

Swaddling

Babies can be swaddled as soon as they're born. It makes them feel cozy and warm, like they're "back home." All babies don't need to be swaddled. Many calm babies do well with no swaddling at all. But the fussier your baby is, the more she'll need to be swaddled. Tight bundling is so successful at soothing infants that some babies even have to be unswaddled to wake them up for feedings.

Swaddling should always be snug. Never put your baby into bed with loose blankets. Make sure her swaddling is snugly wrapped around her so it doesn't loosen during the night. Loose blankets can get around a baby's face and contribute to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). In traditional cultures, parents swaddle their babies tightly because loose wraps invariably pop open.

Although some Americans worry about tight swaddling, most of the time bundling fails because it is done too loosely. To make sure your wrapping is not too tight, slide your hand between the blanket and your baby's chest. It should feel as snug as your hand slid between your pregnant belly and the elastic waistband of your pants at the end of your ninth month.

Swaddling can help a baby sleep. Even babies who don't need wrapping to keep calm often sleep more when they're swaddled. Bundling keeps them from startling themselves awake. Swaddling plus white noise can add one to two hours to a baby's nighttime sleep.

The age for weaning off the wrapping varies from baby to baby. Many people think they should stop swaddling after a few weeks, when their baby starts resisting it. But, actually, this is when swaddling becomes the most valuable. To decide if your infant no longer needs to be wrapped, try this: After she reaches 2 to 3 months of age, swaddle her with one arm out. If she gets fussier, continue wrapping (with both arms in) for a few more weeks. However, if she still sleeps well with one arm out, she probably doesn't need swaddling any more. Most babies are ready to be weaned off wrapping by 3 to 4 months of age, although some continue to need the wrapping to help them sleep up to 9 months of age.

Proper Swaddling Technique

There are as many ways to swaddle a baby as there are to fold a napkin for a dinner party, but the method outlined here is, in my opinion, the best. When learning to wrap, practice on a doll or on your baby when he (or she) is calm.

Prepare to start swaddling



1. Place a large square blanket on your bed and position it like a diamond.
2. Fold the top corner down so the top point touches the center of the blanket.
3. Place your baby on the blanket so his neck lays on the top edge.
4. Hold your baby's right arm down straight at his side. If he resists, be patient. The arm will straighten after just a moment or two of gentle pressure.



1. **Down.** Just as swaddling is the cornerstone of calming, this first **DOWN** is the cornerstone of swaddling. It must be done well or the wrap will unravel. Hold your baby's right arm straight against his side, grab the blanket three to four inches from his right shoulder, and pull it *very snugly down* and across his body. (The blanket should look like half of a V-neck sweater.)
2. **Tuck.** Keeping the blanket *taut*, finish pulling it all the way down and *tuck* it under his left buttocks and lower back. This anchors the wrap.
3. **Snug.** While firmly holding the blanket against his left hip (with your left hand), grab the top edge of the blanket next to his unwrapped left shoulder and tug it *very, very snug*. Pull the blanket until there is absolutely no slack around your baby's right arm and the fabric is stretched to the max.



After this first "DOWN...tuck...snug," the baby's right arm should be held so securely against his side that he can't bend his arm up, even if you let go of the blanket. Don't be surprised or lose confidence if your baby suddenly cries louder when you pull the blanket tight. You're not hurting him!

Up. Now, straighten his left arm against his side and bring the bottom corner straight *up* to cover the arm. The bottom blanket point should reach up and over his left shoulder. It's okay if his legs are bent; that's how babies are positioned in the womb. But, be sure his arms are *straight*. If they're bent, he'll get out of the wrap as fast as you can say, "Oops, he did it again!" And, he'll cry even more.

1. **Tuck.** Tuck this corner tightly under his whole left arm with your right hand. Put your left hand on his straight left arm so it's pressed against his body.
2. **Snug.** While your left hand still holds his left arm down, use your right hand to grab the blanket three inches from his left shoulder and *snug* it with a *continuous* pull (stretch it as much as possible). This removes any slack next to his right arm.



1. **Down.** Still holding the blanket three inches from his left shoulder, pull the blanket taut and *down*, but only a smidgen.
2. **A smidgen.** This DOWN should bring only *a smidgen* of fabric over his left shoulder to his upper chest, like the second half of the V-neck sweater. (A mistake parents often make with the DUDU wrap is to bring this down fold all the way to their baby's feet.)
3. **Hold.** Using your left hand, *hold* that small fold of blanket pressed against his breastbone, like you are holding down a ribbon while making a bow.



1. **Up.** As your left hand holds that fold, grab the last free blanket corner with your right hand and pull it firmly, straight out to your right. This will get every last bit of stretch and slack out of the wrap you've done so far. And, without releasing the tension, lift that corner in one smooth motion, *up* and...
2. **Across.** Bring it tightly *across* his waist and wrap it around his body like a belt. The belt should go right over his *forearms*, holding them snugly down against his sides.
3. **Snug.** The finishing touch of the DUDU wrap is to *snug* the "belt" by giving it one last tight pull to remove any slack. Then tuck the end into the blanket as shown in the diagram. This last tight snug and tuck keeps the whole swaddle from popping open.