

How to Select a Jogging Stroller

Here are some important factors to consider when buying and using a jogging stroller.

Beware of the swivel wheel

You may be tempted by the latest trend in strollers with a front swivel wheel, but beware of these all-terrain walkers created specifically for urban shoppers. Many companies have adapted the three-wheel look and marketed them as a “sport,” “fitness” or “all-terrain” stroller. These strollers are not intended for jogging or running because the 12-inch wheels are too small for a smooth push and ride.

In addition, the swivel wheel creates a tipping hazard. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), stroller tips account for an estimated 1,400 injuries a year. The creators of Go-Go Babyz strollers were terrified when one of their own children fell over while in a swivel-wheeled stroller. A sideways bump tipped the stroller over with the co-founder’s son strapped inside. Curious toddlers often like to climb into strollers and the swivel wheel makes these strollers especially unsteady. And although you can usually lock the swivel wheel into place, the possibility remains that it will loosen while jogging. In the end, if you intend to jog or do serious running with your stroller, steer away from the swivel-wheel style.

True “jogging” strollers

There are basic structural components that go into a true “jogging” stroller. These include:

- * 3 non-swivel wheels
- * Inflatable tires that are all at least 16-inches in diameter (20-inch wheels are recommended for more serious running)
- * Lightweight aluminum frame
- * Hand brake for the front wheel to help you slow the pace
- * Foot brake for the rear wheels to “park” the stroller
- * Adjustable sun shade
- * 5-point safety harness
- * Run-away leash

Other desirable features to look for in a jogging stroller include:

- * *An adjustable-height handlebar.* This is essential if you plan to share the stroller with your partner. An adjustable handlebar helps ensure correct stroller posture and can prevent wrist pain and discomfort for people with carpal tunnel syndrome. Varying the handlebar height to match your workout — walking slow, power walking, jogging, running, flat or rolling hills — increases your comfort level and performance when exercising on your own or during Biceps, Babies & Buggies stroller fitness classes.

- * *Reclining seat.* If your child is less than six-months old or cannot hold up their head due to weak neck muscles, a reclining seat will help prevent their head from falling forward. It's also a nice option for when they fall asleep.
- * *Under seat storage bin.* While not essential, it makes carrying your workout mat or towel, bottle or toddler snacks a breeze.
- * Comfort features, such as water bottle holders, key clips and cell phone pouches are nice to have.

Safety first

You may be tempted to select your jogging stroller because of the available colors, but safety always wins out. Here are some safety considerations:

- * Kelty strollers are known for their comfortable and ultra-safe 5-point safety harnesses.
- * Hand brakes create a false sense of security as they can disengage or slip creating a possible safety hazard. Make sure the model you choose has a rear-wheel foot brake and that you use it.
- * Reflective fabric or attaching a blinking light increases your safety when using your stroller in the dark.
- * Safety bells are handy when you're trying to pass someone with their iPod cranked.
- * Do NOT attach your pet's leash to your stroller.
- * Do NOT rollerblade while pushing your child in a jogging stroller.

Checking the recall notices with the Consumer Products Safety Commission or Safe Kids USA is also highly recommended.

Try before you buy

Push every jogging stroller you can get your hands on. Once you narrow the field, put your baby in it and test drive it to determine if it's safe and comfortable for you and your little one. Try out the brakes and folding mechanism for ease of use and don't forget to check the dimensions to make sure it will fit in your vehicle.

TIP: The Kelty Kids Speedster Deluxe Stroller won a 2005 Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA) innovation award for its simple folding mechanism.

Paying the piper

Although cost is definitely a factor in quality and durability, you can find a good jogging stroller for around \$300-\$350. Jogging strollers that retail for around \$150 are usually not as sturdy or long lasting.

— Kristen Horler, CEO & Founder of Baby Boot Camp, 2006