

A room to grow with: Create the perfect nursery

By Mary E. Hart/ Baby
Friday, April 21, 2006

A ceiling, a floor and four blank walls may never seem quite as daunting as when you're setting up your child's first room. Forget about wondering when your baby will sleep through the night after it's born... your main worry right now is what your baby will sleep in; what the room will look like; and just where all that stuff you got at the baby shower will possibly go. Organizing and decorating your infant's room can be a piece of cake when you know about the ins and outs of murals, magnetic paint, dressers, storage and how to plan the room in advance for the toddler years.

When you're thinking of a mural for your infant's room, you won't know what your child will like, but you can easily match the theme of the mural to your or your husband's likes. "If a client is having a boy," states Antoinette Virgilio of Magical Murals (magical-murals.com), "I'll ask what the husband liked to do as a child and design a mural along those lines. I've also painted murals from favorite books that the parents have bought for their child, like Peter Rabbit or Winnie the Pooh."

Scared that your child won't like the mural when he or she grows up or that the next child to use the room won't be of the same gender? "It's very easy to transition a mural from being for a boy to a girl," says Virgilio. "Two weeks ago, I worked on re-doing a mural that originally was in a little boy's room and had blue and yellow stripes across the bottom and sheep over the crib with grass. The family is now having a little girl and they purchased particular green and pink striped bedding. I changed the stripes in the bottom of the mural to green and pink and then worked with the rest of the mural that was already there by adding pink tones and lilacs along with the sheep."

If you don't know the gender of your child, you might be thinking of going for a light yellow room. "Don't be afraid of color," says Justine Bassett of The Bee's Knees Design (beeskneesdesign.com). "It's only paint and can easily be painted over. Many new parents go straight for pastel tones for their infant's room, and then later find that all of their child's toys are in primary colors. A primary, bold color can be great for your child's room, even if it's just on one wall."

You and your child will see the color of the paint you choose, but what's underneath the paint can bring about much joy to your child. "Consider using magnetic paint underneath the regular paint," suggests Bassett. "It goes on grey, which is 'invisible' and then you can paint over it with any regular latex paint. By using magnetic paint above your baby's changing table, you can put up pictures for your infant to view while being changed. Later, you can put up letters and other shapes for your child to learn." Having pictures above the changing table is a great way for your child to "see" his or her grandparents or uncles/aunts on a daily basis, especially if they live far away.

Babies can enjoy changing time, but they also need time to explore. Even at a very young age, babies love to see the world around them. "Create an area close to the floor that your baby can use to explore," suggests Bassett. "Use a lot of black, white and red visuals in that area as those colors provide the most visual stimulation



Be creative when decorating your nursery. Don't be afraid of colors, says Justine Bassett of Bee's Knees Design. (Courtesy photo)

at a young age. This area should also contain an unbreakable mirror (which can be found in teacher supply stores) hung close to the floor with a little bar secured steadily around it. The baby can use the bar to try to stand up and will relish being able to see him/herself standing up. Later on, the bar can be used as a ballet barre for blooming ballet dancers."

Babies and toddlers will find it easy to discover and explore in a safe room. "Make sure when you're shopping to purchase safety locks for wall sockets and window locks," states Erika Salloux, a personal organizer (living-harmony.org). You should also make sure to affix all of the furniture to the walls securely so nothing will topple over.

Regarding furniture, if you're torn between a changing table or a dresser, pieces with longevity or multi-functions are your best bet. "You should always think about buying 'today and tomorrow' pieces," advises Salloux. "Buy pieces that can grow and change with your child down the road. A dresser with a secure changing pad on top makes a great changing table. Or, purchase items that are changeable from IKEA, such as the DIKTAD changing table, which converts easily to a chest of drawers; or the SNIGLAR changing table, which can be used as a table or shelves after the changing table is no longer needed."

Everything you received at the shower (all of those clothes and hooded towels) will find their rightful place in a well-organized closet. "Set up a bar in your child's closet that your child can reach when he/she is mobile," says Salloux. "This helps to teach your child empowerment and independence. Later on, you can hang canvas shelves that are labeled by the days of the week and set outfits for each day into each shelf for your child."

If your child's closet is like most and has a shelf that's right at the very top, "get a stool," recommends Salloux. "This will help you gain vertical space by utilizing every inch of that top shelf and will help your child reach all the bars in the closet later on for more independence."

Visit Parents and Kids online at [Websites for Baby Décor](#) for fantastic online resources to Baby Decor.

What You Need for Your Baby's Room

Erika Salloux and Siobhan O'Neill offer this list of necessary items that will help you organize your child's room.

A stool for the closet to reach the top shelf

Toy storage unit/s

Hangers

A comfortable rocker with a pillow

Breast feeding donut (Boppy pillow)

Hanging shelves for closet

Safety clamps on window

Pack & Play

Bookshelf or cubbies

Changing table/dresser

Shelving above the changing table and off to the side of baby

A hanging toy for distraction during changes

Diaper pail

Wipes warmer

Mesh hamper

Mary Hart is a mom, an editor and a freelance writer living in Methuen. She can be reached at mehart@gmail.com.