied to either the baby's stage (0–3 months, 3–12 months), the safety profile of the product (the short list where new + reputable matters), or your living situation (apartment, suburb, or travel-heavy life).

Pro Tip

The single highest-ROI hour you can spend before baby arrives is sitting down with this book and your registry app side-by-side. Read a chapter, pause, edit the registry. The cuts will hurt at first — you have already emotionally adopted the wipe warmer — but the relief at month four will be real.

1.5 What You Will Get From This Book

By the end of these eight chapters you will have:

1. A ranked registry trimmed to roughly 60–75 items, with clear reasons for every entry.
2. A nine-item safety-critical list where new + current-year model is non-negotiable.
3. A buy-used playbook for the items where secondhand saves \$300–\$800 with zero quality loss.
4. Twelve gift-redirect scripts that work with grandparents, siblings, and well-meaning friends.
5. Three living-situation variants of the same registry: apartment, suburban house, frequent-travel.
6. A one-hour final build process to turn the framework into a real, shareable registry.

We are not going to talk you out of being prepared. Preparation is a real need, and dismissing it is condescending. We are going to help you be prepared *accurately* — which is a different and harder skill.

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