

HOW TO: Choose The Right Baby Monitor

If you're a first-time parent, you're probably wondering if it's worth buying a baby monitor. What a monitor offers you is peace of mind that your baby is okay and that you'll hear their cries no matter where you are in your home. It's a comforting extra set of ears – or eyes if you opt for a video monitor – for parents to watch over their sleeping baby without having to be in the same room.



How do I choose a baby monitor?

Baby monitors have undergone an impressive evolution over the years, progressing from simple walkie-talkie style contraptions to tech-savvy buys that offer features like video recording, playing lullabies and other smart innovations designed to make parenting easier. With so many choices, how do you know which baby monitor to buy? Here is everything you need to know.

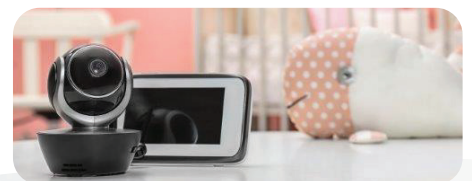
What type of baby monitor do I need?

While there are dozens of monitors available on the market, one of the first decisions you should make is whether to get a baby monitor that connects to wi-fi, or one that doesn't.

What's the difference? Well, they differ in three basic ways:

- **Tech.** Wi-fi monitors are connected to the Internet and usually work via an app that you download to your smartphone. Because of this, there can be a slight delay (around 10 seconds) in the transmission of the signal. Non wi-fi monitors are controlled using the handheld receiver and don't need to be connected to the Internet in order to work – there is no transmission delay with these models.
- **Usage.** Non wi-fi monitors need to be within a certain distance of the transmitter that's placed in your child's bedroom (for example, 350 metres) so they are limited by range. If you have a wi-fi monitor you can check on your baby via your smartphone while you're out at the shops or in the office, and there's no need to carry around a receiver.
- **Security.** Because wi-fi monitors are connected to the Internet, they are susceptible to hacking, but there are a number of security measures you can put in place, and most come with in-built security settings. Non wif-fi monitors are considered almost unhackable.

You may want a unit with two receivers so you can keep one in your bedroom for nighttime, and another for when you're downstairs or elsewhere in the house.



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What should I look for when buying a baby monitor?

There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing the right monitor for you and your baby but some of the more important ones are:

Range. Does the monitor offer sufficient range for you to hear your baby's cries if you're downstairs or in the garden? And does the handheld receiver have an out-of-range alert for if you venture too far?

Standby time. Does the unit – and the receivers – connect to power or run on batteries? Does the receiver have decent standby time so you know how long you can go between charging it, or replacing the batteries?

Soundbar lights. These offer you a visual display (using flashing lights) of how loudly your child is crying – handy for when you're watching tv or to help you determine how distressed your little one is.

Temperature sensor. Some units can read the temperature in your little one's room and alert you if it dips too low or rises to uncomfortable temperatures.

Two-way audio. Instead of just one-way communication, this feature allows you to talk to your baby when they need reassurance.

Extra features: some transmitters can play lullabies, emit white noise or double up as night lights.

While most baby monitors are sold as basic sets of transmitter and receiver, many brands offer optional extras that you can purchase separately, like additional receivers for your partner, cameras and breathing sensor mats so you can essentially build exactly what you want.



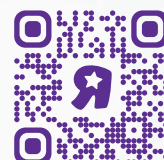
Do I need a baby monitor with video?

One of the biggest advancements in baby monitors is that many models now offer video surveillance so you can visually check on your little one without going into their room and risking waking them up (bonus: you don't even need to get out of bed for middle-of-the-night checks).

If you choose a video-enabled baby monitor then check if you can adjust the camera angle (panning, tilting or zooming) to get a better view, whether it has a wall-mounted or tabletop stand camera, and make sure it has night vision technology. If you've chosen a non wi-fi monitor, check that the receiver has a high-resolution colour or black and white LCD screen. If you're using a wi-fi monitor, the video feed will stream via the app on your smartphone, and you may even have the option to record.

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Should I get a baby monitor with a movement mat?

Movement or sensor mats are a relatively new development and some parents choose to use one as an added alert measure so they know if there's a potential problem, such as your baby stopping breathing. The mats have sensor pads that keep track of your baby's movements and an alarm will sound if it doesn't detect movement for a set period of time – on average, about 20 seconds. In this way, sensor mats can offer parents added assurances against SIDS, but studies haven't conclusively shown them to prevent it. Most movement pads don't work effectively with memory foam mattresses so check your crib's mattress before purchasing.

How to protect your baby monitor from hacking?

- If your baby monitor comes with a pre-installed security code – something like 1234 or 0000 – then change it immediately. And don't choose an easy password like your baby's name or birthday.
- Make sure your modem or router is secure as this is the most likely area of weakness when someone tries to hack your baby monitor.
- Use two-factor authentication whenever possible.
- Install app updates as they become available.
- If you aren't currently using the remote-access feature, turn it off.

How much does a baby monitor cost?

Expect to spend between R500 for a basic model, and upwards of R3999 for an audio/video monitor with a camera, movement mat and all the bells and whistles.



Notes:



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