



## **Birth Announcements: Telling the World Your Happy News**

By Haile Parker McCollum

So you're on the hunt for pink gingham, blue clouds, nursery finery and a diaper pail. Planning for the birth of your child can transform you into the woman you said you'd never be. You know her, that friend of yours who nags her husband four months before her due date to get the nursery painted, obsesses over crib sheets and spends hours Google-ing for the perfect click in car seat. At the top of your husband's list of things to do before the baby gets here is "pay for college." At the top of your list is to find a laundry hamper liner that matches your nursery paint color. Somewhere in the middle are the things you should actually try to do before you arrive home with your swaddled little peanut.

Take for instance, the birth announcement. It is a good idea to choose one before you pack your hospital bag (don't forget socks and lip balm). If you spend all of your visits to the ultrasound technician trying to read the impossible printout and glimpse baby parts, you probably still don't know what you are having. Which is fine, you'll just need to pick both a girl and a boy announcement. Whether you have one or five, you should plan to send an announcement for each of your children. Each deserves their arrival trumpeted near and far in all the land.

Head to your local paper store, kick up your swollen heels and ask to see the baby albums. Your search for the perfect announcement starts here. Moms-to-be are older and wiser these days and the choices available reflect that trend. Don't feel like you have to send a frilly pink announcement if your style is modern and graphic. There is an announcement for every sensibility, your shopkeeper can help weed through the choices. If you live the rural life or have no paper store near you, fire up your preferred search engine and type in "birth announcement" You will find a bountiful plenty on-line.

Every mother thinks her child is beautiful, she just does and that is that. Which is why you may have noticed more and more moms sending announcements with photos on them. If you want to use a photo, wait a couple of days for your baby to get comfortable in the world and then take the picture. Choose a simple outfit and get in close for a good shot. Black and white photography is a good choice as it evens skin tones and looks kind of artsy. It is easy in most photo-editing software to change a digital color photo to black and white – your computer can help tell you how.

Once you have chosen your announcement design, ask if the store can print your return address on the envelopes before you print the actual announcement. That way you can dig out your wedding or holiday card list to begin hand addressing while you wait for the mad dash to the hospital. Labels, although easy to print, are not the way to go for social correspondence. Even the clear ones look like mass mail tacky. This auspicious event demands a personal touch.



The upside to selecting your baby announcement *before* you have your baby is that you can call the store from your sofa or bed after the baby is born with all of the new baby's information and off to the presses they'll go. It should include at the very least the baby's name, birth date – including the year – and the parent's names. Most parents choose to include the weight and length, but that is entirely up to you. And you may not wish to include this information if you have an itty-bitty or toddler-almost-ready-to-walk sized infant. You can also add the town or hospital where the baby was born. Many moms chose to print the baby's full name, including the last name. If you do that, you can include just your first names. It might read something like this:

Taylor Louise Miller  
August 21, 2005  
seven pounds, two ounces  
twenty-one inches  
Paul and Sara

You can choose to spell out the numbers or not. You can base this decision on how the text will look when it is printed and the style of your announcement. A salutation like "We welcome with joy" above the baby's name is a lovely addition as well. If you are going to call your child by a nickname, you should add that below that full name in quotation marks. Baby boy "Trip" won't get gifts with his grandfather's name "Ezera Robert Nichols, III" monogrammed on them.

Before you agree to the final printing, be sure to ask for a proof – a sample of exactly what your announcement will look like in print or electronic format – from the store to make sure it looks just so and that everything is spelled correctly before they print. Or you'll have to throw those babies out with the bathwater.

Now that you have them in hand, you are ready to mail. There is no need to write a personal note on each announcement. You are a busy new mom and the announcement speaks for itself. Because you have already addressed your envelopes, you can now get your friend or mother-in-law to help stuff your pre-addressed envelopes and drop them in the mail. This does double duty; it keeps her busy and feeling useful – and you'll look like a super on the ball new mom. Even if the truth is that you are still in your pajamas at dinner and have not washed your hair for days.

If you just didn't get through your checklist and choose the announcement pre-baby, don't fret, just try and get it in the mail soon after the baby is born. After about 6 months, skip it and just send a cute family photo for the holidays.