

THE MINIMALIST MOM'S GUIDE TO BABY'S FIRST YEAR

HOW TO SAVE TIME, MONEY AND SPACE



RACHEL JONAT



Minimalist
MOM

www.theminimalistmom.com



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FOREWORD

It seems very counter-culture to decide that you don't need a living room full of plastic baby gear for a new baby, when everyone else thinks you do. I made that decision a few years ago. It took me a couple more months of experience to realize that I could go on quick errands with my fifteen-pound baby and leave the fifty-pound diaper bag (more like luggage) behind, as long as I kept a spare diaper in my bag.

If you have hope for living a simplified, uncluttered lifestyle, it doesn't have to end once you have kids, though many will try to convince you otherwise. I've found that simplifying can be a saving grace for families who are over-stretched by their stuff, time commitments, and financial obligations, because really, who needs to simplify more than parents of small children?

The *Minimalist Mom's Guide to Baby's First Year* gives brand new parents the confidence to make lifestyle decisions that will enhance their family's well-being for both the long run and the early sleep-deprived months.

My own experience with having a baby was very much like how author Rachel Jonat describes in this guide. After hearing our exciting news, most people asked us:

1. So you'll move into a house now, right?
2. How will you decorate the nursery?

We didn't have plans to move; we liked our small apartment. In fact we stayed in that same apartment for three more years and upgraded to a two-bedroom apartment when our second child was born. What we learned during that time was that little kids need little space. We liked being close enough to hear our child no matter where she was in our home. It made us feel close as a family.

As for a decorating theme for the nursery, hmm...Craigslist? What a budget-saver and space-redeemer. I bought and sold baby gear as we needed it on Craigslist, and it didn't take me much time. I bought a baby swing for \$25 and then sold it for \$40 when we didn't need it any more. I didn't feel obligated to keep and store it since I hadn't invested a lot of money into it.

Baby gear is temporary and useful. It's not a measurement of how much you value your child or your role as a parent.

The must-have baby lists at the stores and in the catalogs are all written by marketing teams who want to *sell* you something you don't really need.

Rachel Jonat wants to *give* you something that every family needs...more time, more money, and more space. Her advice is a welcome relief from promises that the latest and greatest baby gear will keep your baby happy and give you more sleep.

In our consumer-driven society the word "minimalist"

may sound extreme, but as Rachel describes it, honestly it means "conscious consumer." There is a lot of freedom in that, as well as time and money.

Congratulations on becoming a new parent! It is the most awe-inspiring responsibility in the world with a wonderful mix of crazy and serene. A shopping list can't fully prepare you for it, but the common-sense advice in this guide will definitely make it easier.

Rachel Meeks, author of the home-simplifying blog [Small Notebook](#).



INTRODUCTION

Telling family and friends that a new baby is on the way is a magical and thrilling moment. A moment that you will most likely have a few times in your life. You are announcing a new member of the family and another person to carry on generations of old traditions. Another person for all of you to know and love and connect with.

When I announced to family that we were expecting our first child it was met with squeals and hugs and heartfelt congratulations.

Oh, and plenty of follow-up statements about what we would need.

- “You’ll need a new car for the baby.”
- “You’ll have to move out of your 586 square foot condo.”
- “What theme are you thinking about for the nursery?”

While the baby was technically still the size of a cherry, well-meaning friends and family were recommending we uproot our selves and spend, spend, spend.

And guess what? I started to agree.

Sure, we said our ten year old car would do just fine and there was no need to trade it in. But we moved from the little condo to one almost twice the size. I started

researching all the best baby gadgets, sleep sacks and swaddles, change tables and strollers.

I bought two diaper bags before I even moved my blooming body into maternity clothing. Packages arrived weekly by mail that I tucked away for baby's arrival. On my lunch hour I wandered BabyGAP and picked up whatever was most adorable to me that day. I spent hours researching strollers and fretting over features.

The irony of my spending sprees and the avalanche of gifts I received at my baby shower: I didn't have some real essentials when the big day finally arrived. After my water broke at 38 weeks I made a frantic phone call to my sister asking if she could leave work and run some errands. We had no receiving blankets and none of the infant clothing was washed yet. Turns out the closet full of infant slings, diaper bags and 20 pairs of baby legs were not the essentials I thought they were when I bought them.

Luckily being a touch unprepared had no impact on my labor or our son's birth. We got through it and were officially parents 24 hours after the dramatic early morning start. Like all new parents we were ecstatic, sleep-deprived and overwhelmed in those first few days and weeks. And like a lot of parents I just kept buying. Online shopping is the bane/delight of the mother of a newborn. It's hard to get out to stores with a three-week

old baby. Luckily (or so I thought), the Internet and FedEx bring the stores to you.

My son, Henry, grew rapidly and regularly what I purchased was too small. No matter, just put it in one of the large plastic storage bins for the mythical next baby. Often I would buy things that just didn't work for my son or me. Beautiful but backbreaking slings and toys that frightened my newborn all went into storage bins to deal with later.

Henry also cried. A lot. I would feed him and burp him and change him and sing to him and turn a toy on or put him on the play mat with the mobile hanging over him and still, he would cry. He cried in the car, he cried in his stroller with the fancy bassinette attachment and he cried in the Jolly Jumper.

The one time my son was happiest was when he was in our arms or on my chest. My arms and back ached from holding him. I developed tendonitis in my wrists. We invested a small amount of money in a stretchy wrap, a way to carry him without my arms falling off and so that I could make myself a sandwich. He loved it. I'd spent thousands of dollars on baby items and this one item, something I could have made myself out of a piece of fabric, was what made us both happiest.

Babies don't need lots of stuff. This is what I have learned after lots of money and time wasted on many things claiming to be a must-have baby item. Your baby, more than anything you can buy, needs you.

“Less stuff” may seem like a simple concept, but it can be difficult to achieve in our consumer-driven culture. Everywhere you look there are signs for sales and lists of must-have baby items. Turn on the TV, open a magazine or even read a book for new parents: the call to buy and consume is everywhere. Fight it. The right rhythm for your days and your baby’s ability to sleep long stretches will not be found at Babies ‘R’ Us.

The first part of this book outlines reasons to live with less stuff and why it will save you time, money and space. The second part of this book provides a guide to living well with just the essentials for baby’s first year. I suggest reading part one and then putting the book (or your computer) away for a few days. Think about the concept of living with less, spend a bit of time mulling over your relationship to stuff and your anxiety (if you have any) about your new arrival. Or if you already have kids, think about the how and why of what you buy for them. Then read the second half of the book.

My hope is that you gain a new perspective on yourself and your consuming habits and that you can use these “new eyes” to let go of the stuff weighing down your closets and credit cards.

If all else fails, if you forget my strategies and the advice that follows, please remember this: billions of healthy babies and their mothers have survived that first year of life with none of our modern day gadgets. A parent’s

arms, nourishment and a warm place to sleep have been just fine for many generations before us.

