

# Preventing Bottle Preference

## Understanding Bottle Preference

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Bottle preference (sometimes called "nipple confusion") occurs when a baby becomes accustomed to the faster, easier flow of a bottle and begins to fuss at or refuse the breast.

### At the Breast

Requires coordination: baby must open wide, latch deeply, and use the tongue and jaw to create suction.

### With a Bottle

Milk flows quickly with minimal effort. This can make breastfeeding seem "too slow" by comparison.

*Remember: Your baby isn't rejecting you—they are simply reacting to the difference in effort required.*

## Timing is Key

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**The First 3-4 Weeks:** This is the most critical period. Your baby is learning to latch, and your milk supply is being established through frequent nursing.

**Recommendation:** If you plan to exclusively breastfeed, try to avoid bottles for the first 3-4 weeks until breastfeeding is well-established.

## Paced Bottle Feeding

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If you need to use a bottle, use this technique to mimic the natural rhythm of breastfeeding:

**Positioning:** Hold your baby upright in a semi-reclined position. Hold the bottle horizontally so milk barely fills the nipple—do not tip it straight down.

**Control:** Let the baby draw the nipple in. Never force a baby to finish a bottle; watch for fullness cues.

**Pacing:** Pause every few minutes by tilting the bottle down or removing it to give your baby a break.

**Duration:** Keep feedings to about *10–20* minutes. If they finish in 2-3 minutes, the flow is too fast.

## Tips for Success

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- **Choose a Slow-Flow Nipple:** Use the slowest flow available regardless of age. There is no need to "move up" to faster nipples if you are also breastfeeding.
- **Keep Volumes Small:** Offer *2–4* oz at a time. Breastfed babies typically take smaller amounts more frequently.
- **Breastfeed First:** If supplementing, offer the breast before the bottle.
- **Skin-to-Skin:** Maximize contact to encourage the baby to seek the breast and support milk production.
- **Switch Sides:** Alternate which arm you hold the baby in while bottle feeding, just like breastfeeding.

## What to do if Preference Starts

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Do not panic; this can often be reversed with patience:

- Increase skin-to-skin time and offer the breast when the baby is calm or drowsy.
- Temporarily reduce or eliminate bottles to focus on direct nursing.
- Try different breastfeeding positions and be patient—it may take several days.

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*Schedule your lactation consultation today:*

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