

I was hunched over in the passenger seat, rain streaking the windshield, my grocery bag of coffee getting soggy beside me, and my phone said 3:17 pm. The Baby & Kids Furniture Warehouse Toronto sign gleamed through the drizzle like it had been waiting for me all week. I could hear the streetcar brakes somewhere down the main road, and two delivery trucks were arguing over a parking spot, usual midweek chaos in this part of town. I had exactly 45 minutes before I needed to pick up my partner from the subway, and my brain was a jumble of passwords, registry checklists, and something about conversion cribs that I still did not fully understand.

Why I hesitated at the door

I almost didn't go in. It felt silly — buying a crib is not the same as picking out a jacket — but there was this weird pressure, like I had to get everything right because this piece of furniture was supposed to carry my child's naps and nightmares and, apparently, future toddler rebellions. The first thing that hit me inside was the smell: varnish and cardboard, with a faint hint of wood shavings. The lighting was bright but not aggressive, and a radio somewhere played an acoustic song I half-recognized.

A woman at the front desk greeted me with that practiced friendliness you get in places that see a lot of first-time parents. She listened while I tried to explain our tiny apartment layout and our vague plan to maybe convert the living room corner into a nursery. She offered me a brochure for nursery furniture sets in Toronto and a sticker that said "First Time Parent." I stuck the sticker to my jacket like a badge I had not yet earned.

The weirdest part of the sales pitch

They quoted me two main options. One was a basic crib — mass-produced, straightforward, about \$329. The other was a conversion crib that "grows with your child," at \$749. I asked what conversion meant exactly. The salesperson explained, and I nodded, but I still didn't fully get how many screws would need to be removed when the child turned two. He also suggested a nursery package deal that bundled a crib, dresser, and glider for \$1,499. It seemed sensible on paper, but I kept imagining trying to fit a big glider through the narrow hallway of our 1920s semi.

Sitting on a display glider, I felt the spring give under my weight and realized I was more worried about the chair fitting through the front door than about any of the materials. Practicality won out in small ways. I measured the doorway again on my phone app, double-checked the dimensions, and felt that familiar flush of small victories.

What I actually brought into the store

- notebook with a sketch of our apartment corner
- tape measure on my keys
- a printed screenshot of our registry
- my stubbornness and three increasingly strong cups of coffee

Why the neighbourhood mattered more than I expected

We live in the west end, and getting a delivery up the narrow porch and spiral stairs is a logistical question as much as a purchasing one. The delivery quote they gave me included "standard apartment delivery" for \$79 and "white glove" for \$199. The salesperson explained white glove would include room placement and trash removal. I asked if the white glove people handled stairs. He said yes, but added that if they had to disassemble the crib and reassemble it inside, there could be a "small additional fee" — wording I now interpret as Toronto-speak for "we will charge you for extra patience."

There was traffic on Bloor when I left, and I watched the city slow down into evening mode, cyclists braking for delivery vans, neon signs flickering on. The logistics of where we live — the busy intersection, the curved staircase, the neighbors with too many plants — suddenly felt like part of the furniture decision.

The one time I felt foolish

I misheard a specification on the hardware. The salesperson said "2.5 inches clearance" and I heard "25 inches" and almost laughed out loud. I had to ask him to repeat it, and he did, slowly this time, probably assuming I had just woken from a very long nap. We both laughed about it. He made the crib look sturdier than it did in the brochure and was patient when I pointed out a tiny nick on the side panel and asked whether that would be covered under warranty.

On price and small triumphs

I haggled, awkwardly and not very well. The salesperson offered a small discount if I bought the dresser and glider as a set, and threw in free mattress delivery. Final tally: crib \$749, dresser **Babywarehouse** \$399, glider \$299, mattress \$129, delivery \$79, total before tax \$1,655. After tax, I walked out with a card that said the total was \$1,872.20. It felt like a lot. It also felt like the end of a long checklist item that had been hovering over our heads.

I paid with a debit card because I didn't want to think about credit points. The machine was finicky and required a second swipe, which felt like a metaphor for parenthood: repeated attempts until something finally registers.

The part they didn't talk about enough



Assembly. I watched two staff members wheel the boxes out to the loading bay and then disappear into a pile of hardware like a pair of IKEA ninjas. I realized I had not really looked at every screw, bolt, and Allen key in the box. I still don't fully understand how all the pieces will go together. I told myself I would read the instructions properly, and then I promised myself a beer.

Also, the showroom made the crib look so much bigger than it would in our bedroom. That miniaturization when furniture lands in real life is something no brochure can prepare you for. My partner called while we were on our way back and asked if we needed a new rug. I said maybe. He laughed and said "just don't buy a glider that won't fit," which felt like a good rule.

Why this store felt like a "trusted baby furniture store in Toronto" to me

They had a small section for nursery package deals in Toronto clearly labeled, a thoughtful display of cribs in Toronto in different finishes, and a corner where dressers & gliders at Toronto's showroom were arranged like a real little nursery. It felt less like a showroom and more like a place where people actually return with questions at 2 am. The salesperson emphasized safety standards, crib slat spacing, and the company's mattress recommendations, which made me feel less like I was being upsold and more like someone was trying to keep me from buying something dangerous.

Leaving, the rain had stopped. There was an odd scent of roasted chestnuts on the sidewalk. I felt tired and strangely accomplished. The crib is in boxes in our living room now, leaning against the coat rack like a future guardian. I haven't yet figured out if we'll go for the white glove delivery next time for the dresser, or if we'll attempt assembly ourselves with a YouTube playlist and optimism. There's tea in the cupboard and instructions in a flimsy manual, and for now, that will have to do.

My plan for tomorrow is to clear the corner, lay down a towel, and start with what the manual calls "step one." I do not know if I will curse. I know there will be at least one missing nut or an extra bolt that doesn't fit anywhere, because that's how these things go. But sitting here with the rain-damp smell of new wood still in my jacket, I feel less like I am buying furniture and more like I am creating a small, awkward space that will soon host naps, late-night feedings, and the million tiny firsts that are still a little **furniture warehouse for kids & baby** scary to imagine.

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