

# Birth Plan Philosophy and Guidance

A birth plan is a way to share your wishes, needs, and preferences with those supporting you during labor and birth. It gives insight into who you are, how you've prepared, and what matters to you, whether you're planning a spontaneous birth at home, a scheduled induction, a planned cesarean in the hospital, or anything in between.

A birth plan is also a tool for you to learn, get informed, and feel empowered. While birth is a natural human event, it is also unpredictable. You cannot know the exact day or week labor will begin, how long it will last, how it will feel, how it will progress, or how you will respond.

You can, however, educate yourself about the wide range of possibilities and learn how you might respond in different situations. Writing a birth plan allows you to decide on your ideals and dreams, identify what will help create the most supportive environment for your birth, and note who can best assist you in achieving those arrangements.

## Headings You Could Use for Your Birth Plan

- **Who is present**
- **Communication preferences** (language, tone, who speaks on your behalf)
- **Environment** (lighting, music, scents, privacy)
- **Positions for labor and birth**
- **Monitoring preferences** (minimal monitoring and minimal dilation checks, or following midwife's suggestions)
- **Pain relief options** (non-pharmaceutical and pharmaceutical)
- **Birthing pool** (hospital: plastic hygiene liner and pump paid in advance; home: pool rental with all necessary equipment)
- **Pushing preferences** (instinctive pushing, guidance if requested, time for natural stretching)
- **Perineum care** (warm compresses, oil, local massage)
- **Cord clamping** (before/after placenta delivery, when cord stops pulsating, silicone clamp if brought)
- **Who will cut the cord**
- **Vitamin K** (oral or injection)
- **Feeding your baby** (exclusive colostrum, combination feeding, formula)
- **Special care situations** (partner with baby skin-to-skin if baby or mother needs extra care)
- **Announcing the birth** (who will announce, how)
- **Use of camera/video**
- **Eating and drinking** (eat and drink according to your needs during labor, safe unless cesarean is needed)

## Extra Birth Planning Tips & Tricks

**Inform yourself:** Learn about all your options and the policies at your place of birth.

**Own it:** Write down your wishes, arrange them by priority, and keep your plan short and clear.

**Share:** Discuss with your partner, doula, and care provider. Give copies to everyone involved.

**Be creative:** Stay open to finding creative solutions that work for you at the moment. Creative means adapting in ways that help you feel supported. You can also add words or images to your birth plan to express your needs.

**Consider flexibility:** Are you flexible? If so, let your team know.

**Express your feelings:** Whatever comes up, express it in your own way.

**Ask for what you want:** You are giving birth, so what you and your body need should be met.

**Positive self-talk:** “I am birthing my baby,” “I am strong,” “I can do this.”

**Visualization:** You may visualize your cervix softening, your body relaxing, and your baby moving down. You can speak it in your heart or out loud, and let your team know if they should help you with visualization or offer it for you to decide if it feels right.

## An Example of a Hospital Birth Plan

**I choose hospital birth as for me it's the safe place to give birth, or I need to for medical reasons, or I include hospital birth preferences in case a transfer from home becomes necessary or I change my mind.**

### Environment

- Only essential people in the room (no trainees).
- Low lighting and a quiet atmosphere.
- I may use headphones/earplugs to stay in my own cocoon.

### Positions for Labor and Birth

- I'd like to try being active, upright, in water, kneeling, squatting, or lying down.
- I'd like to be guided by my midwife, doula, birthing partner, or a combination of these.
- If the birthing pool is available, I'd like to use it either for this phase or the entire birth, depending on my needs and the reason for hospital transfer.

### Pain Relief

- I may use gas and air (nitrous oxide, 'laughing gas'), remifentanyl, or an epidural upon request, or stay with non-pharmaceutical options depending on my needs at that moment.

### Pushing

- Push instinctively, with coaching if I ask for it or it's suggested before doing it.
- Wait for the urge to push unless the baby is in distress, and not be pressured with time to allow for natural stretching.
- I'd like to feel my baby's head while pushing or see it with a mirror.

### **Perineum**

- Please use all possible support to protect the perineum, such as warm compresses, oil, and local massage.

### **Cord Clamping and Cutting**

- Cord clamping only after the placenta has been born and the cord has stopped pulsating, using the silicone clamp I brought.
- My partner wants to cut the cord.

### **Placenta**

- Natural delivery methods first before oxytocin shot.

### **Aftercare for Baby**

- All baby procedures done next to me or on me.
- Vitamin K - oral is preferred.

## **An Example of a Home Birth Plan**

### **Environment**

- Only essential people in the room (no trainees).
- Low lighting and a quiet atmosphere.

### **Positions for Labor and Birth**

- I'd like to try being active, upright, in water, kneeling, squatting, or lying down.
- I'd like to be guided by my midwife, doula, birthing partner, or a combination of these.
- I'd like a birth pool available either for this phase or the entire birth, depending on what I feel like.

### **Monitoring**

- Minimal monitoring and minimal dilation checks.

### **Pushing**

- Push instinctively, with coaching if I ask for it or it's suggested before doing it.
- Wait for the urge to push unless the baby is in distress, and not be pressured with time to allow for natural stretching.
- I'd like to feel my baby's head while pushing or see it with a mirror.

### **Perineum**

- Please use all possible support to protect the perineum, such as warm compresses, oil, and local massage.

## Cord Clamping and Cutting

- Cord clamping only after the placenta has been born and the cord has stopped pulsating, using the silicone clamp I brought.
- My partner does not want to cut the cord.

## Placenta

- Natural delivery methods first before oxytocin shot, for one whole hour unless the midwife suggests otherwise (for example, due to bleeding).

## Aftercare for Baby

- All baby procedures done next to me or on me.
- Vitamin K - oral is preferred.

## Closing Note

Now it's your turn to make this truly yours.

You can create your birth plan as a **table** or **open document** with space to write your answers.

We can work together on it in **Google Drive** so we can add and edit in real-time, or you can **print it out** and keep it on your dining table. You and your birth partner can take turns filling it in, using **different colored pens** to show who wrote what, adding to each other's thoughts, reacting to what's already there, and letting the plan grow with you.

This way, your birth plan becomes a living, breathing, changing document.

## **Birth Plan Template**

This template is designed to help you and your birth partner think through your wishes and preferences for labor, birth, and the early moments with your baby. You can fill it out together online (e.g., Google Drive) or print it to write on with different colored pens. Feel free to add, skip, or change sections so it truly reflects your needs.

**Who is present:**

**Communication preferences: language, tone, who speaks on your behalf?**

**Environment (lighting, music, scents, privacy)? what to take in the bag?**

**Positions for labor and birth:**

**Monitoring preferences -minimal monitoring and minimal dilation checks, or following midwife's suggestions?**

**Pain relief options (non-pharmaceutical and pharmaceutical)**

**Birthing pool (hospital or home)? when?**

**Pushing preferences (instinctive pushing, guidance if requested, time for natural stretching)**

**Perineum care (warm compresses, oil, local massage)?**

**Cord clamping (before/after placenta delivery, when cord stops pulsating, silicone clamp if brought)**

**Who will cut the cord?**

**Vitamin K yes/ no? (oral or injection)?**

**Feeding your baby (exclusive colostrum, combination feeding, formula):**

**Special care situations (partner with baby skin-to-skin if baby if mother needs extra care or?):**

**Announcing the birth (who will announce, how)? announcing the sex?**

**Use of camera/video: yes / no? when? is it ok also at c section?**

**Eating and drinking (eat and drink according to your needs during labor is safe unless cesarean is needed), what to bring with me?what to prepare?**

