

FREE GUIDE · FOR FIRST-TIME DADS

The First-Time *Dad Guide*

Every trimester, labor & delivery, and postpartum —
what's happening with her, what's happening with the baby,
and what your actual job is through all of it.

London Steel

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A word from a dad who's in it

Hey, I'm London. My wife and I are expecting our first — a baby girl — and when we found out, I went looking for the guide I actually needed. Not a medical textbook. Not a comedy bit about diapers. Just a straight answer to one question: what is my job in all of this?

I couldn't find it in one place, so I started writing it down. This is that notebook. Everything here is either something I've lived in these last months or something a dad ahead of me drilled into me before I needed it. Where I'm still walking toward it — labor, delivery, the newborn weeks — I'll tell you plainly how I'm preparing.

Take what's useful. Send it to a dad who's a few weeks behind you. That's how this is supposed to travel.

— *London*

First Trimester

Weeks 1-12 · The invisible season

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH HER

Her body is building a person and a whole new organ to feed them, and the hormones doing it do not care about her schedule. Nausea that is not just in the morning. Smells hitting her like a wall — food, trash, cologne, the fridge. An exhaustion that sleep doesn't fix. And underneath all of it, most days, a quiet fear she won't say out loud.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE BABY

Almost everything foundational happens here: the heartbeat, the brain, the organs — built in weeks when nobody can see a thing. She can feel all of it. The world can see none of it. Remember that gap; it's the whole chapter.

YOUR JOB

- ✓ Believe her about how she feels, even when she "looks fine." Most of this trimester is invisible to you and very real to her.
- ✓ Take the smells out of the house — trash, leftovers, strong food. Some weeks, your cologne is not exempt.
- ✓ Food runs without commentary. What she can eat will change daily. Whatever works today, go get it, no face about it.
- ✓ Let her sleep whenever sleep comes, and guard it like it matters — because it does.
- ✓ Show up to the early appointments. There's a heartbeat coming that you do not want to hear about secondhand.
- ✓ Start praying over her and the baby — out loud, where she can hear it.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

It feels like forever, and it is temporary. Both are true at the same time. And she will remember how you treated her in the weeks she felt the worst — long after she's forgotten who bought what.

Second Trimester

Weeks 13-27 • The golden window

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH HER

For most women the fog lifts: energy comes back, appetite comes back, the bump shows up. New things arrive too — back and hip aches, a body changing faster than her clothes can keep up with, and a mind that has moved on to planning everything.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE BABY

The anatomy scan around week 20 checks the baby from head to toe. And sometime in here, the baby's hearing switches on — voices first, muffled but real. Your baby is already learning what you sound like. Kicks start as flutters and become unmistakable.

YOUR JOB

- ✓ Walk into the anatomy scan with the right seriousness. You're going in to see the baby. She's going in to find out if the baby is okay. Match her.
- ✓ Start talking to the bump. It will feel weird. Do it anyway — tell them about your day, read out loud, hand on her stomach before bed.
- ✓ Heavy lifting is yours now: the nursery, the furniture, the hauling, the building.
- ✓ Handle the boring prep while you have energy: pediatrician shortlist, insurance questions, your leave paperwork.
- ✓ Keep dating your wife on purpose. This is the window where it's easiest — don't waste it.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

This is the calmest this gets for a while, and it's not an accident — it's a runway. Use it to prepare, and use it to enjoy her. The third trimester is a different sport.

Third Trimester

Weeks 28-birth • The long nights

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH HER

Sleep falls apart. No position stays comfortable — back, hips, heartburn, a bladder with no room left — and every time she finally drifts off, something wakes her. Then her mind starts racing: labor, readiness, everything that could go wrong. She's physically exhausted with a brain that won't turn off, for weeks — and she's still showing up every single day.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE BABY

Growing fast and running out of room. Their hearing is fully online now — they respond to voices and touch, and the voice they're learning best is the one that talks to them most. Bonding isn't a thing that starts at birth. For them, it already started.

YOUR JOB

- ✓ Protect her sleep like it's your job — because now it literally is. Take the mornings: the house, the responsibilities, all of it, so she can sleep when sleep finally comes.
- ✓ Give her standing permission to wake you in the night if she can't sleep. She probably never will. Knowing she can is what keeps her from feeling alone in it.
- ✓ Don't try to fix what you can't fix. She doesn't need a solution for the sleep. She needs to know you see what it's costing her.
- ✓ Keep talking to your baby. Don't wait until she's born and start from scratch.
- ✓ Hospital bag packed by week 36. Car seat installed before you think you need it. Route to the hospital driven once, on purpose.
- ✓ Tell her she's doing an amazing job. Not sometimes. Every day.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

The last weeks feel slow to everybody except the man who isn't carrying them. Your whole job is making sure she doesn't carry them alone.

Labor & Delivery

The day itself · How I'm preparing

BEFORE IT STARTS

Know her birth preferences and have them written down where you can find them at 3 a.m. Know where the bag is, where the car is, and how long the drive actually takes. Eat and sleep when you can in the early hours — you're no good to anybody empty.

IN THE ROOM

When she can't talk, you're her voice. Nurses and doctors will look to you — know what she wants before you're asked. And understand going in: you will watch the person you love most be in pain you cannot take away. Staying present anyway is not the backup plan. It is the job.

YOUR JOB

- ✓ Be the calm one. She gets your steadiness, not your panic.
- ✓ Time contractions. Track what's asked. Phones, updates, and visitor questions are yours to field — never hers.
- ✓ Cold water, ice chips, a hand to crush, pressure on her back. Small things, done without being asked twice, are the whole job.
- ✓ Do not eat a full meal in front of a woman who can't eat. Step out if you have to eat.
- ✓ Pray out loud if she wants it. Say less than you think you should. Stay closer than feels useful.
- ✓ When the baby comes, get your hands on them too — skin to skin isn't only for mom. They've been learning your voice for months. Let them meet it.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Every dad ahead of me says the same thing: the room changes temperature the second your child is in it. Let yourself feel that. You don't have to hold it together every second of the biggest day of your life.

Postpartum

The fourth trimester · The weeks nobody films

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH HER

She is healing from something major — whether the world can see it or not. Hormones crash, then level. Feeding is a full-time job with a steep learning curve, and her body is doing recovery and production at the same time, on broken sleep.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE BABY

They eat, they sleep in fragments, and they want to be held almost constantly. That's not a problem to solve — that's the design. They spent nine months never once being alone or cold or hungry. You're the adjustment team.

YOUR JOB

- ✓ Run the house — food, dishes, laundry, the door — so her only jobs are healing and feeding.
- ✓ Take a real night shift so she gets at least one unbroken stretch of sleep. A rested mom is not a luxury; it's the foundation.
- ✓ Learn the difference between the baby blues and the warning signs. Sadness that doesn't lift after about two weeks, numbness, rage, or scary thoughts is not weakness — it's a phone call to the doctor, and you might be the one who has to make it.
- ✓ Visitors earn their visit: they bring food, they wash something, they hold the baby so she can shower — then they go home.
- ✓ Keep choosing your wife in small daily ways. She's still your person, not just the baby's mother.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

The first two weeks are survival, and survival is enough. The joy comes in waves between the hard parts — and then one morning they're looking at you like they know you. They do. They've been learning your voice since before they were born.

Same job, every stage

Every chapter of this asks the same thing of you in a different costume: see her, carry what's yours to carry, and be present before you try to be useful. That's the whole guide, and it's enough to build a family on.

If this helped you, follow along — I post what I'm learning as I learn it, and the music that comes out of it. And send this guide to one dad who needs it. That's the deal.

— *London · @london.steel · officiallondonsteel.com*