

THE Tidal Doula

COMPASSIONATE BIRTH SUPPORT FOR THE TWIN CITIES

WRITING YOUR BIRTH PREFERENCES WORK BOOK

*Writing your birth preferences are a great way to research and prepare for your upcoming birth .Take some time to go over these questions to lead your way in your preparation for your birth and labor. The best birth preferences won't even be taken out in labor because you feel confident with your preferences and have talked about them in detail with your entire birth team **before the birth**, so everyone will be prepared to support your to the fullest.*

STEP 1. WRITE YOUR ENVIRONMENT SECTION

Your environment section of your birth plan is a list of elements that bring you into the most calm and relaxed state (the best state of mind to be in for birthing a baby). So first answer these questions.

What relaxes you? Think about all your senses (smell, taste, touch, vision, and sound) and list them below. Include things you could bring from home (pictures of loved ones, favorite pillows, etc).

Who do you want to be in the room when you're laboring? Birthing?

*Is there anything you **don't** want to see/smell/taste/hear/feel?*



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STEP 2. WRITE YOUR PAIN RELIEF AND MEDICAL INTERVENTION SECTION

This is the section most people look to first when reviewing your birth plan for the first time. How are you planning on managing your pain/discomfort during your labor? I **highly encourage taking a comprehensive childbirth education course** before tackling this portion, there are so many options available to birth and a childbirth education class will get you to know all your options beforehand. Take some time to fill out this page to get you started.

*How do you feel about medical procedures/interventions in birth?
What would you like to be offered during your labor?*

Why do you prefer (or not prefer) these interventions and pain management options?

List all the ways you are planning on coping with discomfort/pain, including your plans of non-medical pain management, so you have a lot of tools at your disposal (examples: epidural, nitrous, water, touch, birth affirmations, meditation, etc).



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STEP 3. HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO DELIVER BABY (SECOND STAGE/PUSHING)

I always encourage my families to talk to everyone on their care team a **LOT** about **how they want pushing to look like**. Because that's especially the time in childbirth where you will be in no head-space to make any kind of a decision, so it's very important that your birth team knows your preferences because you may not be able to articulate or remember them when it's game time. Take some time to reflect on these questions, and again **take your childbirth education class to learn about all your options** and talk with them with your whole care team beforehand.

What positions would you like to push in? And why?

How would you like your pushing stage managed? Do you want to be coached/directed or push on your own rhythm?

What Equipment would you like to be available? Examples include (but are not limited too, again take your childbirth ed!) squat bar, mirror, sheet to pull on, stirrups, etc).



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STEP 4. NEWBORN CARE AND IMMEDIATE POSTPARTUM

After baby's born, you are thrust into parenthood of that little one, and a lot of split second decisions come with it. I highly encourage talking with your doula and care provider about what the immediate postpartum looks like, and what you want it to look like. Here's some questions to get you started.

What are your feeding goals?

How do you want those goals achieved? Are there certain procedures you want to happen or avoided?

What newborn procedures have you researched and are comfortable with being (or not being) administered?

Is there a certain first song or family tradition you want to happen in your babies first hours?



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STEP 5. WRITING YOUR INTRODUCTION

Alright it may seem weird that this is the final step to write before putting everything together, but I wanted you to take some time thinking about all the elements of birth *before* you write your couple sentence introduction at the top. Because this will be a summary of everything else you just wrote.

Write your introduction(3-5 sentence). Introduce yourself and your birth team and explain what matters most to you and any important history you want your care providers to know (ex. past birth trauma, first baby, religious concerns, etc.).

STEP 6. A PLAN FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Consider writing a separate plan for a cesarean or emergency birth situation. Or you could include your preferences on the back of your main birth plan if you like to keep it all together.

I encourage all my families to develop a cesarean section plan/preference sheet as separate from their birth preferences, it's great to be able to get all your ideas down and put the paper away (out of sight out of mind).

Check out my website www.tidaldoula.com for more resources on how to write a cesarean birth plan.



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STEP 6. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now grab this workbook and hop on your computer and reformat/type up everything you just wrote! I like to take each of the previous steps as their own “header”, with bullet points underneath of what you want to include. I’ve also included an example of a double sided birth preferences sheet on the next page.

These will be your headers for your preferences:

- Introduction
- Environment(lights, noise level, who will be in the room, etc)
- Pain relief and medical interventions preferences
- Second Stage/Delivery
- Newborn Care

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Your birth preferences need to be easy to read, be sure to keep it **under a page** (3/4 page is ideal)
- Talk about what YOU would like to do to cope with labor (positions, coping techniques)
- **Remain flexible.** Remember that every single birth will be different and can surprise us, a little wiggle room is always great.
- **Stay positive!** Everyone wants you to have a great birth experience and will do everything they can to ensure that you’re satisfied with your involvement and the choices you make

Thanks so much for reading and working along with me! I wish you the very best for your birthing experience and never hesitate to email me if you have any questions!

Much Love and Happy Birthing!



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MINIMAL MEDICAL INTERVENTION EXAMPLE BIRTH PREFERENCES

This is merely an example of birth plan with a couple planning minimal medical interventions, I am by no means endorsing or encouraging any of their decisions.

We are hoping to have a natural childbirth with minimal medical/drug intervention. We envision a calm, joyous environment to welcome our child into the world. We hope that these goals can all be met given that both the baby and mother are healthy. If either of their health is in jeopardy, we are willing to discuss alternatives to these preferences, but would like to be engaged and informed participants in all decisions. We welcome suggestions and advice!

Environment

My partner and my mother in the room during labor and delivery

I am aiming for a relaxing and soothing environment to aid in natural childbirth. I would like to have:

- Music Playing
- Wear my own clothes during labor and delivery
- I would like the midwife and nurses to discuss available birth equipment

Pain Relief and Medical Intervention

I prefer to try natural techniques or stripping/ rupturing membranes for induction

I am prepared to try to handle the pain with these methods, and welcome other suggestions

- Breathing techniques
- Distraction Techniques
- Heat pressure
- Massage
- Water/Bath/shower

Second Stage Labor/ Delivery

- I would like to be encouraged to try a variety of different positions for labor
- I had hip dysplasia as a child in my left hip, so have reduced flexibility in that joint.
- I prefer to have no episiotomy and risk tearing
- I would like one of my birth coaches to be able to cut the cord (after it has finished pulsating)

After Baby is Born

- Immediate skin-to-skin contact on my bare abdomen with a warm blanket
- We would like all routine newborn care and procedures
- My baby is to be exclusively breastfed, we would like to see a lactation consultant as soon as possible for recommendations and guidance
- When taking the stamped footprints of the baby, please also stamp the footprints in the provided book "On the Day You Were Born"



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