



The Name Game: Our Picks for the Best Brands

Walk into any department store and you'll see a blizzard of brand names for baby clothes. Which ones stand up to frequent washings? Which ones have snaps that stay snapped? Which are a good value for the dollar? We asked our readers to divide their favorite clothing brands/stores into three categories: best bets, good but not great and skip it.

180 BABY BARGAINS

The Best Bets tend to be clothes that were not only stylish but also held up in the wash. The fabric was usually softer and pilled less. Customer service also comes into play with the best brands. Hanna Andersson is a great example of a company that bends over backwards for their customers. Gymboree, on the other hand, seems to be less satisfactory for many parents, souring them on the brand. Keep in mind, some brands are pricey, so look for sales and second hand deals. Or just point Grandma to these sites!

Good but not Great clothes were pretty good, just not as soft or as stylish as Best Bets. The Skip-It brands were most likely the poorest quality: they shrunk in the wash, pilled up or fell apart. Inconsistent sizing was also a problem with brands like Babies R Us' Koala Kids.

Some of these brands sell direct; others just through retailers.

Best Bets

BABY GAP	(800) GAP-STYLE	BABYGAP.COM
BABY LULU		BABYLULU.COM
CARTER'S	(770) 961-8722	CARTERS.COM
CHEZ AMI		CHEZAMI.COM
COZY TOES		COZYTOESDESIGNS.COM
FIRST IMPRESSIONS		MACYS.COM
FLAP HAPPY	(800) 234-3527	FLAPHAPPY.COM
FLAPDOODLES	(302) 731-9793	FLAPDOODLES.COM
FUNTASIA! TOO	(214) 634-7770	FUNTASIATOO.COM
H & M		HM.COM
HANNA ANDERSSON		HANNAANDERSSON.COM
HARTSTRINGS/KITESTRINGS	(212) 868-0950	HARTSTRINGS.COM
JAKE AND ME	(970) 352-8802	JAKEANDME.COM
JANIE AND JACK		JANIEANDJACK.COM
KISSY KISSY		KISSYKISSYONLINE.COM
LITTLE ME	(800) 533-5497	LITTLEME.COM
LL BEAN		LLBEAN.COM
MINIBODEN		MINIBODEN.COM
MULBERRIBUSH (TUMBLEWEED TOO)		MULBERRIBUSH.COM
NAARTJIE		NAARTJIE.COM
OLD NAVY		OLDNAVY.COM
OSHKOSH B'GOSH	(800) 692-4674	OSHKOSHBGOSH.COM
PUMPKIN PATCH		PUMPKINPATCHUSA.COM
SARAH'S PRINTS	(888) 477-4687	SARASPRINTS.COM
SWEET POTATOES/SPUDZ	(800) 634-2584	SWEETPOTATOESINC.COM
TEA COLLECTION		TEACOLLECTION.COM
WES & WILLY		WESANDWILLY.COM
ZUTANO		ZUTANO.COM

Good But Not Great

CHILDREN'S PLACE		CHILDRENSPLACE.COM
GOOD LAD OF PHILA.	(215) 739-0200	GOODLAD.COM
GYMBOREE	(877) 449-6932	GYMBOREE.COM
LANDS END		LANDSEND.COM
LE TOP	(800) 333-2257	LETOP-USA.COM
TARGET (LITTLE ME, CARTER'S JUST ONE YOU, HALO, CIRCO)		TARGET.COM
WALMART (FADED GLORY, CARTER'S CHILD OF MINE)		WALMART.COM

Skip It: GERBER, HANES, KOALA KIDS (BABIES R US), DISNEY, CARTER'S JUST ONE YEAR AT TARGET, GEORGE BY WALMART

Our Picks: Brand Recommendations

What clothing brands are best? Well, there is no one correct answer. An outfit that's perfect for day care (that is, to be trashed in Junior's first painting experiment) is different from an outfit for a weekend outing with friends. And dress-up occasions may require an entirely different set of clothing criteria. Hence, we've divided our clothing brand recommendations into three areas: good (day care), better (weekend wear) and best (special occasions). While some brands make items in two or even three categories, here's how we see it:

Good. For everyday comfort (and day-care situations), basic brands like Carter's, Little Me, and OshKosh are your best bets. We also like the basics (when on sale) at Baby Gap (Gap Kids) for day-care wardrobes. For great price to value, take a look at Old Navy and Target.

Better. What if you have a miniature golf outing planned with friends? Or a visit to Grandma's house? The brands of better-made casual wear we like best include Baby Gap, Flapdoodles, and Gymboree. Also recommended: Jake and Me, MulberriBush, and Wes and Willy. For online sites, we like the clothes in Hanna Andersson and MiniBoden as good brands, especially on sale.

Best. Holidays and other special occasions call for special outfits. We like Chez Ami, and the dressier items at Baby Gap. Of course, department stores are great sources for these outfits, as are consignment shops. As for catalogs, check out Wooden Soldier.