



The Queer Parenting Partnership Birth Preferences Template Prompt Guide

Hello and welcome to The Queer Parenting Partnership's Birth Preferences Template.

We've created this resource to help you think about what matters to you during labour and birth and communicate those preferences with the people supporting you.

We call them *birth preferences* rather than a birth plan because birth doesn't always follow a plan. Having preferences doesn't mean deciding exactly how your birth must happen. Instead, it gives you an opportunity to explore your options, think about how you'd like to be cared for and record the things you would like your care team to know.

The template is designed as a worksheet that you can print, fill in and make your own. Write on it, annotate it, add things, cross things out and ignore anything that isn't relevant to you.

There is no single right way to give birth, and there is no single right way to complete this template. The prompts below are simply there to help you think about the things that *might* matter to you.

You may also find it helpful to discuss your preferences with your midwife or maternity team during pregnancy. They can explain which options are available in your circumstances and locally, giving you an opportunity to ask questions before labour begins.

Your preferences can change at any time. They are yours.

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With love and best wishes,

The Queer Parenting Partnership





Birth Preference Prompts

Before thinking about individual stages of labour, it can be useful to record some information about you.

This isn't just about your medical history. Your name, pronouns, relationships, communication preferences, access needs and the language you use for your body can all affect how safe, comfortable and respected you feel during your care.

General Information

You might want your care team to know:

- Your name and pronouns
- The names and pronouns of your partner, co-parent, doula or other support people
- How you describe your relationships with one another
- The role you would like each person to have during labour and birth
- Any terminology you would or wouldn't like used for you or your family

Don't assume everyone will automatically understand your family structure. Writing it down can reduce the number of times you need to explain it.

A Holistic Snapshot of You

You are more than the pregnancy information in your medical notes.

Consider whether there is anything about your health, circumstances, identity or experiences that you would like the people caring for you to know.

This might include:

- Relevant medical conditions or medical history
- Information specific to your pregnancy
- Allergies
- Access requirements
- Dietary requirements
- Mental health considerations
- Cultural practices or preferences that are important to you
- Religious or faith-related preferences, if relevant to you
- Whether you've had a baby before
- Anything you would like your care team to know about your hopes, worries or feelings about birth
- Sensitive information or previous experiences that may affect how you would like to be cared for



You don't have to disclose trauma or explain *why* something is important to you for your preferences to be respected.

How Would You Like to Be Cared For?

Different people want different things from the people caring for them during labour.

Some people find frequent reassurance comforting. Others prefer to be left largely undisturbed unless support is needed.

You might want to think about:

- How much interaction you would like from your care team
- Whether you'd prefer lots of verbal encouragement or a quieter environment
- Whether you'd like support offered proactively or prefer to ask when you need it
- How you'd like options and recommendations explained to you
- Whether you'd like information communicated directly to you or with support from your partner, co-parent or doula
- Whether you'd prefer questions to be asked between contractions or surges where possible
- How you'd like discussions about pain relief to be approached

What Language Would You Like People to Use?

The words used to describe your body, pregnancy and birth can matter.

You might want to record:

- Anatomical terms you're comfortable with
- Words you don't want used for your body
- The language you use for labour and birth
- Hypnobirthing terminology you prefer
- Gendered terms you would like used or avoided

You can also complete our Body Map if you'd like a clearer way to communicate your preferred terminology.



Early Labour

Early labour can look very different from one person to another. You may find it useful to think about the environment, people and activities that could help you feel comfortable during this stage.

Where Would You Like to Be?

Depending on your circumstances and care plan, you might want to think about where you would feel most comfortable during early labour.

For example:

- At home
- Out and about
- With family or friends
- Somewhere quiet and private

What Would You Like to Do?

You might want to:

- Eat or drink
- Rest or sleep
- Move around
- Listen to music
- Watch something
- Spend time with people you trust
- Have some quiet time

There doesn't need to be an agenda. Think about what might help you feel comfortable and supported.

Comfort Measures

You may want to explore the different comfort and pain-management options that could be available to you.

These might include:

- TENS
- A bath or shower
- Hypnobirthing techniques
- Aromatherapy



- Movement and different positions
- Medication such as paracetamol, where appropriate

Your midwife or maternity team can help you understand which options may be appropriate for your circumstances.

Who Would You Like Around You?

Consider who you would like to support you during early labour.

This might include:

- A partner or co-parent
- A doula
- Family
- Friends
- Another trusted person

You might also want different people around you at different stages.



Active Labour

As labour progresses, your preferences might include where you'd like to give birth, how you'd like to be supported and how you want conversations about monitoring, examinations and pain management to happen.

Where Would You Prefer to Give Birth?

Depending on your circumstances and the services available locally, possible birth settings may include:

- Home
- An alongside midwifery unit
- A freestanding midwifery unit
- An obstetric unit

If you're unsure about the differences between these settings or which options are available to you, you can discuss them with your maternity team.

Who Would You Like With You?

Record the people you would ideally like present during labour and birth.

You might also want to consider how you feel about other people being present, such as student midwives or other healthcare professionals involved in your care.

Observations and Examinations

During labour, you may be offered different observations and examinations.

The existing template includes examples such as:

- Blood pressure
- Pulse
- Temperature
- Respiratory rate
- Vaginal examinations to assess cervical dilation

You might want to think about how you'd like these procedures explained to you and what would help you feel comfortable before and during them.



Monitoring Your Baby's Heart Rate

There are different approaches to monitoring your baby's heart rate during labour, and what is recommended may depend on your circumstances and how labour progresses.

You can use this section to record:

- Questions you have about monitoring
- How you'd like monitoring to be discussed with you
- Preferences you have explored with your care team
- What would help you feel comfortable if recommendations change during labour

How Would You Like Information Communicated?

Think about how you would like the results of observations, examinations or monitoring explained.

For example, you might prefer:

- Information to be explained directly to you
- Your partner, co-parent or doula to help you process information
- Clear explanations of what a result means rather than simply being given numbers
- Time to ask questions where circumstances allow

Non-Pharmaceutical Comfort Measures

You may want to explore options such as:

- A TENS machine
- A birth pool
- Hypnobirthing techniques
- Eating and drinking where appropriate
- Movement and changing positions

Pharmaceutical Pain Relief

You might also want to learn about the pain-relief options available in your planned place of birth.

The original template includes:

- Gas and air
- Opioid pain relief
- Epidural



You don't have to decide in advance exactly what you will or won't use. Your preferences can change during labour.

Your Environment

What would help your birth environment feel comfortable?

You might prefer:

- Dimmed lighting
- Music or a particular playlist
- Quiet voices
- Minimal conversation
- Particular comfort items
- As few interruptions as possible



Second Stage: Birthing Your Baby

As your baby is being born, you may have preferences about communication, positions, the people supporting you and what happens immediately afterwards.

How Would You Like People to Communicate With You?

Would you prefer your care provider to:

- Offer active guidance and encouragement
- Be present but remain relatively quiet
- Stay in the background where possible
- Communicate primarily through your chosen support person
- Use or avoid particular words or phrases

You can record anything that would help you feel supported and involved.

How Would You Like to Birth Your Baby?

You may want to explore different positions and environments for birth.

The original template suggests considering:

- Giving birth in water
- Upright positions
- Giving birth on a bed

You don't need to choose a single position in advance. You may want the freedom to move and find whatever feels right at the time.

Who Would You Like to Receive Your Baby?

Depending on the circumstances, you may have preferences about who receives your baby as they're born.

This might be:

- You
- Your partner or co-parent
- Your midwife

You can discuss what's possible with your care team beforehand.



Skin-to-Skin Contact

If you would like skin-to-skin contact, you might want to record:

- Whether you'd like your baby placed skin-to-skin after birth
- Who you would like to have skin-to-skin contact with
- What you would prefer if immediate skin-to-skin isn't possible

Cord Clamping and Cutting

You may want to discuss your options for umbilical cord clamping and cutting with your care team.

Consider whether you have preferences around:

- When the cord is clamped
- Who cuts the cord
- Whether there are circumstances in which your preferences might change

If Circumstances Change

Sometimes birth takes an unexpected direction and additional intervention is recommended.

The original template prompts you to consider circumstances involving:

- Forceps
- Ventouse
- Emergency caesarean birth

You may not be able to decide exactly what happens in advance, but you *can* think about how you'd like to be supported and communicated with if circumstances change.

For example:

- Who would you like involved in discussions?
- How would you like information explained?
- Are there particular words you'd like used or avoided?
- What would help you feel involved in decisions?
- Which of your other birth preferences would you like maintained wherever possible?

Discovering or Announcing Your Baby's Sex

If you don't already know your baby's sex, you might have preferences about how or when you find out.



You could consider:

- Whether you'd like somebody to announce it
- Who you'd like that person to be
- Whether you'd rather discover it yourself
- Whether you'd prefer not to make an announcement at all

You can also record whether you'd like photographs or videos taken during or immediately after birth, and who you're comfortable having take them.

If You're Having a Caesarean Birth

Birth preferences aren't only for vaginal birth.

Whether your caesarean is planned or becomes recommended during labour, there may still be aspects of your experience that you would like to discuss with your care team.

You might want to think about:

- Music
- Lighting
- Whether you'd prefer quieter voices
- Whether you have a preference about which hand or arm is used for cannulas, where clinically possible
- Placement of monitoring equipment where options are available
- Whether you'd like the screen lowered as your baby is born
- Whether you'd like skin-to-skin contact and, if so, with whom
- Your preferences around cord clamping
- Who you'd like with you
- How you'd like your baby to be introduced to you
- How you'd like your partner, co-parent or support person to be involved
- Any language or communication preferences you'd like the theatre team to know about

You may want to discuss these preferences with your maternity team beforehand so you can understand which options may be possible in your circumstances.



The Early Hours

Your birth preferences can continue beyond the moment your baby is born.

The first few hours may involve delivering the placenta, examinations, feeding, skin-to-skin contact and newborn observations. Thinking about these things beforehand can help you identify questions you'd like to ask and preferences you'd like your care team to know about.

Delivering the Placenta

You may be offered different approaches to managing the third stage of labour.

Use this section to record any preferences or questions you'd like to discuss with your midwife or maternity team.

Checking for and Repairing Tears

You may want to think about how you'd like examinations and any necessary suturing to be communicated and approached.

If examinations or procedures involving your genitals are particularly difficult for you, you can record anything that could help you feel safer or more comfortable.

You don't need to explain why.

The Golden Hour

Some families value having a period of relatively uninterrupted time together immediately after birth, sometimes referred to as the golden hour.

Think about what you'd like those first moments to look like where circumstances allow.

Feeding Your Baby

There are many different ways families feed their babies.

Depending on your plans and circumstances, you might want to record preferences relating to:

- Breastfeeding or chestfeeding
- Expressed milk
- Formula feeding
- Bottle feeding
- Combination feeding



- Who you would like to feed your baby
- How you would like partners or co-parents involved

You may also want to record the language you'd like care providers to use when discussing feeding.

Vitamin K

You may be offered vitamin K for your baby after birth.

Use this section to record any questions you have, information you've discussed with your care team and your preferences.

Newborn Observations

You may also want to consider your preferences around routine newborn checks, such as:

- Weighing
- Measurements
- Physical examination

You might want to think about when you'd prefer these to happen, whether you'd like somebody with your baby and how you'd like the process explained.

Your Environment

What would you like the room to feel like after birth?

Perhaps you'd like:

- Quiet and calm
- Dimmed lighting
- Music
- Time alone as a family
- Particular people present
- Somebody else to communicate the news of the birth to loved ones



How Would You Like to Be Supported?

Finally, think about how much interaction you'd like from your care team during these early hours.

You might prefer:

- Some uninterrupted time
- Your care provider to remain nearby but in the background
- More active reassurance and support
- Your partner, co-parent or another person to take the lead in communicating with others

As with every other part of this template, there isn't a correct answer.

These Are Your Birth Preferences

You don't need to create the "perfect" birth preferences sheet.

You don't need an opinion on every possible decision, and completing this template doesn't lock you into any of the choices you've written down.

Use the sections that help. Ignore the ones that don't. Add your own. Change your mind.

Most importantly, use this template as a way to think about what helps you feel informed, respected, comfortable and involved in your care.

Your birth preferences are about you, your baby and your family — they don't need to look like anybody else's.