



how to buy a baby monitor

A monitor helps you keep tabs on your sleeping baby from any part of your home.

Audio monitors transmit sound only. Video monitors show images, too.

Monitors have two basic parts—a transmitter and a receiver.

what to look for when buying

Analog, digital, or WiFi: Analog monitors are less expensive, but the sound quality is usually not as good. Analog signals are transmitted as radio waves, so anyone in range can listen to the signal. Digital models convert sounds into data, making it almost impossible for others to eavesdrop. WiFi baby monitors connect to your WiFi network and send the audio and video to your smartphone, tablet, or computer.

Sound-activated light: A unit that lights up when it detects noise allows you to glance at the monitor and know instantly that something's going on.

Audio or video: Audio-only monitors tend to be cheaper and take up less space. Video monitors offer a wide variety of options, including different screen sizes, cameras that pan and zoom, and even night-vision images.

Frequency: Avoid interference from other wireless devices in your home by picking a monitor on a different frequency. The 1.9 gigahertz band offers the least interference.

Special features: Some monitors can keep track of the temperature in your baby's room, send an alert if your baby hasn't moved recently, work with your smart phone, or let you check on your child online.

Multiple transmitters: One system has three transmitters that allow you to monitor up to three kids' rooms. Careful, though: These gadgets might interfere with each other's signals.

Multiple receivers: Some models have two receivers. This can be handy if you want to leave one in your room and carry the other around the house or outside.

Security: Look for 1.9 gigahertz monitors that use DECT technology (digitally enhanced cordless telecommunications) to encrypt the audio signals. For video monitors, digital models offer better security. Some have a "digital lock" to encrypt the images.

Low-battery indicator: Tells you when to change the batteries with a sound or flashing lights.

what to avoid

Cord dangers: To prevent strangulation, keep cords well out of your baby's reach and at least 3 feet from the crib.

Water hazards: To prevent accidental shocks, never place a baby monitor in or around water.

what it's going to cost you

Audio monitors range
in price from
\$20 to \$125.

Video monitors
can cost
**\$75 to \$300
or more.**



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what I wish I'd known about buying a baby monitor

BABYCENTER MOMS' INSIGHTS

Taken from our article and community comments on the topic.

"I didn't buy one that was very portable and that was a mistake. I wound up wanting to move it around a lot—including taking it to Grandma's house."

"Nothing is foolproof. The models we have for monitoring movement and whatnot have had false alarms."

"Like a lot of things in life, sometimes the more expensive monitor isn't always better. My sister paid \$200 for her video monitor and the image is fuzzy and breaks up. I paid \$80 for my video monitor and I love it."

"To be honest, I'd ditch the traditional monitor for a smartphone-compatible video camera."

"I wish I'd gotten a video monitor with the infrared thing so I could see him in the dark."

"Get the monitor that works with the way you live your life. If you're not the type to get all worked up about every baby snort or prescribe to the philosophy that you can know too much, skip the ones with all the doohickeys. A simple audio monitor can work great."

"I would've liked one of the monitors that allows you to take snapshots from the video images. That way I wouldn't risk waking my daughter up every time I try to get that super-cute sleep shot."

"Since I can hear my next-door neighbor's baby over my monitor, I would get one that has one of those frequencies that's less prone to interference."

"I use a Wi-Fi monitor and recommend making sure you have a firewall up and your Internet password-protected so that no one can hack your video monitor and share the images!"

"Long range: I wish mine had more. My brother has one that works all the way out to his barn. Mine can't seem to get down the hall sometimes."

"An intercom is an awesome capability because I can shush from the comfort of my own bed. Mine also can tell me the temperature in his room, which comes in handy where I live."

"We're in an apartment and our first monitor was analog and didn't work. We replaced it with a digital model and it works great."

"We used the audio-only type monitor for the first six months but found that once the baby could move, you really need the video."

"My first monitor had only one camera. But for my second baby, we upgraded to one that has two. I have one camera mounted in my baby's room and the other I move to the living room when my baby is in there. If I have to run into the laundry or out into the garage, I can see my baby all the time."

"I love the features on mine, including playing music, talk/microphone, the intercom, and the night vision. And mine has a volume sensor on it to tell you how loud the baby is."

"I couldn't justify the need for a video monitor, so we have just a basic sound one. I like how it has two sound settings. One setting picks up every single noise in the room. It's sensitive enough to pick up the noise her humidifier makes but it does pick up some static. The other setting is voice activated. There is no static at all with this setting—and it doesn't click on until she starts crying or talking. We use the voice-activated mode all the time."



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featured monitors

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Item Number: 14060492

Samsung WiFi Video Baby Monitor

what you'll love: The sleek, wireless webcam lets you watch streaming video of your baby, and then share the cutest moments with faraway family and friends, all with top-notch video quality. There's two-way audio, infrared night vision, and a motion sensor to record your baby's every move.

what to watch out for: Even tech-savvy parents find it difficult to set up and get working. Some parents warn that the audio doesn't work consistently, and that there are long feed delays.

the bottom line: It's got some issues, but this monitor takes baby watching—and video sharing—to the next level.



Item Number: 14038045

Mobicam Digital DXR Video Monitor

what you'll love: It's uncomplicated. The initial setup is easy, and there's little interference with other devices in your home. The 450-foot transmission range allows you to go about any household chores while still keeping tabs on your little one. You can expand up to 4 cameras, and the quad split screen will show images from each camera at the same time. You can even save baby footage directly to an SD card (not included).

what to watch out for: The images can be grainy, and the audio is fussy. It can't pan and zoom, so you may have to go into your baby's room to readjust the camera if he moves out of the picture.

The bottom line: This easy and multifunctional award-winning monitoring system is a favorite among both tech-savvy and tech-impaired parents.



Item Number: 13979795

The First Years Crisp & Clear Video Monitor

what you'll love: It's a rare find: a video monitor at a budget-friendly price. The Crisp and Clear monitor has good transmission range for a video monitor, night vision capabilities, and rechargeable batteries in case you want to carry it around or clip it to your belt. If you've got background noise in the house, sound-activated lights will alert you if your baby is making noise.

what to watch out for: Some parents warn that they found it more staticky and screechy than "crisp and clear." This model doesn't have a two-way talk feature, so you can't shhh baby from a different room.

the bottom line: It's an affordable option for parents committed to video.



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Philips/Avent DECT Baby Monitor



Item Number: 13460492

what you'll love: You won't have to worry about interference or static, because this model has an encrypted signal. The cordless monitor can go a full 24 hours before recharging, and it has an eco-friendly, low-energy setting. It's also got some cool bells and whistles: a built-in night-light, a lullaby player with a five-song library, and a room temperature indicator with a warning alarm.

what to watch out for: You can't remotely activate the lullaby setting, so you'd have to creep into baby's room to turn it on. Also, some parents feel that the volume could be louder.

the bottom line: A reliable, long-use monitor for those who want to keep an ear out for trouble, not nightly surveillance.

Summer Infant BabyTouch Digital Color Video Monitor



Item Number: 13299985

what you'll love: You can get in really close, even from another room! This large-screen video monitor has great picture clarity and the ability to pan, scan, and zoom in. You can add up to three more cameras for multi-room use. This monitor also comes with night vision capability and a two-way talk feature, plus it transmits up to 400 feet.

what to watch out for: The magnetic docking mechanism can cause the monitor to stick upon removal, and camera positioning can be difficult when it's mounted to a wall. And while you can plug this monitor in or use AA batteries, both of those options cause concern: Electrical cords must be kept out of baby's reach, and parents say the monitor quickly eats through batteries.

the bottom line: Summer Infant's Digital Monitor is one of the most advanced and reliable in the field.



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