



A FREE KIT FOR REAL AUSSIE PARENTS

The Survival Kit

Straight talk and real tips for every stage, from newborn to teenager, pulled from a decade of Mums Lounge stories.

NEW MUMS / **TODDLERS** / **PRESCHOOL** / **PRIMARY** /
TWEENS / **TEENS**



WELCOME

Hey mumma, glad you're here.

Whatever stage you're in, chances are you've Googled something at midnight that nobody warned you about. That's basically why Mums Lounge exists.

This guide is the stuff we'd tell you over a coffee, not a textbook. Real tips for every age and stage, pulled from a decade of Mums Lounge stories and the mums who lived them.

Steal what's useful, skip what's not, and send it to a mate who needs it today. Every section starts with one quick win you can act on straight away.

Let's get into it. The Mums Lounge team

What's inside

Part One	The New Mum Years
	Amy's Newborn Checklist
Part Two	The Toddler Years
Part Three	The Preschool Years
Part Four	Primary School
Part Five	The Tween Years
Part Six	The Teen Years
Bonus	Your Stage-by-Stage Survival Checklists

Want more like this? Browse every stage at mumslounge.com.au →

PART ONE

The New Mum Years

01

The fourth trimester is rough. Here's what actually helps, in your body and out of it.



Your body needs a recovery plan too

Birth is a big physical event however your baby arrives, and recovery takes longer than most of us are told.

QUICK WIN Set up a recovery station in the bathroom. Pads, a peri bottle, ice packs and your pain relief, all within arm's reach.

- The first few days are rough. Bleeding, swelling and soreness are all expected. Call your midwife or GP straight away if you're soaking a pad in an hour or less, passing large clots, running a fever, or your pain is getting worse instead of better.
- Feeling better after week one doesn't mean you're "done". Healing quietly keeps going for months, especially down below.
- Book in with the people whose job it is to help: your child and family health nurse, a lactation consultant, your GP, and a women's health physio for your pelvic floor and tummy muscles. Asking for help isn't a last resort, it's literally their job.

*Here's the bit nobody puts on the hospital discharge form: **how you're recovering physically has a real effect on how you're coping mentally.** Looking after your body isn't a nice-to-have. It's the job.*

Keep reading: what to actually expect from postpartum recovery →

Sleep survival, for actual humans

Broken sleep comes with a newborn, but there are ways to make it less brutal.

QUICK WIN Next time someone says "let me know if you need anything", hand them the baby and go nap. That's the anything.

- Take turns overnight with your partner, even if it's just swapping who gets up first.
- Sleep when the baby sleeps at least some of the time. The to-do list can wait.
- A loose routine beats no routine, but don't chase perfect in the early weeks.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

The newborn haze is not forever, and needing help is not losing.

safe sleep space first, and never nod off together on the couch. [Red Nose has the full safe sleep guide.](#)

Keep reading: 7 sleep tips for new parents →

Amy's Newborn Checklist

This is the actual list our co-owner Amy, a pharmacist and mum of two, sends to friends who ask "what do I actually need?" Where she has a favourite, it's called out below.

Heads up: some of these are affiliate links, so Mums Lounge may earn a small commission if you buy through them. It doesn't cost you a cent more, and Amy only lists what she'd actually tell a friend to buy.

Feeding

- ☐ Breast milk storage bags
- ☐ Bottles x 2, **Amy's pick: Pigeon Softouch glass bottle**. Don't buy too many bottles until you know how you're going to feed.
- ☐ Bottle brush and steriliser, if bottle feeding
- ☐ Absorbent breast pads, **Amy's pick: Bare Mum**
- ☐ Hydrogel breast pads, for sore or damaged nipples. See a lactation consultant if damage doesn't settle.
- ☐ Breast ice packs, **Amy's pick: Ninja Mama**

Nappy Change

- ☐ Nappies, wipes, nappy disposal bags
- ☐ Nappy rash cream
- ☐ Silicone change mat
- ☐ Changing caddy
- ☐ Cotton terry nappies, for everything except a nappy (think burp cloths and change mat covers), **Amy's pick: Kmart**

Sleep

- ☐ Bedside sleeper, **Amy's pick: SnuzPod**
- ☐ Waterproof bassinet sheets
- ☐ Cot, plus cot sheets and a waterproof protector. Must meet the mandatory Australian Standard, especially if second-hand.
- ☐ Sleep sacks in 0000 and 000, **Amy's picks: Ergo Pouch, Love to Dream**
- ☐ White noise machine with night light, **Amy's picks: Hatch, Noddee**

Getting Around

- ☐ Car seat and infant capsule. Must meet Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754, and get it professionally fitted.
- ☐ Pram, **Amy's pick: UPPAbaby Vista**
- ☐ Travel pram
- ☐ Baby carrier, **Amy's pick: Ergobaby**

Health and Bath

- ☐ Thermometer
- ☐ Snotty nose sucker
- ☐ Eye wipes
- ☐ Basic first aid kit
- ☐ Infant paracetamol. Check with your pharmacist or GP before giving it to a baby under 3 months, and see a doctor for any fever in that age group.

For Mum

- ☐ Hospital bag, packed by week 36
- ☐ Maternity pads
- ☐ Peri bottle
- ☐ Postpartum briefs, **Amy's pick: Bare Mum**
- ☐ Disposable underwear
- ☐ Warm and cold packs for perineum and tummy
- ☐ Recovery shorts, **Amy's pick: SRC**
- ☐ Nursing bra or crop
- ☐ Pain relief, as advised by your midwife or doctor
- ☐ Stool softener, ask your pharmacist

Clothing (Newborn Size)

- ☐ 7 long sleeve, long leg onesies
- ☐ 7 singlet suits
- ☐ Socks or booties
- ☐ A couple of 000 size onesies for when they outgrow newborn quickly

For Later

- ☐ Baby bouncer, for awake time only, not sleep
- ☐ Play mat
- ☐ High chair, **Amy's pick: Stokke Tripp Trapp**

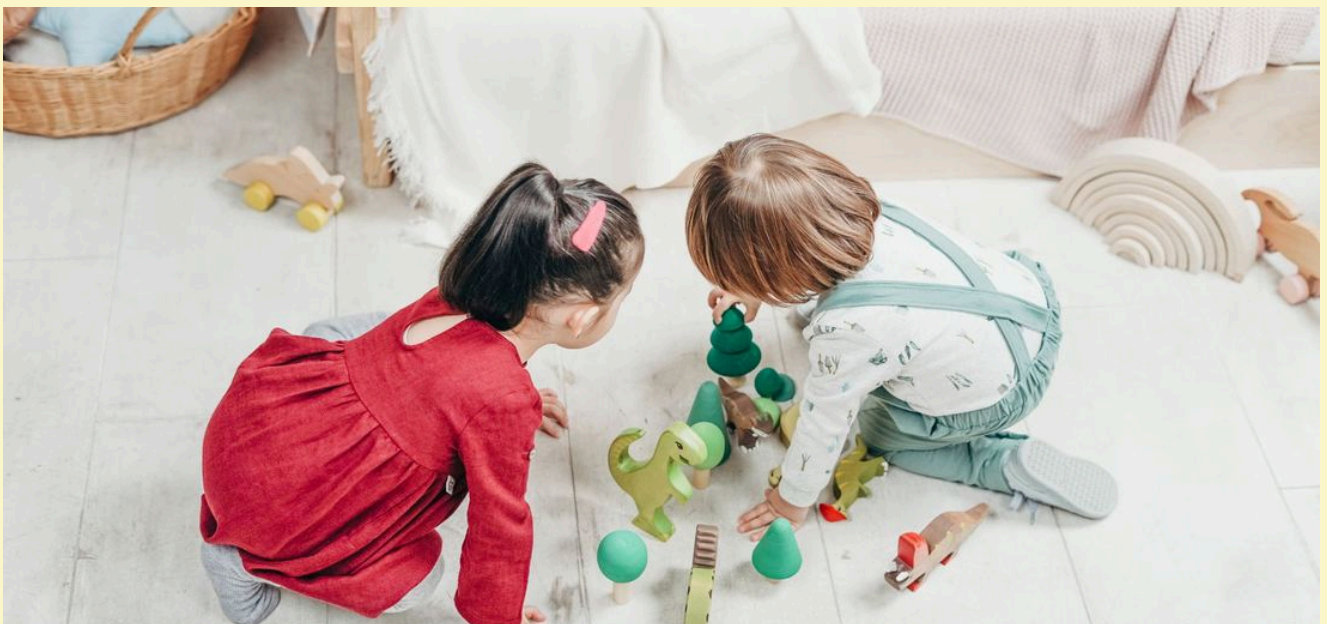
Run out at 9pm? Amy's go-to for almost everything here is **The Memo**, with fast delivery for the "we're out of what?!" moments.

PART TWO

The Toddler Years

02

Meltdowns, screens, and the shoe negotiation that never ends. Here's how to get through it.



The tantrum is a brain thing, not a behaviour problem

Most toddlers have tantrums. They're a normal part of development, not a sign you're doing something wrong.

QUICK WIN Practise the pause. Stop, take one breath, and give yourself just enough time to respond instead of snap.

- Toddlers think the world runs on their timetable. That's not bratty, that's just where their brain's at right now.
- A toppled block tower feels like the end of the world to them, because right now, it kind of is.
- Big, fast emotional swings mean they're learning independence, not testing you on purpose.
- What actually works: stay calm, keep them safe, and name what they're feeling ('You're really cross the tower fell'). Then ride it out and remind yourself you'll both survive it.
- If tantrums are very frequent, very long, involve them hurting themselves, or are still going strong after 4 or 5, check in with your GP or child and family health nurse.

Keep reading: [why your toddler's meltdown is actually a milestone](#) →

Toilet training works best when they're ready, not when you are

Most kids are ready between two and three. There's no prize for early.

QUICK WIN Put a potty out early and let them sit on it. Familiar beats scary.

- Signs they're ready: dry for a couple of hours, telling you about a wee, or copying you.
- Expect accidents and keep your reaction boring. Praise the trying, not just the wins. Dry nights often come later.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Reframe before you react. Most toddler behaviour is a stage, not a verdict on your parenting.

Fussy eating is a phase, not a verdict on your cooking

Toddlers who happily ate everything at 12 months often start refusing half of it by two. It's a normal part of development, and it usually passes.

QUICK WIN Offer two veggies, one they like and one they don't, and let them pick tonight's. The other one comes back tomorrow. It's a small choice that feels big to them.

- It can take 10 or more tries before a toddler accepts a new food. A no today isn't a no forever.
- Turn it into a game. Let them pick a colour for dinner, like red, and try something new in that colour.
- Get them in the kitchen. Stirring, tearing herbs or arranging the plate makes them far more likely to eat it.
- Skip the bribes, and don't let them fill up on milk or juice before meals.
- Get them moving. Toddlers need about three hours of active play across the day, and it helps with appetite and sleep too.

Worth holding onto: your job is to offer the food, their job is to decide how much to eat. If they're refusing whole food groups, losing weight, or gagging on most textures, check in with your GP or child and family health nurse.

Keep reading: a chef and mum's top tricks for taming fussy eaters →

ALSO WORTH A READ **the no-bake WeetBix balls that saved our breakfast standoff →**

PART THREE

The Preschool Years

03

Big feelings, bigger questions, and a backpack that's half their size.



The first day doesn't have to end in tears, yours or theirs

Starting preschool is a big change for both of you, and a wobbly start is normal.

QUICK WIN Let them carry their own bag, even if it's nearly as big as they are. It gives them one thing that feels like their choice.

- Some crying at drop-off is normal. It usually stops within minutes of you leaving, even if it doesn't feel that way.
- A short, calm goodbye beats a long one, and always say it rather than sneaking out. Linger or disappearing both tend to make the next drop-off harder.
- The same routine every morning helps more than a pep talk. Kids this age run on predictable, not persuaded.
- If the tears are still going strong after a few weeks, or they're upset well beyond drop-off, have a chat with their educators and your GP.

Keep reading: six tips to make the move to childcare easier, for both of you →

ALSO WORTH A READ [the mum who drew a hug button on her son's hand for his first day →](#)

Sibling fights are practice, not proof they hate each other

Preschoolers are still learning to share, wait their turn and lose gracefully, so squabbles with a brother or sister come with the territory.

QUICK WIN Before you step in, ask yourself one thing: is anyone getting hurt? If not, give them a minute to sort it out themselves.

- Skip the "who started it" investigation. "What happened?" and "How can we fix it?" get you further.
- Name the feeling for both of them ("You're cross because she took your truck"). It helps them calm down faster than a lecture.
- A few minutes of one-on-one time with each child most days goes a long way. A lot of fighting is really about getting your attention.
- Catch them getting along and say so. It's easy to only notice the fights.

Let them struggle a little. It's how they learn.

The urge to jump in and fix everything is strong, but a bit of frustration is where preschoolers learn.

QUICK WIN Next time they're stuck on something small, count to ten before you jump in. Give them a chance to solve it first.

- Offer choices instead of commands. "Shoes or teeth first?" gets more cooperation than "get ready".
- Step in for danger or real distress, not for frustration. Frustration is where they learn.
- Small jobs like hanging up their coat or choosing their own snack build the confidence that carries into school.

*The line worth remembering: **you're the safety net, not the constant doer of everything.***

Keep reading: encouraging independence, when to step back and when to step in →

ALSO WORTH A READ [the picture book series that makes tricky conversations easier →](#)

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Most of what looks like defiance at this age is just a brain that hasn't learned patience yet. Give it time, and give yourself some too.

Primary School

04

Homework, friendship politics, and a school calendar that runs your whole household now.



What they see you do at pick-up matters

Kids learn how to treat people mostly by watching how you do it.

QUICK WIN Next time you're venting about another school mum, do it out of earshot. They're always listening more than you think.

- Kids absorb how the adults around them talk about other people, especially other mums.
- Friendship fallouts are normal at this age. Listen first, and resist the urge to fix it or message the other parent straight away.
- Modelling kindness works better than lecturing about it.

Keep reading: [the teacher who stopped her class bullying a classmate in one afternoon](#) →

Struggling with schoolwork doesn't mean struggling as a kid

Most kids hit a subject that doesn't click at some point. How you respond matters more than the mark.

QUICK WIN Ask what part felt hard, not how they went on the test. It gets you a real answer instead of a shutdown.

- Small gaps in understanding early on compound fast. Catching them early is easier than fixing them later.
- A different approach usually helps more than more pressure or more tutoring hours.
- If they're still struggling after extra support, talk to their teacher and get their eyesight and hearing checked. Both are easy to miss and easy to fix.

Worth holding onto: **most kids aren't 'bad' at a subject. They just haven't had it explained in a way that clicks yet.**

Keep reading: [4 early warning signs your child may need glasses](#) →

A screen time system beats a screen time rule

Australian guidelines suggest no more than two hours of recreational screen time a day for school-aged kids. A system makes that far easier to stick to.

QUICK WIN Write the rules down and stick them on the fridge. Kids argue with a memory. They don't argue with a printed list.

- Screens after jobs are done, not before.
- Set an actual number for school nights and a bigger one for weekends and holidays.
- Watch together sometimes. It turns screen time into family time instead of a fight.

Keep reading: [Jolene's screen time rules, plus a free printable for your fridge →](#)

Friendships are a skill, and playdates are the practice

Some kids make friends easily and some take a bit longer. Both are normal, and it's a skill they can build.

QUICK WIN Keep playdates short, around an hour or two, with one activity ready to go. Ending while they're still having fun beats ending in a meltdown.

- One or two good friends matter more than a big group. They don't need to be the most popular kid in class.
- Let them lead on who to invite. Asking who they played with at lunch is a good way to find out.
- Before a playdate, have a quick chat about sharing and taking turns, and put away anything they really don't want touched.
- If they're often on their own at school or start dreading going, have a chat with their teacher.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Confidence at this age comes from being allowed to try, not from being told they're smart.

PART FIVE

The Tween Years

05

Not quite a kid. Not quite a teenager. Testing you on both.



Their body is changing before they feel ready for it

Puberty can start anywhere from about 8 to 13 for girls, and a little later for boys, so the conversation often needs to start earlier than you'd think.

QUICK WIN Start the conversation before they need it, in the car, at the shops, wherever feels casual rather than a sit-down talk.

- Normalise periods and body changes early, so it's not a big awkward reveal later.
- Boys need the talk too. Growth spurts, voice changes and body hair can catch them off guard.
- Comfortable, period-ready gear matters more than you'd think, especially for girls staying in sport.
- Praise effort and persistence over performance. It's what keeps them showing up.

Keep reading: why so many girls drop out of sport in puberty →

Big feelings are part of the package right now

Hormones are kicking in and their brain is still busy rewiring, so moods can swing fast. Most of the time it's a phase, not a problem.

QUICK WIN Next time they're upset, ask "Do you want help, or do you just want me to listen?" It stops you jumping to fixes they didn't ask for.

- Try not to take the eye rolls personally. Pulling away a bit is part of working out who they are.
- Side-by-side chats beat face-to-face ones. The car, walking the dog or cooking dinner together all take the pressure off.
- Sleep, food and moving their body make a real difference. A tired, hungry tween is usually a cranky one.
- If low moods last more than a couple of weeks, they pull away from friends and things they used to love, or they talk about hurting themselves, see your GP. Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) is there for them any time too.

Keep reading: the one question a 13-year-old asked her dad that stopped him in his tracks →

The phone conversation starts before the phone

Most kids get their first phone somewhere in these years, and it's far easier to set the rules at the start than to claw them back later.

QUICK WIN Set the ground rules together before device day one, not after the first problem shows up.

- No screens in bedrooms overnight is one of the simplest rules with the biggest payoff for sleep.
- Tech-free meals and a shared charging station outside bedrooms are simple habits that actually stick.
- Ask questions, don't just monitor. They're more likely to tell you what's actually going on.

*Worth knowing: **by 12 to 13, almost two in three Australian kids are well over the recommended two hours of recreational screen time a day**, according to the Australian Institute of Family Studies.*

Keep reading: does your kid need a digital detox? →

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Connection is still the best filter you have. A tween who talks to you tells you more than any app ever will.

The Teen Years

06

More freedom, more trust, more letting go than you feel ready for. Here's how to hold it together.



You're not choosing a side, you're finding the middle

Teens need more freedom and more guidance at the same time, which is exactly why it feels so hard to get right.

QUICK WIN Next disagreement, try "let's talk about it" instead of "because I said so". Same boundary, way more buy-in.

- **Rules vs flexibility:** keep clear, consistent boundaries, but stay willing to discuss and negotiate on some things.
- **Normal vs serious:** most boundary pushing is just normal teenage stuff. When something feels off, check in with your partner, another parent or a teacher rather than sitting on it alone. If you're worried about their mood or safety, talk to your GP, the school counsellor or headspace.
- **Independence vs support:** let go gradually instead of all at once, and stay involved without hovering.
- The mindset that helps most: more than one thing can be true at once. You can be trying your hardest and still have room to adjust.

Keep reading: parenting teens, the balancing act →

Exam stress is real, and burnout can sneak up on them

A bit of pressure can help them focus. Too much for too long, and it starts to show up in their sleep, mood and marks.

QUICK WIN Ask "How are you going with it all?" instead of "How much study have you done?" You'll get a much more honest answer.

- Sleep beats late-night cramming. A rested brain remembers more than a tired one pushing through.
- Short study blocks with real breaks work better than marathon sessions. Food, a walk and time with friends still count.
- Keep the focus on effort, not the ATAR. Remind them one exam doesn't decide their whole future.
- Watch for the signs it's tipping over: trouble sleeping, pulling away, constant headaches or stomach aches, or saying they can't cope. Talk to your GP, the school counsellor or headspace.

Keep reading: how to help your teen survive and thrive in their final years of school →

Keep the conversation open on phones and social media

You can't control everything they see online, but you can make sure you're the person they come to when something goes wrong.

QUICK WIN Bring up the tricky stuff before they need to ask. Way easier at the dinner table than after something's already gone wrong.

- Talk about it before they go looking for answers elsewhere.
- In Australia, under-16s aren't allowed accounts on most major social media platforms. Plenty still have them, so talk about it rather than assuming.
- Explain that anything shared online can circulate further and longer than they expect. If an image of them is shared without consent, eSafety can help get it taken down, and make sure they know they can come to you without getting in trouble.
- Notice worrying behaviour? Look for what's underneath it first, low mood, bullying, self-esteem, rather than jumping straight to punishment.
- Make sure they know exactly who else they can talk to if it's not you in the moment. Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) is free and open 24/7.

Keep reading: talking to your teen about staying safe online →

ALSO WORTH A READ [what teens admit their parents don't know about their social media →](#)

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

A teenager who still talks to you is worth more than one who just complies. Keep the door open, even when they slam it.

BONUS

Your Survival Checklist, Part One

Screenshot this page, stick it on the fridge, or forward it to whoever needs it most this week.

New Mum

- ☐ Set up a bathroom recovery station
- ☐ Take turns overnight and say yes to naps
- ☐ Book the appointments, don't wait it out
- ☐ Never doze off with baby on the couch
- ☐ Let the house be messy for a while

Toddler

- ☐ Practise the pause before you react
- ☐ Offer two veggies and let them pick
- ☐ It takes 10+ tries for a new food to stick
- ☐ Lots of active play, every day
- ☐ Remember: it's a stage, not a personality

Preschool

- ☐ Keep goodbyes short, and never sneak out
- ☐ Let them choose within limits
- ☐ Step in for danger, not frustration
- ☐ Give them one small daily job
- ☐ Keep the morning routine the same



BONUS

Your Survival Checklist, Part Two

The rest of the stages, same idea. Keep it close for whichever one you're in.

Primary School

- ☐ Watch what you say about other mums at pick-up
- ☐ Ask what felt hard, not how they scored
- ☐ Check eyes and hearing if they're struggling
- ☐ Write the screen time rules down
- ☐ Praise the trying, not just the result

Tween

- ☐ Talk about body changes before they ask
- ☐ Set phone ground rules before device day one
- ☐ No screens in bedrooms overnight
- ☐ Ask questions instead of just monitoring
- ☐ Celebrate effort over performance

Teen

- ☐ Hold boundaries, stay open to negotiating
- ☐ Worried about their mood? Call the GP or headspace
- ☐ Loosen the reins gradually, not all at once
- ☐ Talk about phones before there's a problem
- ☐ Save Kids Helpline in their phone
1800 55 1800





You've got this. Most days, anyway.

Parenting doesn't get easier, it just changes shape. Newborn, toddler, tween or teen, hard doesn't mean you're doing it wrong.

Stick around and we'll keep sending you the stuff that actually helps.

VISIT [MUMSLOUNGE.COM.AU](https://mumslounge.com.au) →

More real stories for every stage: mumslounge.com.au/lifestyle/family

Follow along on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest @mumslounge

With love, the Mums Lounge team