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Do twins
need to
be around
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Listening to
Twinspeak

Your First Year's
Top 10 Twin Tips!

HOW TO BEAT THE HIGH
COST OF RAISING TWINS...

Holiday 2011



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Meet fraternal twins Zacc and Lynzee, very active 5 ½ year olds from Las Vegas, Nevada. They enjoy playing soccer, T-ball, swimming, riding bikes and love to do arts and crafts. They also love music and have taken violin lessons, which Zacc hopes to parlay into guitar lessons soon and Lynzee thinks she will sing along "like Taylor Swift." As Kindergarteners at they love learning how to read right now too...

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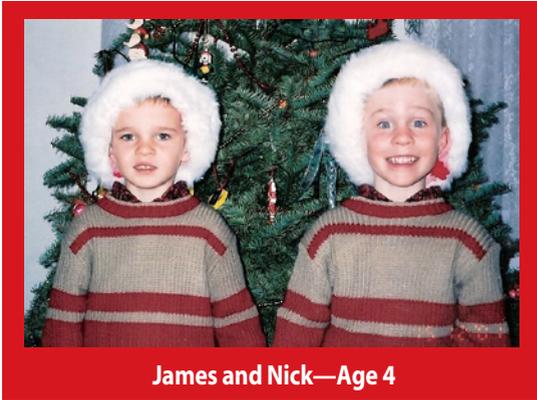


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Seeing red this Holiday Season or just feeling a little blue...



James and Nick—Age 4

It seems like every year right around November 5th or so, about the same time my four boys have crashed and come down from their fog of sugar rushes and candy

highs that I start hearing from my 13-year-old twins (*and now even my younger boys*) declaring all the things in the world that would be “so cool to have this year!” or mutterings like, “everyone else we know has an Xbox system, nobody plays the Wii anymore, Mom” or “Did you hear about the kid at school that got an I-PAD for his birthday? and don’t forget “I think I might be the ‘only’ kid without an I-Pod touch, Mom!”

This is typically when a lump in the bottom of my stomach begins to form and grow as I get this overwhelming feeling of dread thinking about all the stress of the holidays and everything the season brings along with it... and if you’re like me, things can start feeling a little blue. This time of year can make parents feel a great deal of pressure to “keep up with the Santa next door” by over spending and getting into a financial hole while losing sight of what the true meaning of the holiday is really about.

So how can we survive the stress without having that lump in our stomach overtake our entire body?

When we let stress get the best of us this time of year... we end up missing all the fun we could have had with our family because we were too busy stressing out! Kids are not immune to the stress either. They hear the news about protests, high unemployment and our ailing economy and no doubt there are numerous families feeling the pressure this holiday season even greater than ever before. So what exactly is a loving parent to do when they see their children’s wish lists growing larger and larger while knowing they may not be able to deliver?

Here are my 5 Holiday Tips to beat the blues and not see red:

1 Change your family focus. If you can focus more on the season of giving and how the spirit of the holidays is truly about sharing by celebrating the love of family and friends and NOT how much gifts cost or getting the most expensive gift for each child, it can be a wonderful opportunity to focus on the joy the season can bring. Having your kids collect some of their gently used toys that they no longer use and having them donate to the local thrift store is one great way to teach them the spirit of giving while also making room for all the new toys that will arrive on Christmas morning.

2 Start new family traditions. Get creative by finding ways to scale down the spending and think outside the box! To focus more on ‘thoughtful giving’ this year, our family is starting a new holiday tradition. When the boys are buying gifts

for each other we put a \$5.00 spending limit on each gift. This will require them to think ahead and make a plan, get creative and visit the local dollar store or even make or bake gifts for each other instead. They are already thinking of what they are going to do and how much fun it will be.

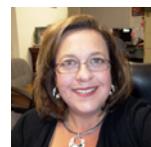
3 Take smaller gifts and put them into larger boxes. Use bright colored paper, ribbons and bows and your children will delight in the visual presentation of all those brightly wrapped presents under the tree. You can use smaller, inexpensive toys and wrap them up and then put them in larger boxes and wrap those to create a fun and joyous celebration for your kids... it won’t even matter what’s inside because they will be having so much fun! And... if they’re like my twins, they loved playing with the boxes and wrapping paper more than the toys anyway! When her twins were younger, one of my twin-mom friends used to only put out Christmas themed books under the tree all season long until Christmas morning...that would prevent the kids from always trying to guess what was inside each present and also created a visual extravaganza for her kids when seeing all the wrapped gifts under the tree for the first time!

4 Set a budget for each child and stick to it! This is so hard to do when all the stores are begging you to spend, spend, spend and you see so many sales that are hard to miss! If your child is asking Santa for a really expensive toy, suggest asking for a less expensive toy that would still make them feel special and loved while not breaking the bank. Explain that everyone has to scale back this year, even at Santa’s workshop! Also, when setting a budget it forces you to be creative with your spending as well. Some thrift and consignment stores have amazing toys that are barely used and would bring hours of fun for your little ones without paying full-price.

5 Reassure your twins that they are loved and cherished no matter what! Even though people may have less this year than in the past, explain to your kids that the holidays are more about celebrating by spending time with family and friends and creating life-long memories. Tell them that they will always have a family that celebrates the season no matter what is happening around them and they are loved and cherished.

Our 2011 Holiday issue is filled with additional ways your family can enjoy the holidays... We are excited to share with you our very best “Top 25 Toys Under \$50.00” in our Annual Holiday Gift Guide and we have included many toys under \$25.00! Plus we have a ton of other great information packed into this issue!

As always, the entire staff here at TWINS Magazine would like to take a moment to thank all of you for your continued loyalty and support for our magazine. We have had to face numerous challenges and obstacles this past year but wanted to let you all know how much your kind words have meant to us. We truly appreciate the wonderful and supportive network of parents of multiples everywhere! Founded in 1984, we look forward to beginning our 28th year as the world leading resource for parenting twins, triplets and higher order multiples! Happy Holidays...here’s wishing you and your family a wondrous season filled with love and joy!



Sincerely,
Christa Reed
Christa Reed
Editor-in-Chief

TTTS Foundation Announces TTTS Parent and Awareness Conference July 27-29, 2012 in Cleveland, Ohio!

The TTTS Foundation is having a TTTS Parent and Awareness Conference next July 27-29, 2012 in Cleveland Ohio for all families who have had Twin-to-Twin-Transfusion Syndrome or TTTS. There will be several speakers, a lot of excellent food and entertainment, a remembrance ceremony, an awareness walk along Lake Erie, and an awareness campaign that families can participate in through professional videotaping and photography.

All are invited and it is a chance to meet pioneers in the field of medicine that are treating TTTS and get your questions answered. Please go to <http://www.tttsfoundation-conference.org> to learn more and to register for this conference. Also, please 'like' our Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-TTTS-Parent-and-Awareness-Conference-July-27-29-2012/237900479599286> and visit our Conference Event Page at: <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=189191987815450>

Have you heard about the new reality show about Multiple Moms?

Texas Multi Mamas hits the airwaves December 27 on WE TV! Multi-Mamas Candace, Casey, Stephanie, Suz, Tonia and Teryn are struggling with the same everyday challenges that all moms face. But in their cases, the challenges come in twos, threes and fours! Thankfully, this group knows how to let loose and party. WE tv's new series Texas Multi Mamas, premiering Tuesday, December 27 at 8|7c, is an energetic look inside the lives of a group of Texas women with big personalities, staunch opinions, and wild lives as they support each other in their moms of multiples group.

- Meet the Moms
- Quizzes
 - Which Texas Multi Mama are you?
 - How many kids can you handle?
 - Are you a demanding mom?
 - Are you ready to be a mom?

November is National Prematurity Awareness Month

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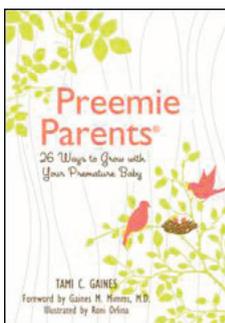


Tami Gaines story is one of heartbreak, tragedy, frustration, inspiration, growth and empowerment. This description may sound incredulous, but it is an apt depiction of the journey the parents of the over 500,000 premature babies born in the U.S. face each year. Tami draws upon her own experience

with premature twins to teach parents how to transform the difficult realities of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) into opportunities for tremendous spiritual and personal growth in *Preemie Parents: 26 Ways To Grow With Your Premature Baby*. *Preemie Parents* addresses the emotional aspect of being a parent of a premature baby and delivers a positive message of hope and action. By openly sharing her real life story, Tami Gaines is able to help readers gain strength and resilience as they support their premature baby. Tami became an authority on the subject after giving birth to twins after only 25 weeks—her daughter spent 3 ½ months in the NICU and her son spent over 18 months. Through *Preemie Parents*, she is able to offer a personal, A to Z guide that will help parents of preemies learn valuable lessons in coping and becoming effective advocates for their children. This inspiring and practical book is filled with insightful information that will serve as a treasured resource for parents, caregivers, and healthcare providers.

"Preemie Parents is a must read for every parent who wants

to successfully manage the emotional rollercoaster of the NICU," says Dr. M. Mimms, M.D., a distinguished neonatologist who wrote the foreword for the book. Tami is a single mother of four, including "micro-preemie" twins, and her amazing ability to turn a traumatic experience into a time for personal growth and an opportunity to help others in similar situations is detailed in the book. Tami Gaines provides guid-



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ance for the millions of people who find themselves in a similar struggle today. She has achieved national recognition as an advocate and spokesperson for parents of premature babies. *Preemie Parents* is one of the few books that speak “parent to parent” and she draws upon her own personal experiences and the difficult realities of the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), to help readers gain strength and resilience as they support their tiny baby.

This inspiring and practical book, which is featured in the July issue of *Parents* magazine, reveals how to survive and thrive during the emotional roller coaster of preemie parenthood.

 Please view Tami’s video <https://www.rsvp.com/tami.wmv>. Tami briefly discusses her journey and why she wrote *Preemie Parents*. Learn more: www.sellerspublishing.com

TWINS Magazine Contributor & Blogger, Planet Mom Melinda Wentzel is now internationally syndicated (via print and online)!

Melinda Wentzel, aka: Planet Mom is a busy mother of twins and popular writer and blogger. She has written numerous articles we have included in our LOL: Laugh Out Loud column and we are very proud she has been able to go international! Here is an excerpt from her recent column “Sweet Dreams” that ran in the *Khaleej Times*, Dubai, UAE:

The nightly bedtime routine offers a parent a wonderful chance to get really up-close and personal with the kiddies — and creates a whole bunch of indelible memories. Putting a child to bed at a reasonable hour has never been my forte. Okay, it’s at the bottom of the list, hovering slightly above ice sculpting and changing a flat tire. Admittedly, I’m pitiful when it comes to the bedtime routine thing. For me, it represents yet another mommy arena in desperate need of improvement... that, and remembering

to dab sunscreen on that little spot on the tops of their heads.

I suppose it’s the chore-like feel of the whole rigma-role that gets to me. And the fact that I have to bark those tired orders each and every night like some sort of tyrant: “Brush your teeth!” “Put your pajamas on!” “Use the bathroom!” “Enough with the television already!” and “Quit fooling around in there and GO TO SLEEP!”

Quite frankly, I’m spent at that hour and I can’t stand having to “work” when I’m already maxed-out on the exhaustion scale myself. But then again, mommies don’t punch a time clock. Their shifts never truly end. And downtime is nothing but a myth — unless, of course, you count the smidgen of time spent alone in the shower or those precious moments locked within the solitude of a closet, where the din cannot follow and where the world can wait until we’re reunited with our marbles — yet again.

To read her entire column click on the link below:

 http://www.khaleejtimes.com/weekend/inside.asp?xfile=/data/weekend/2011/September/weekend_September56.xml§ion=weekend



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Send us your comments, suggestions, questions about raising multiples or if you need advice on a pressing subject or any other information you want to share with us and your letter/email may be included in an upcoming issue of TWINS™ Magazine. You can also send along a photo of you and your twins/multiples with your email.

Contact Christa D. Reed, Editor-in-Chief at twinseditor@twinsmagazine.com.



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Listening to Twinspeak

by Nancy J. Siples, Ph.D. and Janna S. Sipes, J.D.

Tick-tock the game is locked and nobody else can play. Parents of twins often tell us that's how they feel—like their twins belong to a secret club with a membership of only two: a club where even baby twins communicate, long before they've learned to use words. Scientists call this unique communication style of twins "idioglossia." But we like to call it "twinspeak".

Twinspeak isn't about words; it's about understanding one another. All of that time together in the womb gives twins a head start on how to pass information to each other without the need for words. Until they can talk, baby twins bridge the gap with grunts, grins and giggles.

Our family lore has our twinspeak beginning at the age of six months. One day while we were playing on the living room floor, our Uncle Larry witnessed what he was sure was an argument between us. But then, right before his very eyes, our angry mutterings and gestures turned into belly laughter as our conflict was magically resolved. Playtime resumed without a hitch and without a word.

Twinspeak is not limited to identical twins like us. We recently heard from a mom of boy-girl twins who had read about twinspeak in our book *Dancing Naked in Front of the Fridge and Other Lessons from Twins*. Jana Stoudemire told us how she'd been waiting for her twins, Jack and McKenna, to start using twinspeak. "It's so subtle when they're infants that I knew I must be missing something. I was so excited when I first put two-and-two together and realized that they were actually doing it!"

Jana finally noticed Jack and McKenna's twinspeak when they were about nine months old, after she had put them in separate cribs. The first sign of it came when she found them standing, "just gazing at each other—like they were looking into each other's souls. When I came in, they started to laugh."

Jack and McKenna are now 20-months-old and their twinspeak continues to evolve. McKenna is mastering words at a faster pace than Jack is. But, Jack doesn't care because McKenna can understand him. Jana easily recognizes their twinspeak now, "McKenna

will ask me for a glass of milk and when I give it to her, she immediately hands it to Jack! Then, they both crack up. It's clear to me that Jack somehow let McKenna know that he wanted milk, even though he never tells me."

As do all parents of twins, Jana and her husband Jay marvel at the bond Jack and McKenna share. One evening after the twins had a particularly exhilarating giggle fit; Jay said to Jana, "They don't really need us, do they?" Jana confessed to us that all she could do was nod her head because she knew exactly what he meant.

Technology has helped Jana and Jay keep tabs on Jack and McKenna's budding twinspeak. The baby monitor spies on them during naptime—which often

means not sleeping for the Stoudemire twins. "They throw toys and their pacifiers from crib to crib. They goo-goo at each other and laugh outrageously. I know they're having a conversation in their giggling language," Jana remarked. She has even recorded these "conversations" from the monitor for Jay to enjoy whenever his job takes him away.

The Stoudemires have experienced only the tip of the iceberg—for twinspeak will grow up with twins and become an intricate part of their childhood, adolescent and adult communication styles. Everything from finishing each other's sentences, to having the same thought at the same time, to nonverbal communication epitomizes mature twinspeak.

Watch for twinspeak in your little ones and as they get older let them know that the communication between them is very special. Be patient if it seems to you that they have a private joke just between them. Because the truth is they do...one that lasts an entire lifetime. ♥

Nancy J. Sipes, Ph.D., and Janna S. Sipes, J.D. of San Diego, California, are identical twins and authors of the book *Dancing Naked in Front of the Fridge and Other Lessons from Twins*.



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When One Toy Is **Not Enough!**

by J. Cameron Tew



Recently, a young mother stopped by our home and asked Angela if she was the one that was running the in-home daycare on our street. "No," Angela said. "Well, I saw all those toys in the backyard and I just thought you were the person," the woman said before heading to our neighbor's house.

I can understand her confusion. There have been times I have looked off our deck and thought a daycare center might be a good way to earn a little extra money. How many homes do you know that have three rocking horses, three riding cars, and three baby swings? Alas, it is just a perk that comes with having higher order multiples: you can count on having many of the same toys.

Now, I'm not saying that we have three of everything. There is only one big slide and one picnic table and the like. But if it's a fairly small toy that one child can handle on his or her own, it's a good bet that there are three laying around our house or under a bed somewhere.

The reason for the duplication in playthings is simple. It cuts down on the number of squabbles that Mom and Dad must endure about whether Brandon or Jason or Nathan had the red toy hammer first. When all three want to play with the same toy at the same time (which is often), all we have to do is go find the other two. Peace is restored in the Tew house for a little while.

Having three of the same toys doesn't always keep the guys happy. For some reason, they sometimes want the same toy, literally. It does not matter if an exact replica is laying on the floor two feet away, the three of them will launch an all out tug of war and begin screaming at the top of their lungs, alerting Angela and me—and the neighbors—to the most recent brawl in the hall. When these rumbles first began, Angela and I would try to figure out who had the toy first and give it back to him. We still do that if we know who had the toy. But when we are unsure we hand the boys one of each and explain that any more fights will send the toy into time-out! If a fight breaks out again, the ones involved lose the toys that precipitated the fight.

Still, I'm sure that having the same or similar toys around the home has cut down on the number of fights. And while we probably have gone overboard in buying three of everything, I don't believe we would take back too many of the toys we've purchased.

Now, some of you are probably wondering what this means as far as sharing. When you have three of everything, when do they learn some self-discipline and how to wait their turns? In general, we have three very cooperative boys. I don't know how many times I've seen Nathan go to his bedroom and bring Brandon his bunny when he gets his own. We just want each to have time to appreciate all his toys now that the attention spans are getting longer. For example, there have been times when Brandon has spent nearly 40 minutes "fixing" all the furniture and his care with his hammer. I could not imagine taking it away and giving it to Jason. I also could not bear to make Jason wait that long for a turn.

Still, we have had to learn some self-control in buying so many toys. Along the way we have learned some tricks that have allowed us to save a little bit of cash while still getting all the toys we need.

Consignment Shops — First, we have learned to check first with the local consignment shop or thrift store. There we can find the basic tool seats and toy baseball bats for less money than we might at the area toy stores. And while the toys may not be shiny and new when we bring them home, that wouldn't matter after the first few days. If we cannot find what we're looking for at the consignment/thrift stores, then we go to the local department stores and buy what we need.

Extra Pieces — Another thing we have learned to do is to order extra pieces of toys from the manufacturer. For example, when the boys celebrated their birthday in July, Angela ordered a single golf club from Little Tikes. She had bought their play clubs from a local store, but it only came with two clubs. Instead of buying an extra set of clubs, she called the company and made a separate order.

Be Prepared — We have learned from experience to ask other parents of older multiples what toys they had to buy that were similar as well. This gives us a guide to plan our upcoming purchases with. Some parents have told us that they try to vary the types of toys they buy their children, getting one a Mickey Mouse doll and the other a Donald Duck. That is an option, but if it is a toy that you expect your children to become especially attached to, consider buying the same toy so there is not dispute over who gets which toy.

Still, I know someday we'll have to draw the line on buying three of the same toy. I can hear it now: "But Dad, Jason has a new car. Where's mine?"

J. Cameron Tew is married to Angela and together they have triplet boys. They live in Wendell, North Carolina and he was the editor of the Raleigh Extra.

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PREGNANCY

by Maisie Knowles



Maisie Knowles is a working mother of two with three-year's experience writing on parenting and partner issues.



Expecting? Take a Babymoon!

Dear Expecting Parents:

Before you dive into the world of dirty diapers (times two) and the numerous sleepless nights you are about to experience, take advantage of your current freedom and go on a Babymoon! This pre-babies vacation helps you connect as a couple while relaxing and rejuvenating before the stress of parenting multiples hits and make sure you take an extra long Babymoon, since you may not have the luxury of traveling sans children for many more years.

Consider the following tips to ensure comfort, value and fun as you plan this important getaway.

Travel during Your Second Trimester—This is the most comfortable part of your pregnancy. Hopefully morning sickness has passed and your growing belly isn't making you feel like you're coming apart at the seams. Keep in mind, however, that some cruise lines won't sell tickets to women who are pregnant beyond 24 weeks, so check out this [comprehensive list of cruise line policies](#) before booking.

Visit Child-unfriendly Locations—Find a location you won't visit when children are part of your family. For example, a Disney Cruise is easy to do with little ones, but a spa and shopping mall is next to impossible with two toddlers. A two-hour flight is relatively easy with children, but a flight to Hawaii or overseas will bring parents to their breaking point.

Eat Together—Plan plenty of quiet meals with your partner and cherish those uninterrupted adult conversations. It gets significantly

harder to have a relaxing meal when toddlers are throwing food and screaming at the dinner table.

Visit a Spa—During your second trimester, you can again indulge in a relaxing massage and planning this during the beginning of your Babymoon will help set the tone for the rest of your trip. Pedicures are also great, since it will soon be increasingly difficult for you to reach your toes!

Use Gift Cards—Save on the costs of your Babymoon and buy gift cards at a discounted rate for your airfare, hotel stay, dining, car rental and spa treatments. Sites like www.GiftCardGranny.com have hundreds of travel-related discount gift cards for purchase, from airlines to bed and breakfast websites. Remember to buy your gift cards a couple weeks in advance to account for order processing and mailing time.

Be Adult-only Active—Participate in adult-only activities, such as going to a movie, dancing the night away, visiting museums, catching a theater show, going to a sporting event, or eating in a nice restaurant. Basically, think of everything you would not do with two little squirmy toddlers in tow, then plan on doing those things. Read "8 Best Babymoon Trips" from Parents Magazine for destination ideas.

HAVE FUN!—Delight in being adults; you have plenty of years ahead to enjoy being a kid with your kids. Take advantage of this special last time to do grown-up activities before your bundles of joy arrive! ♥

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By Jessie Groothuis, M.D.

Your First Year's Top 10 Twin Tips

Jessie Groothuis, M.D.

is an associate professor in the pediatrics department at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and director of the Special Baby Clinic (the premature high-risk follow-up clinic). She is the mother of three children, including twins.

The first year of raising multiples is often the most physically and emotionally demanding time families will ever experience. To be better aware of what to expect during the first year, we want to share 10 of the most difficult adjustments that most new parents may have to make. Anticipating these adjustments and asking for help are two important ways of decreasing the stress of raising infant multiples.

#



Postpartum Depression

Postpartum blues—often called postpartum depression—is a disorder that has been described as an emotional reaction to the demands of motherhood. However, doctors now believe that this is brought on by hormone level changes after childbirth: a dangerous drop in estrogen and progesterone or a low-thyroid condition. According to James A. Hamilton, M.D., a retired associate professor of clinical psychiatry at Stanford University, about 50% of new mothers suffer from one of the less severe forms of postpartum depression, which has as its symptoms insomnia, anxiety, crying spells and confusion. It is important that mothers of newborn twins anticipate and recognize when they need help in coping with the more severe episodes of postpartum depression—called adjustment reaction with depressed mood—symptoms of which can last for weeks or months. Less common forms of postpartum depression—severe postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis—may become severe enough for women to require psychiatric intervention and medication. If they have a desire to hurt their babies, are hearing voices, are unable to function, in general, or are experiencing excessive crying, confusion and forgetfulness, they should seek professional help immediately.

#



Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation can be an important reason why parents of multiples feel depressed as well as overwhelmed. Plans to enlist help in the forms of relatives, friends, teenage babysitters or a baby-sitting co-op should be made in the first several weeks after the babies are born, or ideally, before the babies come home. New parents need to set aside a block of time every day to do what is relaxing

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Organization

If expectant parents are fortunate enough to know that they are having multiples, they can plan ahead for their babies' arrivals by gathering essentials such as formula bottles, clothes and car seats. The number of baby clothes and diapers needed depends on the availability of a washer and dryer. Forty diapers is usually an adequate amount initially for those children wearing cloth diapers, as are 10 to 12 pairs of rubber pants. It is important for parents to weigh the advantages vs. the disadvantages (cost, comfort, convenience, etc.) of using the various diapering options available (disposable, cloth, diaper services, cloth with plastic pants, etc.) To become organized, parents may find it helpful to develop charts for bathing, feeding and other essential daily activities. Time for themselves, their spouse and other children should be included on the charts as well.

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Feeding

Feeding more than one infant takes a tremendous amount of time and energy. Breastfeeding twins are possible for many, but not all, mothers; time, not the milk supply, is usually a factor in how smoothly a mother of twins' breastfeeding experience proceeds. Simultaneously nursing both infants reduces the time this endeavor takes. Many new mothers of multiples may elect to partially or completely bottle feed; it is easier if they make up a day's worth of formula in advance. Another way to make feedings go more smoothly is to enlist a second "feeder" so that both twins can be held for their feedings. This is a good way to involve fathers, older siblings and others who want to help. When multiples progress to eating solid food, feeding them with separate utensils may cut down on incidences of

cross infections, such as colds and diarrhea. Parents may consider making large quantities of baby food at one time and freezing the food in small plastic bags. They may also choose to buy solid foods in bulk.

#5 Space and Finances

Most families worry about having enough space and finances to accommodate two children when they learn that they are having multiples. However, it is important that parents remember that their babies do not necessarily each need their own bedrooms, cribs, bathtubs or play pens, particularly in the first few months of their lives. As their needs become obvious (they need to be separated in different cribs, for example, to avoid waking each other up from naps), then purchases can be made with these specific situations in mind. Parents may want to contact their local parents of multiples club and check garage sales for hand-me-down clothes, play pens, strollers and other items to reduce expenses. Delaying the purchase of such items as play pens and high chairs will cut down on initial expenditures as well.

#6 Separation and Individualization

Although in most cases, singleton infants bond primarily to his parents, most multiples simultaneously develop strong ties to both their parents and their co-twins. However, the natural challenges of separation and individualization are compounded for multiples that are treated as a unit by family and friends. Here are some ways you can promote individualization with your twins: choose different sounding names for your twins; don't always dress them the same; use their individual names when referring to your twins; emphasize and value their differences; take your twins on separate excursions; spend time alone with each twin; have frequent individual body contact with each twin; hold and cuddle each twin; talk frequently and equally with each twin; provide separate care schedules when possible; encourage your twins to make contact with adults and peers and expect that each twin's behavior will be unique.

#7 Marital and Sibling Adjustments

Though the birth of twins is a joyous occasion, adjusting to the changes that the event brings to a family's life is often difficult. Older siblings (and spouses) may feel left out and unimportant after the birth of twins because the care of the newborn twins is so time-consuming and physically exhausting. That is why spouses need to make a "standing date" (and obtain a babysitter!) as frequently as possible to ensure that they will have a chance to get away and focus on each other. When the babies come home, parents may want to ask relatives to take care of their newborns from time to time so that they can spend time alone with their older children. Providing opportunities for outings with one twin and one sibling so that each sibling gets to know the babies "one-on-one" is also helpful. Parents should remind well-meaning relatives and strangers that older siblings are the big brothers or sisters and that the older generation needs to tactfully focus some of the attention on the twins' siblings.

#8 The Side Show

The one fact of life that all new parents of twins can attest to is that every set of multiples attracts attention from the general public. How the adults feel about this attention is as varied as the parents themselves. Some parents enjoy it while others find it overwhelming. I advise those who find it enjoyable to "have fun" and not feel guilty about taking pleasure in their roles as parents of twins, as long as they remember that their twins should not always be seen and treated as a unit, especially as they get older. I also advise the many parents who find all of the attention overwhelming to try to promote the individuality of their children by not dressing them alike and by frequently taking their babies out separately or with another adult who can help carry them.

#9 Well-Meaning, Know-It-All Friends & Relatives Who Have Never Had Multiples

All new parents are bombarded with advice from well-meaning friends and relatives. No matter what advice "experienced" parents of singleton babies may offer to parents of multiples, much of it may not apply to twin-rearing situations. Parents who try to live up to other people's expectations may feel resentful, guilty or ambivalent. "I raised four children and never needed any help," or "You should give your babies a bath every day" can be anxiety-provoking for example. One of the most important things parents of multiples can do to get a reasonable perspective on twin-rearing challenges is to contact other parents of multiples. The only pieces of advice that should be accepted and utilized are tips that reduce parents' feelings of stress and raise their feelings of competence. Of course, well-meaning friends, particularly those who say that they wish that they had twins, can help with babysitting, grocery shopping or keeping new parents company on a walk, for example. Parents should not be afraid to admit when they feel overwhelmed or to say that they need help. Most of those who offer advice do it because they care about the family and want to be helpful.

#10 Dealing with the Normal Feelings of Ambivalence & Anger

Studies of parents of multiples show that most feel a great deal of ambivalence after their babies are born. Some even wonder whether they will actually love their children at all and be able to meet their needs. These feelings can come from new parents of multiples' experiencing feelings of tremendous isolation (because they may be spending the majority of their days home "alone" and, there, may have only limited contact with other adults.) At the same time, they're discovering that they have no time to be truly alone. In short, when they find that caring for their multiples takes so much of their time, they may not feel that they have enough time for themselves. Parents who experience this ambivalence about caring for their newborns need to set time aside for themselves and their family for activities they find enjoyable. Combining sets of self-nurturing plans, for example, by having a best friend visit while taking a walk in the park with the babies is one way to accomplish this goal. Also, talking to other parents of multiples or reading multiple-birth resources and blogs may offer a healthy perspective on parenting problems as well as practical solutions. ♥



TODDLERS

Do They Need to Be Around Other Kids?

by Janet Gonzalez-Mena

All children need playmates outside the family. The question is, how soon? Since toddler twins have a built-in play group, why is it important to expand beyond that? Eventually, multiples need to open their relationship to include other age-mates. It doesn't hurt to start right from the beginning, rather than waiting until preschool or kindergarten to get them used to the idea that

Janet Gonzalez-Mena lives in Napa, California and taught early childhood education at Napa Valley College for many years and is the mother of five children.

there are other children in the world. Of course, if twins are in childcare, they're already meeting other children. Or if they were born into a large family, they may have less need for outside relationships. But, what about twins who don't meet other children on a regular basis...what can parents do?

Parents can set up situations where their twins have a chance to naturally gravitate to other children while still in the company of each other if they join a playgroup, invite other children over, or meet parents and their children at a park, for example. It's easier for children to adjust to this new situation while a parent is present. This early beginning is especially important if twins are to face separation from each other when they enter preschool or kindergarten. Knowing how to relate to other children can take some of the edge off the pains of being apart.

seem to be ignoring what others are doing or even be negatively affected by the group. However, this period is of benefit because the newcomers are getting used to the sounds and experience of being around their peers. Even though they don't look involved, they are. This is a little like sticking one's toes in water as "step one" when learning to swim or splashing around on the edge of a lake. One may not learn to swim that day, but it's a good introduction to the water.

- **Parallel play.** If children continue to be exposed to a group and feel more comfortable, they often begin to gravitate toward the center of the action to be close to others who are playing. They don't actually play with them, but repeat each other's words and pick up on play themes. They find pleasure in the company of others, even if they don't interact. Parents may or may not find that their twins stick close together while moving into the center of things.
- **Pairing.** Eventually, children start pairing up. One child will follow another around or two will begin paying attention to each other. You can see that this is happening when they stop talking so much to themselves and start talking to the other. At first, they talk **at** each other, but eventually they begin to talk **to** each other and to listen as well.

BECOMING PART OF A GROUP

Children in a group, who are allowed to play freely, move through the following succession of steps as they form relationships with peers. It may be helpful for parents to understand how children form friendships and eventually become group members in order for parents to have reasonable expectations about their children's social behavior.

- **Playing around the edges.** When first introduced to a group of children in a free-play situation, new comers often stick to the sidelines. They may



• **Shifting Pairs.** It may be harder for twins to form twosomes outside their own relationship. But as they watch other pairs come together, then shift and change, they may begin to get the idea of how “shifting pairs” works. If they can form temporary pairs with other children, they are on their way to expanding their ability to create and maintain further relationships—an important life-long skill.

• **Expanding relationships.** It would be ideal if two pairs could play together and no one ever felt left out. Then parents could invite two children over and things would work well. Sometimes that happens, but more likely, triangles form. Triangles can be very hard on toddlers—especially if they are twins. If two members of the triangle relate close to one another, the third member feels left out. This situation creates plenty of squabbles and unhappiness. Because of triangles, some parents avoid playmates altogether, thinking that it’s a peaceful solution to an unnecessary problem. But there’s another way to look at triangles: If children experience enough of them, they become tolerable. Twins come to

see other children as friends instead of competitors. Eventually, the triangle becomes comfortable, and when it does, exciting new play unfolds.

Although the squabbles, hurt feelings and tears make life difficult when children form triangles, there important lessons emerge from the conflicts:

1. Children learn that it’s worth trying to get along in order to maintain a friendship.
2. Children gain experience in discovering perspectives that are different from their own.
3. Children learn problem-solving skills and conflict management outside the twinship.

The skills children learn when triangles are formed help them become valuable friends and eventually good group members who feel secure about who they are. Secure people feel free to make their own unique contributions to the friendship or to a group.

What can parents do to support the triangles that form when playmates are introduced to their twins? How can parents respond when twins feel miserable about a new relationship that seems to threaten

their twinship? It’s important for parents to model qualities that build solid friendships when responding to problems between their multiples and playmates—qualities such as sensitivity to the feelings and perspectives of others.

In order to model these qualities, parents need to listen respectfully and not rush in and solve the problem for the children in a heavy-handed way. Just taking a disputed toy away, or sending a complaining child to time-out, won’t do it. Parents need to listen to the squabbling parties, get them to listen to each other and support creative solutions. In this way, they teach their children how to manage quarrels in order to promote relationships instead of destroying them.

As you can see, it’s important for the social development of toddler twins that they have ongoing opportunities to interact with other children outside the twinship. These interactions also support intellectual development. Until twins experience other points of view, they can get stuck in their own. Having a co-twin helps, of course, but a little bigger variety adds richness. Seeing beyond one’s own perspective is the kind of mind-stretch that pays off later. ♥

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Remove The Child KEEP THE CURTAINS

At times, parents of twins get so caught up in the twin relationship that they unknowingly lose sight of their bigger parenting responsibility. A few months ago a couple sought my advice about how to minimize the fighting and competitive behavior between their four-year-old fraternal twin



by Joan A. Friedman, PhD is a prominent and well-respected twin expert who shares her passionate views and insights about twins and their emotional needs with twins and their families throughout the world. The fact that she is an identical twin and the mother of five, including fraternal twin sons, makes her ideally suited to this task. She conducts ongoing groups for parents of twins and provides consultation on twin related matters such as school placements, developmental discrepancies, and behavioral issues.

boys. Mother explained that most of the family members were "afraid" of the feisty twin's outbursts and tantrums. She told me that she often cautioned her other son to avoid his brother. Father added that he felt compelled to buy two of everything because his more aggressive son would snatch a different toy away from his brother. Mother chimed in to emphasize that this boy grabbed everything away from his brother under any circumstances – even if there were two of the same thing.

As is often the case, mother and father had different parenting styles. Father tried to avoid the confrontations and felt that the environment should be altered to minimize temptations. For instance, when his son attempted to pull down the curtains, father suggested replacing them with blinds. Mother, on the other hand, was more capable of being a disciplinarian even though it was not easy for her. Nonetheless, she worried that too many limits and punishments would crush her son's lively spirit and damage his self-esteem.

As we know, there is no blueprint for parenting. Our own life histories and experiences will very much influence how we discipline our children. Frequently parents have difficulty understanding how consistent limits and expectations create a securely attached child. They feel as if they are being mean, bad, and

unloving when they have to say no, mete out punishments, and deny or delay gratification. Parents worry that their children will stop loving them. Yet, once parents see the positive results of their limit setting, they begin to appreciate their child's capacity to stay in control and be calm. Children want parental approval more than anything in the world – they need to be admired, loved, and cherished. As we all know, when our children are behaving in an unreasonable fashion, we certainly

do lose touch with our more positive feelings. This applies to our partners, as well!

It is a daunting task to discipline two different children at the same time. The twins' divergent temperaments and our particular bonds with each child make it even more challenging to feel secure about punishing one child and not the other. Having to deal with cries and protests that things are unfair, parents of twins may feel more inclined to give into demands just to keep the peace for a while.

Some parents feel that it becomes a bit easier to discipline their children as they develop more cognitive skills. Nonetheless, it is vital to remember that parents who maintain control and enforce limits make their children feel safe and protected. If you feel that your twins have too much power, it is important to sit down with your partner and reorganize your strategies. Once you are "back in the saddle," so to speak, your child will feel safer and more socially equipped to direct his spirited energy toward more creative endeavors. ♥



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Annual Holiday OUR HOLIDAY PICKS...THE TOP

This year we wanted to go a different way for TWINS Magazine's Annual Holiday Gift Guide. For many families out there, this time of year can be very stressful having to figure out how to meet the high demands of buying toys and gifts for two (or more) kiddos while also trying very hard to stay within your holiday budget! It's also very important to make sure these gifts provide hours of fun for your multiples and the opportunity for them to play together, too! That is why we believe we have found the very BEST toys available this holiday season that won't break the bank! We have discovered 25 top toys that are not only fun but encourage creativity and can entertain your little ones for a good length of time. We recommend these toys because they are safe, durable, come from reputable companies and all cost under \$50.00 with most costing under \$25.00! You can click on links to learn more about each toy -- we hope you will enjoy our comprehensive list! Happy Holidays everyone....

1 ABC-123-First Words by ALEX

Age Range-24 months-36 months
Price \$25.95

An excellent new product to help child learn ABCs and 123's! 36 solid wooden tiles also feature first words. Well made and colorful this product is sure to please and will help your child with early learning.



2 Sneaky, Snacky Squirrel Game™ by Educational Insights Inc

Age Range 3-6 years
Price \$19.99

Your forest friends are hungry and they need your help. Spin the spinner, squeeze the matching colored acorn with your Squirrel Squeezers, and place it into your log. Be the first to your log with delicious acorns and you win! You could also spin "pick an acorn," "steal an acorn," or "lose an acorn," so be strategic, little squirrel. 2 to 4 player game. Includes set of Squirrel Squeezers, 20 colored acorns, 1 game spinner, and game board (doubles as packaging). Develops matching, sorting, strategic thinking, hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and pre-handwriting skills. Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Zo7UfEkx-4>



3 Gazillion Bump-N-Go Bubble Bug by Funrise Toy Corporation

Age Range - 3 - 5
Price \$9.99

This cute motorized bubble bug will entertain your child as it races along releasing hundreds of colorful bubbles. If this little bug bumps into something, it quickly turns and races in a different direction. Just fill with solution, push the button, and watch as the wings pop open and it's off to the races. Your child will have fun trying to catch the Gazillion Bump-N-Go Bubble Bug.



4 Snapatoonies-DVD Series by Jordle Productions

Age Range Birth-5 years
Price \$19.95

Snapatoonies is a lively, interactive and fun baby and toddler DVD series that educates children while entertaining them. Perfect for babies to preschoolers. Each 30 minute DVD's include 3 bonus scenes from other Snapatoonies Episodes.



Gift Guide 2011

25 TOYS UNDER \$50.00!

5 Stacking Rings by Metro Design USA, LLC

Age Range 1-4 years
Price \$2.99

These stacking rings are an entertaining educational tool for kids to learn important eye-hand coordination, size and color recognition, and counting. The inflatable rings are clear so kids are able to see the jingle ball inside. It comes with three different sized inflatable rings with inside plastic jingle balls that are made of heavy duty brightly colored see-through vinyl material and provides a great way to practice eye-hand coordination.



6 Soft Peek-A-Boo Blocks by Blue Box Toys Inc

Age Range Birth-5 months
Price \$19.99

Little minds enter a world of discovery with 9 soft blocks that rotate and open up for hours of stacking fun and surprises. The clever animal face figure designs also add extra fascination for babies... a soft and easy way to help child learn to explore blocks.



7 First Jigsaw Puzzle - Square by Young Minds At Play

Age Range 1-3 years
Price \$40.00

The First Jigsaw Puzzle-Square is a 4-piece solid hardwood puzzle. The big, chunky pieces are interchangeable and reversible, allowing



any two pieces to be connected. However, the pieces must be connected correctly to form a square. Two different solutions are possible: a checkerboard pattern and a striped pattern. At over 3/4 inch thick,



8 Bunch-O-Fun™ by Kids II, Inc.

Age Range 0-12 months
Price \$10.99

The Bright Starts™ Bunch-o-Fun™ characters make great companions on the go or at home! Each character is bursting with activity; easy pull bungee legs, crinkle, chimes, rattles, clackers and teethers. Baby will be entertained and by their furry friend.

toddlers can easily sense when a successful connection has been made. This eco-friendly puzzle is made in the USA from 100% solid maple and cherry hardwood. The corners are rounded. A safe, food-grade beeswax/oil finish is hand applied to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the wood.

9 Wacky Bowling Set by ALEX

Age Range 2-5 years
Price \$32.99

Squeezeable, wacky bowling set! Each pin is a silly character. Set them up, roll the ball and knock them down. Mix and match heads for even more fun! Comes with 6 pins, 2 balls and a convenient carry-along bag.





10 **Talk of the Farm** by *ALEX*

Age Range 18 months–36 months
Price \$47.99



This is a wonderful toy your multiples can share! A magical interactive talking play mat, Talk of the Farm, provides just that experience by absorbing children in play and reinforcing the concepts of counting, learning colors, and animal sounds and helps child learn to follow directions. Take a tour of Buttercup Farm with Farmer Rick in your own pick-up truck. As you drive the truck over the music notes, the farm comes to life! Each sound-activated area tells the child something about each part of the farm—Farm House, Buttercup Barn, Cow Pasture, Pig Pen, Chicken Coop, Vegetable Garden, and more! Talk of the Farm also improves eye-hand coordination and encourages imagination!

11 **Bright Starts Acti-Tree** by *Bright Starts*

Age Range 3 months–2 years
Price \$11.99

This is a new activity toy that provides a variety of activities and sounds to keep babies entertained while on the floor or in the crib! Use on floor, or attach straps for use in crib. Multiple activities to develop different motor skills. Handle turns to spin lion's face. Roller ball with rattle beads. Ratcheting sun twists and clicks. Sliding peek-a-boo character. Sliding bee. Push apple squeaker to spin snail and more. Fun goes wherever they go. Look for other fun activity toys like Cruise 'n Sort Bus and Peek-a-Zoom with shapes and activities.



12 **Smart Snacks Gingerbread Shape Sorter** by *Learning Resources*

Age Range 2–3 years
Price \$18.99

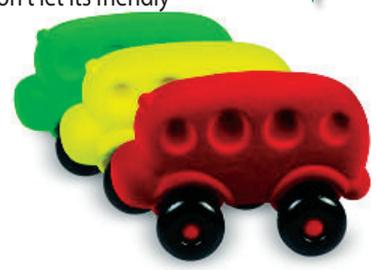
Spice up imaginative play while learning shapes, colors, and fine motor skills. This new cottage contains six holes that match six chunky candy shapes. The sorter engages children as they explore shape recognition, spatial reasoning, color recognition, fine motor skills, and imaginative play. Pieces store in the durable plastic house, which encourages clean up, and then empty through the door. Durable plastic pieces wipe clean. Good product for home and school.



13 **2Skoolbus** by *Rubbabu Inc.*

Age Range 6 months–5 years
Price \$19.95

The new soft and colorful Rubbabu 2Skoolbus is fun and the rounded body and soft wheels make it is uniquely huggable. Rubbabu vehicles are a fast favorite of boys and girls alike. Children love the bright colors and the squishy soft texture. Made of natural rubber, it is a great alternative to PU foam, and is as plush as it is strong despite its soft texture. Skoolbus is available in all the Rubbabu colors – so there's plenty to choose from. A brightly colored body and contrasting black tires with red hubs offer wonderful visual appeal while the flocked surface is a luxury of tactile stimulation. Don't let its friendly rounded look fool you - 2Skoolbus moves fast! Give it a push and it will move rapidly across floor or carpet while your toddlers give chase to catch up!



14 Hairy Tangle Jr
by Tangle Creations

Age Range 3–12 years
Price \$6.99

The Hairy Tangle includes all the virtues of the original Tangle Jrs, plus provides squiggly and squirmy fun for everyone! For the sensory sensitive, this Tangle provides wonderful tactile amusement for all ages. Collectable and connectable to the full Tangle Jr line, you can create different designs and tactile combinations. All over the world, people are finding that once they start twisting and turning this Tangle, they are hard to put down! See the new book Learning with Tangle Brain Tools. Enjoy Tangle Toys anytime and anywhere and they are perfect for all ages. Stress reducer and creative tool to help everything relax.



15 Buckley Panda
from BuckleyBoo

Age Range 18 months to four-years-old

Price: 17" BuckleyPanda retails for \$29.99 and the 12" for \$19.99

BuckleyBoo is a growing collection of award-winning developmental stuffed toys co-created by a child psychologist and grandma that encourage cognitive development and sequential learning through matching, buckling and unbuckling. Plus BuckleyBoos are adorable and cuddly and are sure to become your little one's new favorite friend. From the age of 18 months to four-years-old, children will embark on a developmental journey with BuckleyBoo where each mastered task serves as a springboard for the next level of learning



16 Marshmallow Dual Pack Straight Shooter & Blower by Marshmallow Fun Company

Age Range 6+

Price \$9.95

Twice the fun! The dual pack comes with two mouth-powered marshmallow shooters: the Marshmallow Blower and Marshmallow Straight Shooter. The Marshmallow Straight Shooter is a brand new style of blower. Both products are around 12", shoot mini marshmallows up to 30 feet and rely on lung-power alone to launch the edible ammo. Visit Marshmallow Fun online at www.marshmallowville.com



17 Kipsy and the Magic Beans by Kipsy

Age range 2 to 8

Price \$19.99

Getting young children to go to bed and stay in their own bed can be a challenge! Kipsy and the Magic Beans is a fun bedtime sleep aid for children in fairytale form. The set includes a storybook to read together, a soft doll to sleep with, magic beans and incentive toys. Parents read the story and plant a magic bean under the child's pillow. The child knows to keep the bean warm and toasty by sleeping on the pillow overnight. In the morning, the bean has magically turned into a toy! This is perfect for childhood transitions — switching beds, starting school, life changes, or sleeping in a new place. www.kipsytoys.com





18

Zipfy Mini Luge by Zipfy, Inc.

Age Range
Price \$35.00

Introducing the easiest, safest, most exhilarating way to go sledding... ever! It makes a great Christmas gift. Take the kids out with their new Zipfy Mini Luges to the park and you'll be amazed how easily you'll carve down the hills. It makes for great winter fun! It is lightweight, easy to control and carry, for all ages with a 250 lb capacity - Safe as its sits feet first.

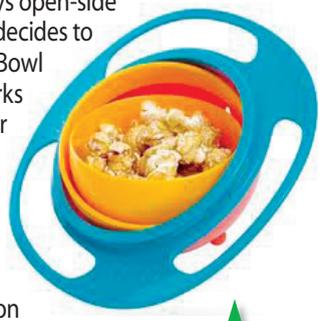


20

The GYRO Bowl by Plymouth Direct

Age Range infants+
Price \$14.99 BUY ONE GET ONE FREE***
PERFECT FOR TWINS!

The Gyro Bowl is a revolutionary no spill bowl is a kid-proof bowl that uses 360-degree technology to keep items inside the plastic sphere. The bowl stays open-side up, no matter which way a child decides to twirl it, throw it or dump it. Gyro Bowl is virtually indestructible and works just like a globe and is dishwasher safe, too! Parents can rejoice at the thought of never having to clean snacks off the carpet or out of the deep crevasses of a car seat and your kiddos will love taking this super snack contraption with them everywhere they go!



19

The OBLO by Great Circle Works

Age Range: 5+
Price \$24.00

The OBLO is an Award-Winning 3D spherical puzzle that challenges and inspires kids of all ages. OBLO is also an engaging, didactic puzzle ideal for growing minds. It's a colorful layer of spheres that creates a compelling 3D puzzle. As children construct and deconstruct its parts, the OBLO develops motor skills and hand-eye coordination as well as engaging children's curiosity. As they use both of their hands to manipulate the OBLO, it is also a great preparation for learning to write and draw.

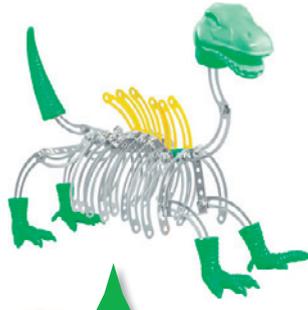


21

Brainstring Advanced by Recent Toys USA

Age Range 8+
Price \$16.99

Touted as the "Rubik's cube of the next generation," the award-winning Brainstring Advanced from Recent Toys is perfect for hours of unplugged entertainment during the cold winter months! Trying to figure out this challenging brain teaser will stretch your puzzle-solving skills to the next level. Learn more at www.recenttoysusa.com.



22

Nuts & Bolts Kid-Friendly Erector Sets by Wild Republic

Age Range 8+
Price \$15.00

Nuts & Bolts, are kid-friendly erector sets that come the tools to build metal dinosaurs, elephants and other animals.





23 Pirate Ship Cardboard Play land by Box Creations

Age Range 3 to 7

Price \$40.00

New line of U.S.A. made, durable, recycled cardboard play lands, including **Country Cottage**, **Carriage**, **Medieval Castle**, or the all-new award-winning **Pirate Ship** (a Family Fun Magazine Toy of the Year, recently featured on Live with Regis & Kelly). They come with detailed line work and markers to provide children and parents with a great way to enjoy "Do-it-Yourself" FUN. Each classic design is large enough to accommodate 2-3 children so this toy could bring hours of fun for your multiples!

24 Lazer Stunt Chaser by Think Way Toys

Age Range 4+

Price \$39.99

Lazer Stunt Chaser: Super speed and super stunts combine to make the Lazer Stunt Chaser the hottest new R/C car this holiday season. 1:32 scale, up to 40 feet of control range and over 300 mph scale speed your kids can perform mind boggling flips and stunts using the multiple stunt sets, or race against your others. They're dual sided and ready to drive either way with a different color and design on each side. The ultra cool light-up wheels change color when the car turns over. Charger requires 6 AA alkaline batteries. Remote control requires 2 AA alkaline batteries. Alkaline batteries not included.



25 Perplexus Epic & Perplexus Rookie

by Plasmart

Age Range 8+ and for Perplexus Rookie 4+

Price \$29.99 and for Perplexus Rookie is \$19.99

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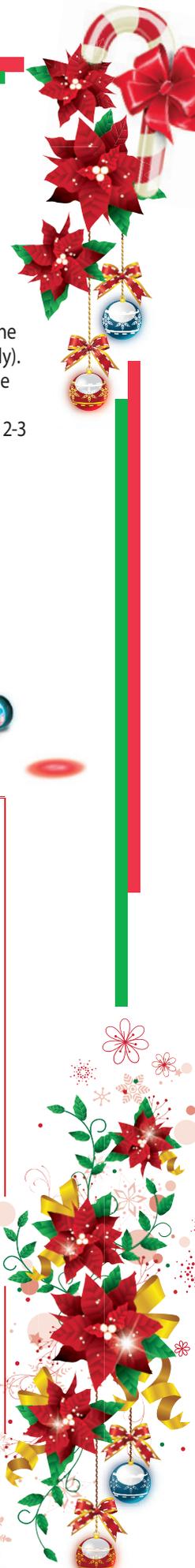
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How to Beat the High-Cost of RAISING TWINS

by Christina Baglivi Tinglof

Let's face it, kids cost money (a lot of money!) In fact, the USDA's Expenditures on Children by Families 2010 report estimates that it will cost an average of a quarter of a million dollars to raise a child from birth to age 17 (college not included). That's for one kid!

If you're the parent of twins, the financial strain can be particularly painful. Not only are your costs double from the get-go as you need to buy two of just about everything, you'll need to purchase all that equipment at the same time, too. Think two car seats and cribs when twins are babies, and double car insurance and college tuition if you're like me with twins nearing the end of high school. Now that's expensive!

But that's the bad news.

The good news is that moms and dads of multiples are a resourceful bunch. Very resourceful. Either out of necessity or simply for the thrill of just one more challenge, parents of multiples know how to stretch a dime. So whether you're a mom-to-be with twins on the way or your dynamic duo are teenagers heading to high school this fall, here are some valuable tips for beating the high cost of raising twins.

PREPARE TO PAD YOUR WALLET DURING YOUR TWIN PREGNANCY

So you just found out you're expecting twins. Congratulations! You're one of the lucky ones as you can now start preparing for their arrival the right way, the frugal way. For instance, when it's time to furnish the nursery, think long term, quality furniture that can grow as your kids grow. "Purchase classic furniture that can transform once your child is older," explains Pam Baumeister, mother to four spunky daughters and the marketing director for Steal Network, the company behind BabySteals.com, KidSteals.com, and KidCrawl.com. Baumeister advises looking for cribs that change into toddler beds and can later be used as twin bed headboards. And what about that changing table? A big waste as it becomes useless once your twins are potty trained. Save your money and instead add an inexpensive changing pad to the top of your babies' dresser.

And before putting the finishing touches on your twin nursery, don't forget to join your local Mothers of Twins Club (find one through nomotc.org). Their semi-annual tag sales are huge productions and a discount Mecca, perfect for finding nursery furnishings and baby equipment from double strollers to nursing pillows. Many groups allow moms pregnant with twins to shop a "preview" sale so they can have first crack at all the goodies before the general public. You can snag your twin layette, for example, for a song—\$1 for infant sleepers, one-piece outfits, and receiving blankets, even less for booties and knit hats.

Next, hit the Internet and sign up for Amazon Mom (amazon.com), a free membership program that not only offers 30 percent off diapers and baby wipes (plus 15 percent off nearly everything else that your babies will need) but throws in free two-day delivery, too (restrictions apply). Imagine, big savings plus you'll never have to make a midnight diaper run again!

Stressing about the high cost of childcare? Ask your employer about flexing your work schedule like Kate Dominus of New York, New York. "My husband and I stagger our work days," says the mom of two-year-old identical twin boys, John and Milo. "I don't leave for work until nine a.m. when my nanny arrives and my husband comes home by five p.m. so we only have to pay our nanny for a 40-hour week as opposed to a 45- or 50-hour work week." Dominus estimates they save about \$150 a week with this system.

And finally, think about breastfeeding your newborns rather than heading straight to formula. Not only is it healthier as breast milk offers infection-fighting antibodies but it's free. Formula, on the other hand, will run you about \$250 on average a month for two babies. Worried that you won't be able to nurse your newborns? Make a small investment in a lactation consultant. Find one through La Leche League (llli.org) or through the hospital where you'll be delivering.

THE HIGH COST OF CLOTHING YOUR TWINS

Infant twins don't need many clothes but once your twins hit the preschool years, that all changes. To save money, Corrie Behar of Montoursville, Pennsylvania shops the end-of-the-season clearance sales taking advantage of both AAA discounts as well as store loyalty programs. "I just purchased everything my twins will need for next summer for a total of \$54!" says the mom to boy-girl twins, Ben and Natali. "For instance, I purchased a Dora the Explorer dress for my daughter which was originally \$32 for \$1.75. I purchased pants from Old Navy for both kids for \$1.25 a pair."

Behar heads to outlet malls right after Labor Day for next summer's wardrobe and mid-April for winter apparel and buys clothing one size larger. Since her twins are still toddlers, she finds it's easy to estimate next year's clothing size.

Stacking several discounts together is the best way to shop for clothing, according to Erica Walsh of Staten Island, New York. "For example, I currently have a 30 percent off MVP coupon from Kohl's," explains the mom to two-and-a-half-year-old fraternal twin girls, Angelina and Colleen. She also cashed in reward points from a credit card for \$100 Kohl's gift card. Plus, Walsh earns Kohl's Cash for her purchases at the store. "All this will let me buy a nice high ticket item for practically nothing."

Lori Mohring uses the same strategy while shoe shopping for her two-year-old fraternal twin boys, Ethan and Cameron. "I look for big shoe sales," the Cape Coral, Florida mom explains. "I usually go to JC Penny when they have a big sale and make sure to use a store coupon." If the deal is extremely good, Mohring will even buy the next two sizes. "Then I am prepared when they outgrow their sneakers super quick," she says.

And when your twins outgrow their clothes, resell them at one of those Mothers of Twins Clubs semi-annual sales for some extra cash. See? It pays to be a member of your local twins group.

IT'S WHO YOU KNOW

When Susan Gamble travels with her four-year-old fraternal twin sons, Matthew and Lucas, instead of renting a crib, high chair or stroller, she contacts the local twins club at her destination where members are more than happy to loan her the gear she needs. "In this day where you have to pay the airlines \$25 for a checked bag, you can't take extra equipment with you," explains the Los Angeles, California mom. On a recent vacation to Florida, Gamble not only got the gear she needed from local moms of twins but they shared great tips on things to do in the area, too.

"I ask quittances for acquaintances but you can't be shy," says Cynthia Zhu of New York, New York. Zhu noticed her neighbor had a son just a year older than her two-year-old identical twins Mark and Liam so she asked her if she could have the clothes he'd outgrown. "I got a ton of stuff. He had more clothes than my boys combined!"

When Julie Tosh of Minneapolis, Minnesota needs something, she turns to social networking. "Post what you need on Facebook and your friends might just know someone," says the owner of Nestingessentials.com, a website that connects expectant parents to the products they'll need, and mom to two-year-old fraternal twins Charlie and Oscar. "I've gotten great feedback from other parents happy to share and get rid of stuff from their homes. It's worth posting as you never know unless you ask."

GREAT GIFT GIVING STRATEGIES

Tim Johnson of San Pedro, California, and a self-proclaimed bibliophile, loves to give books as presents, especially to children. "I go to the clearance section in bookstores where you can get books for \$1 to \$3," says the father to two-year-old identical twin girls, Rebecca and Naomi. He also hits up his church's book sales and his local library's big monthly book sale.

But if your twins have electronics on their wish lists, keeping up with their appetites for the latest tech gadgets can be costly, especially when you need to buy two devices at once. Instead of buying new, think used says Judi Di Fonzo. When her seven-year-old fraternal twin sons, Neil and Craig, each asked for a Nintendo DS for their birthdays, this Philadelphia, Pennsylvania mom did a bit of research before doling out her hard-earned cash. She found a used pair with warranties from a local gaming store for about half of what they'd cost new.

I wholeheartedly agree with this strategy, especially as technology changes so rapidly making the new appear outdated in just a matter of months. So when my boys asked for new cell phones last Christmas, I purchased three refurbished phones for a third of what they would have cost new.

"I've discovered the best time to shop for the upcoming year's birthday party toys is to head over to your local Target, Toys R Us or other outlet about ten days into January," adds Susan Gamble. "This is when all the Christmas toys get deeply discounted." Armed with a list of ages and genders of the kids she thinks she'll have to buy for Gamble leaves the stores with some pretty sweet deals. "Of course you need the storage space to do this, but it sure beats going out the week before the party and paying full price for a gift."

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Your twins may be just babies now but trust me, time will fly and before you know it, your twins will both be applying to college. Talk about financial stress! Start saving now by opening a 529 plan, a tax-advantaged savings account, for each child. (I like the low fees and low contribution options offered by Iowa's plan, collegesavingsiowa.com.) Then link each 529 account to UPromise (upromise.com), a rewards program that gives you money for college when you spend at participating businesses, stores and even restaurants. It's amazing how quickly the savings add up!

With our twins rapidly closing in on college, I take a bit of solace in the knowledge that the financial aid formulas look favorably upon families with more than one child in college at the same time. In fact, when you have two in college at once, your Expected Family Contribution, or EFC, will be cut nearly in half, making it much easier to qualify for financial aid even if you think your income is too high. Furthermore, some schools like George Washington University and Eastern Michigan University offer second-sibling discounts, too.

Good news for sure. And these days, every little bit helps. ♥

Christina Baglivi Tinglof lives in Southern California and is the mother of three sons, including 15-year-old fraternal twin boys and a 13-year-old singleton. She's also the author of *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples*, and *Double Duty*. She blogs at christinabaglivitinglof.com and runs the website talk-about-twins.com.



Winter Fun with your Little Ones without Breaking the Bank!

By Michele Boom

Are you on a budget this holiday season? Looking for some simple, affordable winter fun? Try these easy, affordable craft ideas to help transform the winter doldrums into winter pizzazz!

Ice Stained Glass

What you need:

Pie pan
Water
Yarn

Pine needles, greenery, leaves, flowers or anything from nature that is decorative

Directions: Fill the pie pan with water. Line the inside edge of the pan with yarn so it goes completely around the pan. Keep the ends loose and up out of water. Place the leaves and pine needles inside the pan. Put it in the freezer. If it is below freezing, place outside. Remove once it is completely frozen over. Dipping it in warm water will help if it is stuck in pan. Hang your ice stained glass outside on a tree. A variation would be to add food coloring instead of leaves and greenery.



Winter Snow Globe

What you need:

Old baby food jar
Water
White or silver glitter (*stay away from the light fluffy kind as this type floats on the surface*)
Green or red ribbon
Figurines (*optional*)
Florist clay or modeling clay (*optional*)
Glycerin (*optional, to help slow the snow fall*)

Directions: First you need to wash the baby food jar. Attach figurine to inside of lid using clay. Figurines should be waterproof. Cake toppers, ornaments and plastic dolls are good ideas to use. Test that the figurine is the correct height so you can see it. Then, fill jar with water and glycerin. Add ½ teaspoon of glitter. Screw the cap on and invert. Glue a ribbon along the cap. No ribbon? Paint the cap! The cap can be glued on if you have little hands who may be tempted to unscrew!



Snow scene

What you need:

Shaving cream
White glue
Paper

Directions: Mix half shaving cream with half glue. Paint a snow scene on colored paper. The paint will be puffy and will dry that way!

Make Snow with detergent

What you need:

2 cups of Ivory Snow
1/2 cup water

Directions: Using an electric mixer, whip the mixture until it is light and fluffy. It can be used to decorate windows, crafts and trees. Use wet hands when handling to keep from sticking. It will dry and last for up to two weeks. To remove, just add water.

Salt Crystal Snowflakes

What you need:

Salt
Water
Paintbrush
Black construction paper

Directions: Boil water and pour into cup. Add a few teaspoons of salt in water. You will see salt crystals forming at bottom. Stir. Dip paintbrush in water and paint snowflakes on paper. Let air dry.

Michele Boom is a former elementary school teacher who turned in her chalkboard to stay at home with her young daughters. She is currently the President of her local MOMS Club and spends much of her time penning parenting articles for regional parenting magazines. She is also the mamma behind the popular Mommy blog, <http://www.Mammataalk.blogspot.com>.

Five Strategies for Winning the Holiday Mealtime Battle

by Rallie McAllister, MD, MPH

Parents want their children to eat well throughout the year, but it's especially challenging to keep our families on the right track during the holidays. As we shift into hectic holiday schedules, it's not always easy for parents and kids to stick to a nutritious diet, especially for those with a picky eater at home. For parents of multiples, this can prove even more difficult as one twin's picky eating habits may begin to affect and even escalate the problem with the other. That's why it's important to understand picky eating habits within your family and keep everyone on the right track, especially during this time of year.

Mealtimes provide a great opportunity for families to gather together and to reestablish good eating habits. For parents with multiple picky eaters at home, getting back on the right track can be even more difficult and can make mealtime seem like an endless battle.

According to a recent survey by Abbott, more than two out of three moms have a picky eater at home. Only one in 10 of those moms is successful at getting her picky eater to eat nutritious foods every day. This struggle is emotionally stressful for moms: the majority report feeling like the "bad guy" when it comes to managing their children's picky eating.

If you belong to the 90 percent of moms who long for a solution, there's hope! As a family physician, I often encounter these problems in children, and I always try to offer moms a few smart strategies and tips to help get their children eating healthier.

1 Make all of your holiday meals a family affair. Many families eat the big holiday meals together, but too often children find opportunities to snack between meals. Eating as a family allows parents to model healthy eating behaviors. When your family gathers around the table to eat and reconnect, your child gets more than just good nutrition—they get important family time.

2 Invite kids to help out in the kitchen. Moms know that children love to help. By encouraging your picky eaters to help you make meals, they're more likely to eat and enjoy the final product. Preparing meals can be fun, and kids are more likely to eat the foods they helped prepare.

3 Teach healthy habits for life. For moms with picky eaters, patience is key, since the problem won't be solved overnight. It's important to give kids a little freedom of choice in their eating decisions, rather than insisting that they eat a particular food. In the meantime, to help with a child's daily nutritional well-being and for mom's peace of mind, try PediaSure® or PediaSure SideKicks®. PediaSure is a source of complete, balanced nutrition that's clinically proven to help children grow*. For picky eaters who are not behind on the growth curve, PediaSure SideKicks is a source of supplemental nutrition to help balance out an uneven diet.

4 Introduce your child to other healthy eaters. Kids learn from other kids. Studies show that when children are given the opportunity to watch other kids eating vegetables that they themselves previously refused to eat, their intake of those vegetables increases significantly. With this in mind, it's a good idea to serve nutritious foods at play dates and at family get-togethers. If one child eats his carrots and broccoli with gusto, the rest of the children are likely to follow suit.

5 Give your child a choice. It's important to allow your multiples to make some decisions together and individually, including decisions about which foods to eat, as long as those foods meet your approval. The key is to create a win-win situation by offering your children a choice between two similar, wholesome foods. Whichever food they choose, they'll be getting good nutrition.

It can be especially hard to gain ground on picky eating during the holiday season when you have a house full of picky eaters, but don't give up! Continue to offer your children nutritious foods and encourage them to go easy on the holiday sweets and treats, and you'll be well on your way to helping your kids develop healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.

For more information on how to win the battle on picky eating, visit PediaSure.com. Parents should also call the new PediaSure Feeding Expert line at 800-986-8798 to speak to a live nutrition for answers to picky eating problems. ♥

*Rallie McAllister, MD, MPH, is a family physician, member of the PediaSure Mom Brigade, and coauthor of *The Mommy MD Guide to Your Baby's First Year*. (www.mommymdguides.com.)*

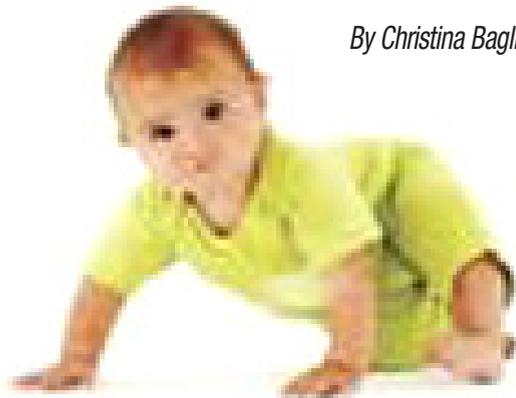
*Studied in children at risk for malnutrition



Are You Who You Think You Are?

*An Interview with
Dr. Nancy Segal,
the Author of
Someone Else's Twin*

By Christina Baglivi Tinglof



As the director of the Twin Studies Center as well as a professor of psychology at California State University, Fullerton, no one's more passionate about the study of twins than Dr. Nancy Segal. In her latest book, *Someone Else's Twin: The True Story of Babies Switched at Birth*, Dr. Segal, a fraternal twin herself, investigates the unusual cases of identical twins switched at birth. In particular, Segal tells us the story of identical twins, Delia and Begoña, born in 1973 in Spain's Canary Islands. Due to hospital error, an unrelated baby, Beatriz, was accidentally switched with Delia in the nursery. Suddenly, Begoña became a fraternal twin and Beatriz her virtual twin. The two grew up together in Begoña's biological family never realizing that they were unrelated. The other identical twin, Delia, then grew up in a non biological family as a singleton. The families never learned the truth until 28 years later when the two twins met by chance. Once DNA tests confirmed that Delia and Begoña were indeed identical twins, everyone's lives were suddenly turned upside down.

Dr. Segal's riveting account not only explains the legal fallout once all parties learned the agonizing truth but she also examines deeper emotional questions such as, how does a mother truly know if a baby is hers? How is our identity formed? And, when it comes to raising children, which plays a greater role, nature or nurture?

I had a chance to talk with Dr. Segal recently about her new book. Below are highlights of our conversation.

Question: You write in the book's introduction that "Every once in a while a researcher discovers a problem, event, or situation that is irresistible, something so compelling that she drops everything to study it." Can you explain what your fascination was with this story? Why did you drop everything to fly to the Canary Islands to interview, Delia and Begoña, the two identical twins switched at birth, and Begoña's virtual twin, Beatriz?

Answer: There were four issues that jumped out at me once I learned about this case. First, what was the emotional response of these people to suddenly find out that everything about their lives was not the way they thought it should be? Second, what does this tell us about the science of how mothers know who their babies are? After all, mothers are in hospitals and they're given a baby to take home. How do they know that that baby is theirs? It's a very important question and one that's been overlooked for many reasons that I go into in the book. The fourth issue was a legal consideration. How do lawyers hope to compensate people for the loss of a life? The fact that they [*Beatriz, Begoña, and Delia*] lived lives that were unintended, ones that shouldn't have been theirs. And it became possible only because of someone's careless mistake. And finally, there was the whole nature-nurture question. Are we more like people with whom we've been raised and are not related to or are we more like people with whom we share genes and been raised apart? So the whole package just had so much in it, questions of universal significance that went beyond this case.

Question: As a mother, I kept wondering while I was reading this book how the moms of the switched-at-birth babies didn't suspect something was wrong. After all, most were told at the time

of the birth that their babies were identical yet when they got them home, the babies were obviously very different looking.

Answer: Keep in mind that the mother in Spain, the mother of Beatriz and Begoña, was told the girls were identical but she was still living under the legacy of the Franco era where people did not question authority. And what mother really questions whether or not a baby is hers? As I write in the book, all throughout human history, women have delivered babies at home so there was never a question whose baby it was but once women started delivering babies in hospitals, beginning in the 1900s but certainly with a big rise in the 1960s, this whole question could have come up but never did because it's not part of the human female repertoire to question if the baby is hers. You are given this baby. Why would you question that it's not yours?

Question: Yet it also tells me something about the mother-child bonding process. We think it's all biological, that we'll instantly know our own children. But bonding doesn't necessarily take that form, does it?

Answer: No, it doesn't. In the [*switched-at-birth*] case in Switzerland where the boys were switched back to their biological families at age seven, and you'd think this is the mother's other identical son, he looks like the boy she has been raising, she should fall in love with him instantly. And she didn't. She had bonded with the other [*non biological*] child. The bonding that forms between mothers and children is really a function of the time and caring that's invested in these children, and the attachments that develop.

Question: You write that there are now seven known cases of identical twins switched at birth. These stories came to light because the twins were mistaken for their co twins. Therefore, does it make you think that there are probably dozens of other non-identical or fraternal twins accidentally switched at birth?

Answer: That's a great question. They estimate 20,000 accidental baby switches occur each year nationwide but virtually all are corrected before the babies leave the hospital. And that's probably the case. But you have to imagine that some are not. So for every incorrect placement of the baby, it means two families go home with the wrong child. It could well be with fraternal twins that they would never discover this because people know that fraternal twins can look completely different. It's possible that this goes on and would never be detected. But I don't want to put fear in parents' hearts. My intention is to alert people to the possibility that this probably occurs in some rare cases. And if you're in a hospital and you suspect you've been given the wrong baby, you have to speak up.

Question: Let's talk specifically about the major focus of your book, mainly about Beatriz, Begoña, Delia. Each suffered greatly

after the truth came out but each felt a loss in a very different way. Can you explain?

Answer: Delia [*an identical twin raised as a singleton*] suffered because she was raised in a family where everyone was very different from her. What she thought were the usual adolescent tensions that most kids have turned out to be a clash in personalities and abilities. Delia also developed leukemia when she was sixteen and was unable to find a suitable bone marrow donor among her family. She had to have a more risky procedure instead. Plus, her biological father died when she was six. She will never have the opportunity to meet him. She was also denied growing up with her identical twin sister and denied being raised by the family that gave birth to her.

Begoña [*identical twin raised in biological family as a fraternal twin with her virtual twin, Beatriz*] suffered from not knowing her identical twin. She was very worried about her unrelated sister [*virtual twin Beatriz*] who suffered a great deal. So Begoña was torn between her loyalty to her unrelated sister and this desire to get to know her new sister. Also, the shock of discovering that her life, too, was not what it was intended to be. She was supposed to be an identical twin but she was not.

Beatriz [*born a singleton but raised as a fraternal twin in a non biological family*] suddenly found herself in a family where she was connected to nobody. She had felt this way from the time since she was 12. She felt different from her sisters. She feared rejection from her family once the mistake had been discovered. She feared she would lose their love. She feared she would lose her twin sister. She also felt caught between the two families. She felt she wasn't up to the standards of her rearing family but she felt she was above her biological family in the terms of sophistication and culture.

Question: I couldn't help but try to "rank" or "quantify" how much each twin has suffered after learning the truth but you write that you believe it's nearly impossible to do that. How so?

Answer: I think you can't. As an outsider we can look objectively and make a list of whom suffered what but how you suffer is not just a function of the objective events, it's the function of your personality and how you deal with things. Therefore, I cannot even come close to rank ordering who I think suffered the most and I wouldn't even try. I think everyone suffered and each in her own way. And everyone's suffering is completely legitimate.

Question: You worked for many years on the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart (MISTRA). In general, how do their stories differ from the switched-at-birth stories you write about in *Someone Else's Twin*?

Answer: Every pair of twins that I studied with MISTRA with the exception of one was not a switched-at-birth twin. All the others were separated due

to mothers dying, illegitimate birth, parents who couldn't afford to keep them, and so they were adopted into separate families. And that's more or less how events played out. But when you have a switch, it becomes a whole different scenario because this was a situation that was not intended to happen and [biological] parents did want these children. This was a human mistake causing these twins to be raised apart. So when there's a reunion, it's not a wonderful celebration as it is for most of the [MISTRA] twins we've studied, instead it's a shattering of identities.

Question: In the second half of the book, you write about the problems hospitals face with outdated mother-infant identification. What would you like to see change?

Answer: I really like Dr. Garrido-Lestache's procedure of fingerprinting but as he makes it very clear—and as I hope I made it clear in the book—it has to be done carefully. Fingerprinting is a simple, easy, cheap procedure but it requires training. In Spain they have a biometric sensor which does fingerprints by scanning them and that's a lot easier than using ink pads. Also, some have tried to patent a DNA procedure which is technically feasible but not economically effective at this point. I think we need to develop those further. Those procedures in place would assure good mother-infant identification. We also need to limit the number of patients that are assigned to each nurse. When nurseries get too crowded that's when mistakes can happen.

Question: What do you think we can learn from this tragedy?

Answer: First, if you suspect a medical mistake of any kind, you've got to speak up. You don't want to live your life with these what-if questions. I also think we need to understand what it means to lose a sense of identity. People can have their lives shattered for many reasons when things are suddenly not what they seem to be. For example, supposed you learn you are adopted. That will revise the way you think of yourself, your family, everything about you. And we're so careful with children, to place them in stable, adopted homes because we



want them to have a sense of connection and continuity. But if this should happen to an adult, we think, 'Oh, they're old enough, they have their identities, there's no problem.' But I think the judge on this case misstated things when she said that the damage dated from the time of the discovery onward not retrospectively. Everyone suffered because their lives were completely revised. So I think we have to pay greater attention to events that can happen that can alter one's sense of identity and how people can cope with those.

Question: What are you working on now these days?

Answer: I have a new book coming out in May 2012. It's called, *Born Together—Reared Apart: The Landmark Minnesota Twins Studies*. It's a complete comprehensive overview of the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart. The methods, the findings, the implications, the controversy. It includes pictures, anecdotes, and the science. You name it; it's all in there. ♥

Christina Baglivi Tinglof lives in Southern California and is the mother of three sons, including 15-year-old fraternal twin boys and a 13-year-old singleton. She's also the author of *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples*, and *Double Duty*. She blogs at christinabaglivitinglof.com and runs the website talk-about-twins.com.

About Nancy L. Segal the author of *Someone Else's Twin*:

Nancy L. Segal, Ph.D. (CA), is a professor in the Department of Psychology at California State University, Fullerton, and the director of the Twin Studies Center, which she founded in 1991. She herself is a twin and an expert on twin research. She is the author of *Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins* and *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us about Human Behavior*, and the senior editor of *Uniting Psychology and Biology: Integrative Perspectives on Human Development*. She is



also an associate editor of *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, the official journal of the International Society for Twin Studies. Dr. Segal's media appearances include *Today*, *Good Morning America*, *20/20*, the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, the *Martha Stewart Show*, *Discovery Health*, and the *Diane Rehm Show* on NPR. Dr. Segal has been a contributor to TWINS Magazine for many years.



Want to read this fascinating book?

You can purchase a copy of the book at Amazon for \$16.50 and other online resellers. Click on this link to learn more:

http://www.amazon.com/Someone-Else-s-Twin-Babies-Switched/dp/1616144378/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1310241406&sr=1-1



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The 'OLIVER TWIST' Method

by Carolyn Blodgett

Being the mother of twin boys has made me become quite creative. I have learned to think fast and lie even faster (a necessity!)

They work as a team and I am on my own most of the time.

Carolyn Blodgett, Carolyn and her husband Roger live in a small southeastern Iowa town with their three boys Alex, Adam and Andrew. They enjoy spending time together which includes soccer and basketball games, piano recitals, and school plays as well as quiet time at home. Carolyn works outside the home but still manages to find time to write about her precocious boys. The never fail to give her good material to draw from.

Adam and Andrew are notorious for being contrary. Dinner was always especially trying for this very reason. When they were around the age of three it was an especially difficult time in our lives. One of the boys likes peanut butter and dislikes jam; the other guy is all about the jam and just forgets the peanut butter. These are minor incidents but really just help to accentuate the struggle. If they are problematic with peanut butter and jam what happens when you add more components... more ingredients and more silverware?

Adam had gotten into the habit of not wanting anything that was presented to him...ever! This got old extremely quick and I truly had enough. One evening while I was preparing dinner, I got out place settings for four members of my family of five. I then filled the plates of Adam's twin brother Andrew and my oldest son Alex while my husband and I had the last two plates.

Adam was looking at me bewildered. I paid no attention to him but waited for him to speak. "Where's mine?" that sweet little voice asked. I gave him a questioning look myself and replied that he wasn't having dinner tonight. He looked around the table at everyone else and then said that he wanted to eat. I told him, quite matter-of-factly, that he could have dinner tomorrow night but that tonight he was just going to skip

it. I was not mean-spirited about it, I was not telling him he could starve but were merely conversational. He started to get a little indignant with me but I kept my cool and kept enjoying my dinner and talking to the rest of my family. I was surprised and grateful that my other sons stayed out of this and didn't try to intercede on Adam's behalf. Andrew normally would've sat and argued with me about Adam's need to eat. Twins do have a habit, thankfully, of sticking up for each other; however tonight was not that night. This had to be all Adam's doing for it to really work.

Finally Adam spoke again letting me know he was unhappy with this arrangement and that he wanted to eat. I told him that I assumed that since he was often so unhappy about what we were having for dinner that this meant that he would be relieved to skip it. He started to insist that he wanted to eat, that he liked my cooking, that it wasn't fair that his brothers were eating and he wasn't allowed to. I gave a sigh and relented. I got his plate and fed him and he ate every bite in what I can only imagine was a show of will, that he was getting his way and had won the argument. I was fine with that considering that he ate and we didn't have our usual dinnertime dialogue of "I don't like this" or "Can I have something else?"

Sometimes both the twins are difficult when it comes to meals. They've requested ice cream or candy or Happy Meals instead of what I have prepared because they really like those things. In the end they must know that this is never going to happen but still, they try to wear me down. There are many things I will negotiate with them like corn in place of peas; carrots instead of cauliflower, etc. Not dinner as a whole though. If I know for a fact that there is something that they have tried and don't like I, of course, don't push it on them but the rule is that we try new things. I am like most every mother out there by keeping a mental tally of what my kids have tried and liked or have tried and spit out. I started off with the trying of new things early with the twins. I was afraid that if they got older and started to try different things that they would be predisposed to what they were used to and shun the new things I was trying to introduce to them. However, if one of them liked something and the other hated it they would sometimes side together and both decide to not eat it. These are real situations with twins, the solidarity is wonderful but not with everything. I had to remember that even though they were twins it did not mean they were the same. It did not mean they would both like or dislike the same things and this can be easy to overlook.

It has gotten much easier over the years, as I write this they are six years-old and in the first grade now. We still have struggles, naturally, but I am so used to dealing with my twins that I can handle it. Thankfully I've never again had to resort to my 'Oliver Twist' method, it has effectively been retired and I have moved on to other ways of coercion. Ah, the things mothers do to accomplish even the simplest of goals. ♥





"Learning to Ride the Roller Coaster"

by Dan Pfaff

It was my wife Cindi's fifth month of her pregnancy when our doctor recommended she have an ultrasound. Cindi's stomach had grown several inches beyond what was considered normal since the last checkup. When we asked our physician what she thought the reason was for the accelerated growth rate, she made it sound as if there was no reason for concern and that it was simply a routine examination.

On the day the ultrasound was to be performed, Cindi and I brought our two-year-old daughter, Katherine, to the hospital with us. After a brief period of providing background information and filling out forms, the ultrasound technician began scanning Cindi's belly and recording measurements. I took Katherine out into the hallway where we sat on a bench eating Oreos and talking about her favorite Sesame Street characters.

When I was finally called back into the room, I prepared myself for the worst. I thought I might enter and see Cindi crying or hastily gathering her things to leave. These were scenarios I envisioned if something had happened to our baby. I blocked the thought from my mind. And then I considered maybe the ultrasound had detected nothing wrong at all. I didn't want to think about that either. I knew an abnormal increase in belly size and an ultra-sound that failed to prove forces beyond her control as the culprit might cause Cindi to diet. I found myself trying to come up with a convincing way to tell her there was nothing wrong with her recent obsession with oranges and peanut butter that was threatening to bankrupt us. I was so confused.

When I stepped through the curtain, rather than finding Cindi upset as I anticipated, she lay on the hospital bed, her belly still showing, and she was smiling as though she had just won the lottery. "Guess what," she said. I looked for answers from the ultrasound technician who was also grinning. "The baby is ten pounds?" I asked. "We're having twins!" Cindi responded. As I caught my breath, I held Katherine tight then let her slide from my grasp until her feet hit the floor. "That's great," I said, trying to sound sincere. Cindi told me later that I had turned pale.

Hearing the news that my wife was pregnant with twins began a period of anxiety in me that I had never experienced

before. Although I was relieved that nothing was physically wrong with our babies or with my wife, all I could think about at that moment as my daughter slipped from my grasp was the double cost of diapers and daycare. Instead of one crib, one highchair, and one stroller, we now needed two. I thought about how someday there would be two simultaneous car insurance payments and then two concurrent college tuitions to help out with. Our house was suddenly too small, along with our forms of transportation—our biggest vehicle being a Toyota Corolla. And then what about Katherine? How would she respond to receiving less attention?

That was back in 1997 when our adventure first began. It has now been fourteen years since the twins, Matthew and Aly, were born, and I wish I could say my anxiety has diminished since then. It has not. Instead of worrying about the cost of diapers and daycare my anxiety has now turned into concern about grades and how I'm going to get everyone to their extra-curricular activities on time. College, although rapidly approaching, is a bridge Cindi and I will have to cross when we get to it. Katherine is a junior in high school just learning to drive. The twins are now freshmen involved in music and every sport imaginable like their sister.

I think back to that day when we had the ultrasound performed and, yes, there was a moment that I too felt proud and excited about the idea of having twins. It was a very brief moment, however. I don't know if it's because I'm a man or if it's just my personality, but having multiples put me on an accelerated roller coaster ride into parenthood, and the best I've been able to do is learn to roll with it. But although initially I panicked, and although I still sometimes do, it is a ride that I wouldn't trade for anything. ♥



Dan Pfaff received an English degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he also received a certificate in creative writing. From there, he went on to earn his English teaching certification at Edgewood College. Dan lives in the country with his wife of 19 years and their three teenagers, two of which are twins. When he is not in the classroom, Dan enjoys writing and spending time with his family. He currently has a short story being published in *The Monarch Review*.

Double Takes

HOLIDAY 2011
Edition



Addison & Brooklyn
FR – 20 months old
Anaheim Hills, Ca



Hayden and Connor
FR – 11 months old
Smithfield, Virginia



Hunter and Heath
ID – 9 months old
Rockwall, Texas



Sam and Sarah
FR – 11-years-old
Centennial, CO



Hailey and Hannah
ID – 10-years-old
Fort Collins, CO



Ava and Isabella
ID – 21 months old
Honolulu, HI



Julia and Holly
FR – 4-years-old
Scotch Plains, NJ



Jordan Taylor and Haley Madison
FR – 8 months old
Jamestown, North Carolina



Landon and Luke
FR – One-year-old
Abilene, Texas



Simon and Norah
FR – 16 months old
Newtonville, MA



Taylor and Avery
ID - 3-years-old
Calgary, Alberta Canada



Hadlie and Hudson
FR - 8 months old
Modesto, CA



John and Thomas
FR - 3-years-old
Clark, NJ



Brielle Hope & Kendall Faith
FR - 22 months old
Philadelphia, PA



Heath and Aiden
ID - 7 months old
Brisbane qld, AUSTRALIA



Emmy and Caleb
FR - 4-years-old
College Station, TX



Anja & Abby
ID - 5 months old
Abbotsford, BC Canada



Eyan and Ella
FR - 7 months old
Fremont, NH.



Charlie and Rory
ID - 2-years-old
Chester, NY



Samson and Maxim
FR - 15 months old
Auckland, New Zealand

**Mom says, This picture literally captures the 2 seconds when they were NOT crying. Someone happened to snap this picture at the perfect moment. Feel so lucky to have been forwarded this picture we love it!!



Twins' Night before Christmas...

by Cynthia F. Panks

It's late Christmas Eve when this story begins...
In the home of Matilda and Monica, twins!
Identical sisters, who look just the same...
Are worried that Santa may not know their names!

When visiting Santa out at the big Mall.
They stood next to him confidently tall.
"Matilda, you are quite a gymnast," he said.
I like your fine medal that hangs by your bed,

And, Monica's trophy from her last recital;
You're quite a pianist; there is no denial."
How did Santa do it? Did he just guess?
Twin identity crisis can cause so much stress!

If friends cannot do it, how did this jolly elf...
Recognize each twin for her unique self?
Was Santa just lucky to get their names right?
Will he really know them on Christmas Eve night?

Momma said that Santa's observant and smart.
Does he have the secret that tells twins apart?
The twins fashioning an early gift from Momma,
Names monogrammed on plaid Christmas pajamas,

Decided to put Santa to the big test...
After all, he was Santa and he should know best.
Matilda and Monica made a big swap;
They switched out their new Christmas P.J. tops!

Ready to face Santa with a twin game,
Matilda wore Monica and Sis took her name.
As Mom and Dad slept, the girls crawled quietly...
To position themselves 'neath their bright Christmas tree
Momma knew they were anxious; so, she'd understand;

And, she said that Santa's a twin's biggest fan.
They waited for hours not making a peep.
But, before they knew it, the twins fell asleep.
Then Santa arrived and much to his chagrin...
Tumbled as he almost stepped on a twin!
"A Twin Slumber Party? Not in anyone's dream
On Christmas Eve night! This must be a scheme!"

Said Santa observant and Santa so wise;
And he was not fooled by their P.J. disguise.
Placing presents for Monica, Matilda, too,
Santa knew he still had one last thing to do.
Beside each girl's present, he left a note;
Here are the wise words that Santa wrote:

Twins are a gift to the world, times two.
But the real blessings lie in each of you.
Though you may look alike, you're uniquely apart
By actions and words that define separate hearts.
So be true to yourself though others may guess;
And, your face with your name will outshine the rest.

The girls were awakened by paws on the roof...
Was that Santa leaving? Did they miss their proof?
But, the note Santa left them gave their names new light.
And they heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight,
"Celebrate twins; forget all the drama!
I know who you are; so switch back your pajamas...
And, hop back in bed to let this story end
With a double Merry Christmas to all good twins!



About the Author Cynthia F. Panks:

Cynthia F. Panks, age 63 is the proud grandmother to two sets of twins! Writing is one of her favorite past times and she currently works at home as a Freelance Video Editor. She had two daughters who both delivered twins! Madison and Mackenzi are 14-years-old. Sydney and Shelby are 7-years-old. She wanted to write a Christmas poem on the uniqueness of being a twin since there weren't many holiday themed poem or songs for twins.





Hey I'm Graduating! Send Gifts!

(Cash preferred)

by Miriam Salerno



It seems that major milestones in education come in four year chunks – four years of high school, four years of college, four years of medical school, four years of a joint degree in law and whatever else, and even four years of raising twins. Yes, I have just elevated child-rearing to the same category as medical school. You did, in fact, read that correctly. I decided that surviving the first four years of having twins is a commendable rite of passage equal to that of any advanced degree. We've studied the books, we've tested each others' limits, and we've passed countless oral exams by doctors, in-laws and nosy ladies at coffee shops and grocery stores. I want a diploma. So in honor of my twins' upcoming fourth birthday, I've decided to celebrate my own achievements with a short list of...

JOBS I'M NOW QUALIFIED FOR AFTER RAISING TWINS FOR FOUR YEARS.

1. Middle East Peace Negotiator: Evan and Maya have more in common with the Israelis and Palestinians than you might think. First, for most of their young lives they've been completely irrational actors driven solely by emotions and without the ability to look at any situation objectively. Secondly, they are prone to outbursts of violence...though instead of suicide bombs or missiles, we deal mostly with hair-pulling and Lego launches. Third, their stubbornness knows no bounds... none. Dividing up Jerusalem can't be as challenging as divvying up a box of markers with only ONE orange. Crayons you can break in half, but, markers? You're dunzo.

2. Salesperson of any kind: Have you ever tried to convince a toddler to eat something or wear something or go

somewhere when they don't want to? Now imagine trying to convince two very different toddlers to do the SAME thing at the same time that neither one of them wants to do. It takes unearthly powers of persuasion and persistence. I could totally sell cars.

3. Surrealist writer: Evan wants a story about dinosaurs. Maya wants a story about princesses and magic crystals. No, no...Now Evan wants a story to about race cars and Maya wants it also to be about mommy and daddy and grandma and going to school. No problem, folks. I got it in the bag. I can make up a bedtime story about any absurd combination of random people places and illogical events...and it WILL have a moral, darn it! Go ahead. Test me. Let's see what you got, hot shot.

4. Short tempered... I mean short order

cook: "Evan, what do you want for breakfast?"

"NOTHING." "No, you have to eat something."

"NOTHING!" "Fine, starve... see if I care." "Okay, Maya, what do you want for breakfast?" "CHEESE." "No, you can't just have cheese."

"EGGS WITH CHEESE." "Okay, scrambled eggs with cheese coming up." (*proceed to make eggs, then serve eggs*). "NO I DON'T WANT THESE EGGS, cries Maya" "What?" "I SAID I WANTED PANCAKES!"

"Um, no you didn't." "I DON'T LIKE EGGS WITH CHEESE!" "You just f&*#ing asked for eggs with cheese. Eat the f&*#ing eggs with cheese" (*storm out of kitchen in a huff*).

5. Infantry Sniper: I would imagine there are few jobs in the world that require as much focus and concentration as a sniper. Imagine pointing a big gun and trying to aim and probably there is a war or whatnot and people are screaming and shooting and there is blood and helicopters and maybe guts flying around. And still this guy (or gal) has to stay focused and precisely blow the head off of someone. Now imagine you're driving a car and you're also on a conference call with a client and there are two three-year olds in the back and they want a book to read and someone dropped a toy and they want a snack and they are hitting each other and, oh shit, there are other cars on the road and maybe some motorcycles and still the kids are screaming and want pretzels or juice boxes and you're client is telling you something and you're trying to listen. And still you make it home alive. Sniper, schmiper.

6. Maid: 'nuf said. ♥

Miriam Salerno is mom to boy/girl twins. She is the author of the hilarious blog Bordeaux at Bedtime (www.bordeauxatbedtime.blogspot.com). Check it out for some more LOLs!



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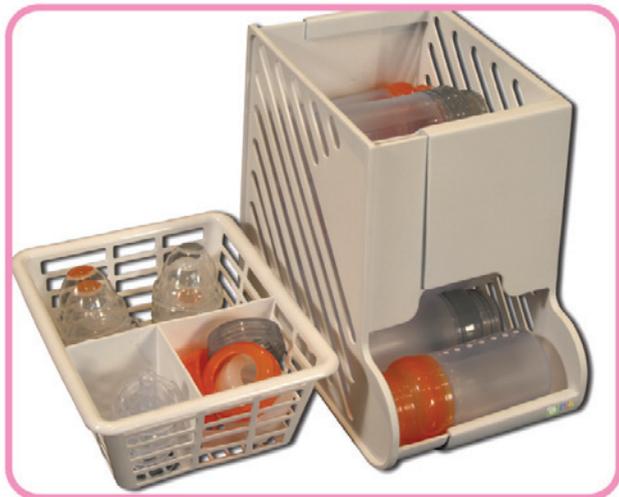
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