



Pregnancy
By
Design®

The **Complete Guide** to

*Writing a
Birth Plan*

Your Guide to Writing a Better Birth Plan

Welcome to your complete guide to writing a better birth plan! This guide walks you through the “4 P’s” of birth planning: Person, Place, Provider, and Plan. Complete each page of the guide to create the foundation for your birth plan, and find out where you need to focus your energy in order to be ready for birth. You’ll also fill in your custom Labor Action Plan.

The very last page is your Better Birth Plan, the one-page plan that you’ll share with your provider and take to your birth. Print ours, or customize the template to create a better birth plan - one that your medical and support team will actually read and follow!

Person

Birth Profile Scores: (Personality scales)

Control: _____ Flexibility: _____ Assertiveness: _____

I would describe my personality as:

My strengths that will help me during labor are:

Some areas of weakness that could affect me during labor are:

During labor, I hope to feel:

My personal priorities during labor are:

Birth Profile Score:

Birth Beliefs: _____

I most associate labor and childbirth with the following words/phrases: (circle all that apply)

Scary	Beautiful	Empowering	Medical	Peaceful	Normal
Choices	Emergency	Unknown	Supported	Obstetrician	Chaotic
Overwhelming	Natural	Alone	Relaxed	Hormones	Traumatic
Medication	Midwife	Surgery	Team	Suffering	Triumph
Birth center	Epidural	Mystery	Hospital	Mystery	Love

Other words or phrases that come to mind about birth:

Positive birth stories that I have heard:

Negative birth stories that I have heard:

Overall, my thoughts about birth seem to be: ___ More positive ___ More negative/unknown

How this could affect my birth:

How I would like to think about birth:

Place

Birth Profile Score:

Place: _____

Right now, I am leaning toward having my baby at:

___ a hospital ___ a birthing center ___ home

I've been told that my pregnancy so far is: ___ low risk (safe to birth in or out of hospital)

___ possible risk (unsure of best place to birth)

___ high risk (safest to birth in a hospital)

Reasons why I might be more comfortable in a medical setting (hospital):

Reasons why I might be uncomfortable in a medical setting (hospital):

Reasons why I might be most comfortable in a non-medical setting (birth center/home):

Reasons why I might be uncomfortable in a non-medical setting (birth center/home):

Ways I will make my birth place feel more like home, to help me relax and progress in labor:

Birth locations I am considering:

1. Name of facility: _____
Address: _____ Baby-Friendly designation? Yes No
Phone: _____ Offers Mother-friendly care? Yes No
Cesarean rate: ____% (WHO recommends 15% C-section rate) Epidural rate: ____ %
Types of providers with birthing privileges: Midwives Obstetricians
Support VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean), if relevant: Yes No Unsure
Routinely offered: Eat and drink during labor Move freely during labor
 Birth balls Hydrotherapy in birthing room (shower, tub)
Notes: _____

2. Name of facility: _____
Address: _____ Baby-Friendly designation? Yes No
Phone: _____ Offers Mother-friendly care? Yes No
Cesarean rate: ____% (WHO recommends 15% C-section rate) Epidural rate: ____ %
Types of providers with birthing privileges: Midwives Obstetricians
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Provider

Birth Profile Score:

Provider: _____

- I am receiving prenatal care from:
- An Obstetrician (OB/GYN)
 - A qualified midwife (certified/licensed)
 - My family doctor
 - Other: _____
 - I have not yet been receiving prenatal care

What I like about the medical model of prenatal and birth care (OB/GYN, family doctor):

What I like about the midwifery model of prenatal and birth care:

My current prenatal care provider:

- takes time to completely listen to my questions and concerns
- treats me like an individual rather than a case
- is open with me about how they usually treat patients in labor
- has told me their Cesarean rate (It is _____ %, compared to the recommended 15%)
- shares my overall view on birth
- always informs me about the pros and cons of any tests or treatments they recommend
- makes me feel comfortable during exams and visits

When I am at a prenatal appointment with my provider, I usually feel:

Birth providers I am considering:

*Include at least one midwife consultation

1. Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Cesarean rate: ____% (WHO recommends 15% C-section rate) Epidural rate: ____ %
Types of providers in the group: ____ Midwives ____ Obstetricians
Support VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean): ____ Yes ____ No Successful VBAC %: ____
Routinely supported: ____ Eat and drink during labor ____ Move freely during labor
____ Birth balls ____ Hydrotherapy in birthing room (shower, tub)
Notes: _____

2. Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Cesarean rate: ____% (WHO recommends 15% C-section rate) Epidural rate: ____ %
Types of providers with birthing privileges: ____ Midwives ____ Obstetricians
Support VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean): ____ Yes ____ No Successful VBAC %: ____
Routinely supported: ____ Eat and drink during labor ____ Move freely during labor
____ Birth balls ____ Hydrotherapy in birthing room (shower, tub)
Notes: _____

3. Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Cesarean rate: ____% (WHO recommends 15% C-section rate) Epidural rate: ____ %
Types of providers with birthing privileges: ____ Midwives ____ Obstetricians
Support VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean): ____ Yes ____ No Successful VBAC %: ____
Routinely supported: ____ Eat and drink during labor ____ Move freely during labor
____ Birth balls ____ Hydrotherapy in birthing room (shower, tub)
Notes: _____

Preparation & Plan

Birth Profile Score:

Birth Knowledge: _____

I have taken or will take the following childbirth education course:

I understand why it is so important to relax during labor: ___ Yes ___ Not really

During labor, women often use coping tools that help them in their daily life.

Things that help me relax or cope with pain/stress (such as a bad headache, or a big fight):

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a warm bath or shower | <input type="checkbox"/> essential oils | <input type="checkbox"/> exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my favorite music | <input type="checkbox"/> be by myself | <input type="checkbox"/> lie down in bed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a hot cup of tea | <input type="checkbox"/> connect with my partner | <input type="checkbox"/> call a friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> light a candle | <input type="checkbox"/> express my feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> go outside |
| <input type="checkbox"/> read a book | <input type="checkbox"/> dim the lights | <input type="checkbox"/> eat a snack |
| <input type="checkbox"/> close my eyes | <input type="checkbox"/> go for a walk | <input type="checkbox"/> deep breaths |

Other ideas:

I will try to create an environment of safety and comfort conducive to oxytocin and labor progress by doing the following:

- Dim lights
- Door closed
- The fewer people, the better / My support team only
- Intermittent monitoring so I can move around
- Positive and encouraging talk only
- Wear/bring my own labor clothes
- Play/bring my own music
- Use/bring aromatherapy/essential oils

***You should know:**
The legal authority in the room sits with you, the birthing person. Your provider does not “allow” or “not allow” you to do anything. The choice is yours!

Labor Options

Pain relief options that I plan to use:

(Star the ones you'd like to learn more about.)

- Warm compresses (rice bag/heating pad/hot water bottle)
- Hydrotherapy (warm shower or tub)
- Massage, counter pressure on low back
- Comfort techniques such as hip squeeze, knee press
- Moving freely (walking, squatting, swaying; changing positions often)
- Guided relaxation
- Deep breathing
- Vocalization (making loud, low sounds to release pressure)
- Visualization/focal point
- Nitrous oxide
- Narcotic shots or IV (Stadol, Nubaine, etc.)
- Sterile water injections
- TENS unit (electrostimulation)
- Epidural anesthesia

Positions I'd like to try during labor:

- Upright walking or swaying
- Squatting on a birth stool
- Squatting with a birth ball
- Sitting/rocking/bouncing on a birth ball
- Lying in bed with a peanut ball
- Hands and knees on the bed, floor, or in birthing tub
- Side lying, with or without peanut ball
- Forward leaning on partner, wall, or bed
- Sitting backward on chair or toilet
- Others: _____

Labor Options (cont'd.)

During delivery:

- Use upright position for gravity assistance and comfort
- listen to my body to know when and how to push
- receive directions on how to push from my provider
- see (hand mirror) or touch my baby as s/he makes progress
- receive perineal massage and/or hot compress to prevent tearing while I push
- GIVE PERMISSION before my provider uses episiotomy, forceps, or vacuum delivery

I would like my provider to help during labor by:

- asking for consent before doing any procedure or check
- explaining things as they happen
- giving time to ask questions and talk it over before any non-emergency procedure
- suggesting positions or techniques for comfort and labor progress
- NOT mentioning pain medication unless I request it first
- staying nearby throughout labor with a calm, reassuring presence

After baby is born:

- Wait for the cord to stop pulsing to clamp and cut it. (Delayed cord clamping)
- Collect blood for the cord blood bank. (I'll provide the kit)
- I would like to hold my baby immediately skin-to-skin.
- Perform any checks and procedures while baby is on my chest.
- Please delay routine procedures until after bonding time.
- I would like my baby's first bath to wait until we are at home.
- We will take the placenta home.
- Please send a lactation consultant to help us breastfeed.
- I would like some quiet time and privacy to try breastfeeding on my own first.
- Do not take the baby from my room.
- Do not give the baby formula or water.

Labor Options (cont'd.)

If my provider recommends induction of labor, I would like to:

- be informed about the risks and benefits of induction methods vs. waiting
- do my own research about whether it is medically necessary
- wait for labor to start on its own as long as baby and I are healthy
- try the following methods of induction:

- Castor Oil
- Nipple stimulation (releases natural oxytocin)
- Membrane strip or sweep (during a vaginal exam)
- Cervical ripening gel
- Cervical ripening pill (misoprostol/Cytotec; not FDA approved)
- Foley bulb catheter (non-medication option to ripen cervix)
- IV Pitocin/oxytocin

If my provider recommends cesarean surgery for birth,
I would like to:

- wait for labor to start to get the hormonal benefits for baby and me, if possible
- be informed about the risks and benefits of surgery vs. waiting/natural birth
- do my own research about whether it is medically necessary
- be accompanied by these people in the operating room/recovery room:

-
- learn about "gentle" or "family-centered" cesarean options at my hospital
 - be told what is happening, or use a clear drape so I can see my baby right away
 - hold my baby immediately skin-to-skin
 - hold my baby after s/he is wiped down and checked
 - hold my baby when I am in the recovery room

Think and Reflect

How I feel about advocating for myself & my baby, and making decisions during birth:

Some of my worries about labor and birth are:

I plan to address my worries by:

Some topics I would like to learn more about are:

Some skills I would like to learn or practice to get ready for labor include:

Tasks I would like to complete soon, to help get ready for labor:

My Labor Action Plan

This is not your "Birth Plan". This is your comprehensive "cheat sheet" for labor, for your eyes only! Complete your Labor Action Plan and take it to a visit with your medical provider. Discuss your Labor Action Plan with them, and find out whether your provider is on the same page you are in supporting your vision for birth.

Note: You can find lots more pages and checklists for your Labor Action Plan in our Beyond the Birth Plan birth course! In the birth course, you'll receive an Early Labor Cheat Sheet, Birth Bag Checklist, a doula-approved Comfort Measures Cheat Sheet, Birth Coach tips, Birth Affirmations handout, "What if My Water Breaks?" Cheat Sheet, and more!

People to contact when I'm in labor:

Doula: _____ Phone: _____

When to call: _____

Provider: _____ Phone: _____

When to call: _____

Other: _____ Phone: _____

Other: _____ Phone: _____

Early labor ideas:

To create a relaxing environment at home, I will...

Some items I want to have around me during early labor are...

Last-minute items to pack include...

Timing contractions:

Contractions began at: ___:___ am/pm

They were about _____ apart.

Note time and patterns, when you notice change/progress:

Time	Length	Frequency
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Encouraging labor:

To get labor started, or moving along, at home, I might try:

- Walking around (where? _____)
- Going up and down the stairs sideways
- Bouncing on my birth ball
- Taking a warm shower
- Nipple stimulation (manually or with breast pump)
- Having sex/orgasm (reminder: don't insert anything vaginally if your water has broken!)
- Distracting myself/relaxing by:

Comfort at home:

To manage discomfort at home, I plan to use the following items or techniques:

- Warm compress (rice sock/bag, heating pad, hot water bottle)
- Massage/counter pressure
- Hip squeeze
- Move - Change positions, walk around, sway
- Deep breathing
- Warm bath (ok even if your water has broken!)
- Shower (may also cause contractions to get stronger)
- Birth affirmations for mental focus
- Visualizations
- Vocalizing (low-pitched sounds, moaning, etc.)

Labor positions I want to use:

Change positions every 30 minutes or so to encourage progress!

- Sit/bounce on birth ball
- Lean over birth ball while standing or kneeling
- Sit on the toilet
- Sit backward on a chair or toilet
- One foot up on a chair or stairs, lunge
- Hands and knees
- Squat
- Open knee-chest position on floor
- Side lying, with a pillow or peanut ball to open pelvis
- Other positions, or tips I want to remember:

Things I hope my partner/coach will say/do:

Make a note of how you'd like to be encouraged and supported during labor! Share with your partner or birth coach. If you're stuck for ideas, check out our Birth Coach training and cheat sheets in Beyond the Birth Plan, our full birth course!

Snacks and drinks for labor:

Eating and drinking is ESSENTIAL to have enough energy for getting through labor! What nutritious, protein and/or carb-packed snacks and drinks will you keep nearby?

- Water
- Coconut water
- Electrolyte drink (store-bought/homemade)
- Juice
- Fruit
- Granola/protein bars
- Honey sticks (quick boost of energy!)
- Crackers/pretzels
- Other:

Leaving for your birth place:

Make notes to remember as you leave for your birth place! Special instructions for pets? Does a loved one need to be notified or asked to do something? Do you know where to park at your birth place?

If you're planning a home birth, what last-minute notes do you want to remember?

Admission procedures:

Make any notes about preferences or requests during admission. Most hospitals expect you to get into bed when you arrive, for monitoring your baby, drawing blood work, answering admission questions, and doing a vaginal exam. Birth centers tend to be more flexible and require far fewer admission procedures.

- I will give my labor nurse a copy of my birth plan right away.
- I will stand/lean next to the bed for as much of the admission process as possible.
- I will request a peanut ball immediately for comfort in bed during admission.
- I will lie on my side during admission procedures to lessen discomfort.
- I will ask the medical team to work around my coping tools that are helping me.
- I will decline initial IV placement, or ask to delay it until fluids/meds are necessary.
- I hope to get into the tub or shower as soon as possible.

Making my birth place feel like home:

Things I will bring to make my birthing room feel comfortable and relaxing:

- Bluetooth speaker (waterproof is best!)
- Favorite bathrobe/slippers
- Clothing to wear during labor; a few options/layers
- Essential oil diffuser & oils
- Birth affirmations list or banner
- Focal point (ultrasound photo, baby's name, etc.)
- Flameless candles
- White noise machine
- Other:

Add these items to your Birth Bag Packing List, included in the Beyond the Birth Plan course!

How I feel about pain medication:

How strongly do you feel about your pain relief options? Write down your thoughts so that you and your partner/doula can refer back to this during labor.

Will you feel disappointed in yourself if you use an epidural?

Are there any circumstances when you could justify the use of medications?

Are you open to whatever is offered to you in the moment?

Decision-making during labor:

My priorities in making decisions for myself and my baby during labor include...

(Consider ranking them in order from most important to least important.)

___ Health and safety of baby

___ Health and safety of myself

___ Feeling respected

___ Being well-informed

___ Having time to process information given to me by my provider

___ Learning about options ahead of time, so that I know what my provider is talking about

___ Saying yes to whatever my provider recommends

___ Keeping peace among my birth team by going along with recommendations

_____ 's Birth Plan

Who's in the room:

Person giving birth:

Partner:

Doula/support person:

Preferred nickname:

Estimated due date:

Provider:

I want you to know about me:

What's most important to me about my birth is

I'm most worried about

I hope that you, my caregiver, are

Important background about me:

Thank you for caring for us!

We're so excited to be having our baby at _____! We chose this facility because of the great things we heard about the staff and care here. Thank you for supporting us during such an important time in our lives. We can't wait to tell everyone how amazing you were!

During labor:

- We strongly value privacy, and having a quiet, relaxing space for labor to help oxytocin flow.
- It's important to me to move freely, be upright, and change positions if my body tells me to.
- Please suggest creative, helpful positions and comfort tools; we're sure you have seen it all!
- Please do not suggest pain medication. I will let you know if I feel medication is needed.
- We would like for you to explain everything that is happening along the way.
- Please do not give any interventions without my specific consent. This includes breaking my water, vaginal exams, and anything else you might want to do. We value your recommendations and look forward to partnering with you with informed consent!

During delivery:

- I hope to follow my natural urges to push. Please give me a chance to push on my own before giving direction. Your encouragement and praise is welcome, though!
- I may choose to push upright or out of bed. Thank you for working with me to follow my instincts!
- I would like to see my baby's progress with a mirror, and/or touch my baby's head when possible.
- Please support my perineum with warm compress and counter pressure to help avoid tearing.
- I do not consent to an episiotomy. If you believe an assisted delivery is necessary (episiotomy, forceps, vacuum), please inform me beforehand.

After delivery:

- I would like to hold my baby right away, skin to skin. Please delay routine checks and procedures until after our first hour together, unless there is a need for swift care.
- Please delay cord clamping until it has stopped pulsing.
- Please do not pull on my placenta to help it detach.
- We do / do not wish to take our placenta home with us.
- I would like to try to breastfeed on my own first and will ask for help when needed.

_____ 's Birth Plan

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During labor:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

During delivery:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

After delivery:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____