

Lightweight/Umbrella Strollers

Lightweight strollers earn entry into this category because they are *(drum roll, please)* light in weight. Weighing 15 pounds and less, they are not only a necessity, but also a lifesaver for short trips with tired toddlers. Their ability to fold compactly makes them a great, trunk-saving choice, and their small size makes maneuvering in tight spaces a breeze.

Not meant as a replacement for a full-size, standard stroller, most lightweight strollers are too light to accommodate infant car seat carriers; even a shopping bag hung from the back handles can tip them over. Unless they have a reclining seat, they are not to be used with infants under 6 months old.

Technically a stroller is labeled "umbrella" if it has two U-shaped handles and folds in on itself like an umbrella. A "lightweight" stroller folds flat.

Because this is the only category of stroller (and perhaps baby gear!) where $9 models are available, it might seem like a great place to give your wallet a break. However, we recommend investing in a good, feature-packed lightweight stroller because you'll use it longer and more often than any other stroller (you'll be sick of your full-size one by age 1, we promise!). The extra durability, nicer fabric, and ease of steering are well worth the extra money. Don't believe us? Try pushing a cheap one through Disneyland all day. Your wrists, back, and shoulders will not thank you. In fact, they may light torches, rile the villagers, and come after you.

Lightweight/ Umbrella Stroller

Also Known As
Buggy

Age Range
6 months to 4 years, unless it has a flat recline, and can be used from birth

Total Usage
3½ to 4 years

Recommendation
Nice to have

When to Buy
When you are tired of lugging around your full-size stroller.

Maclaren: The Umbrella Stroller That Changed History

For more than two hundred years, parents only had one choice of stroller—the heavy, unwieldy baby carriage. It's hard to believe, but the modern, folding stroller wasn't invented until 1965.

Owen Maclaren, a British test pilot and aeronautical designer, decided to try something new after a visit from his daughter, who flew from America with her baby and cumbersome baby carriage. In converted stables at his country farmhouse, he formed an ingenious frame out of aluminum that weighed just six pounds and folded compactly. And thus the umbrella stroller was born.

We love Maclarens, and we're so grateful for the superior handling and styling, we feel like sending them a small donation. And then we found out that they are releasing a black leather and gold umbrella stroller for $4,000, and we changed our minds. They seem to be doing all right on their own.

Maneuverability

We used to think all umbrella strollers were the same—hard to maneuver, flimsy little things that strained and tilted when you tried to shove them around a corner. And then we pushed our first high-quality umbrella stroller. With our breath. Unbelievable, life-altering difference. We'd wept through a trip to an amusement park because pushing our umbrella stroller was like hiking through waist-deep snow uphill, but we assumed they were all like that.

Perhaps because we grew up going to the Dollar Store with a mom who'd never dream of dropping $100 on a stroller when you could get one for $10, we never touched one until our second children. We thought the only

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difference between higher-priced umbrella strollers was in the fancy fabric. Yeah, the fabric is nice, but the real difference is in the design. Cheap umbrella strollers are crisscrossed, hollow steel tubes with a sling of fabric buttoned on them. Nice umbrella strollers are feats of engineering that carefully balance their load over the back wheels for maximum stability and mobility. You can push a good umbrella stroller with a fifth grader in it with your thumb. If you are even slightly interested and can possibly afford it, do yourself a favor and get a good one—early.

The Seat

Lightweight stroller seats are generally quite stiff, quite unpadded, and quite uncomfortable for riders. Rather than a supported seat with a stiff, reinforced frame, many lightweight seats are simple slings of fabric. Some are barely even fabric, but a ventilated mesh. Because you will use this stroller for years, and your children will spend days of their life in it, we do recommend getting a nice padded one.

Reclining Seat

Many umbrella stroller seats are fixed in position and do not recline. Make sure that if you buy one of those, it's what you want. We've grabbed one by mistake before and what a mistake it was! The only thing better than a happy toddler is a sleeping toddler, and yours will be neither in a fixed frame seat.

Plenty of umbrella strollers do have reclining seats now, even fully reclining for a newborn (although we wouldn't put a newborn in a lightweight stroller). While some offer various levels of recline, others only offer two positions: up and down. The method of recline for umbrella strollers is quite different from the mechanical methods on standard strollers. Seats on lightweights recline using zippers, hooks, drawstrings, straps, buckles, and sometimes levers.

Handles

The handles on cheaper lightweight strollers are notoriously uncomfortable; the nicer strollers have nicer handles. Some are hard plastic, but some are padded. We like the padded ones.

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Be careful of anything you hang on the back of your umbrella stroller, as they are lightweight enough to tip backward quite easily. We're always extremely careful when our toddler is in one, but somehow we always forget about unloading the back first, and when we lift our child out, the stroller crashes backward to the ground. While our child is safe in our arms, our purse and the stroller take a beating.

Basket

Seriously scaled-down umbrella strollers will not have a basket at all. Some nicer ones do, and we seek those out. However, prepare for a much smaller basket than on standard strollers.

Extra Features

Lightweight strollers are lightweight because they don't offer much extra. No snack trays, no parent consoles, no cup holders. You can add some of these things with universal accessories, which we do. Oh, we do.

Stroller Weight

Under 15 pounds, they are all pretty light. So light, you won't really feel a difference between an 11- and a 13-pounder. The lightest ones weigh in at 7 pounds, but most are around 12.

Price

There are two basic types of umbrella stroller: cheap and not. The cheap ones range from $9 to $39. The higher you go on the pay scale, the better your stroller will maneuver. Period.

The not-cheap umbrella strollers range from $50 to $200. Too steep? Look online for last year's model; you can usually score a brand new one for $100 less and the only difference is generally the color.

Why we love them: They are lightweight and easy to travel with.

Why we don't: They are lightweight and easy to tip over.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Maneuverability
- ☆ Seat
- ☆ Seat recline
- ☆ Handles
- ☆ Basket

NOTES: *Lightweight/Umbrella Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade

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Luxury Stroller Systems

In 1999, Max Barenbrug, a design student from The Netherlands, set out to make a new kind of stroller that offered more functionality and a sleeker form. He pitched his concept to every major manufacturer and was turned down. He decided to make them anyway, so he and his brother started their own company, a little outfit called Bugaboo. And a new era was born.

Loved by the very starriest of celebrities—think Madonna and Gwyneth—the stroller crashed through price barriers, selling for a full $400 more than the next priciest brands.

Who would pay that much for a stroller?

A lot of people, apparently, as sales tripled from 2003 to 2004. Now almost a dozen new manufacturers are producing luxury stroller systems. Owners swear by them, reviewers swoon over them, and magazine editors can't print their photos enough.

So, are they really worth all the croaking? In a word, yes.

When we first started testing them, we were prepared to push through the hype and were even a little biased against them. We're middle-class moms, after all, and proud of it.

And while it was lust at first sight (the delicious solid-colored fabrics against the cool gray aluminum is such a relief from the 6,000 muted plaid variations of other strollers), it was true love at first push. A luxury

Luxury Stroller System

Also Known As
Designer stroller, pram system, infant stroller system

Age Range
Birth to 4 years

Total Usage
4 years

Recommendation
Really nice to have

When to Buy
If you're going to pull the trigger, do it before your baby is born, so you can enjoy the benefits of this stroller system from day one.

stroller system surpasses every stroller we've ever laid hands on in terms of mobility, maneuverability, and just plain modern marvelousness. It responds with the slightest touch. Drives as if on clouds. And offers flexibility the likes of which we've never seen.

Only having viewed them (jealously) from afar, we were surprised to learn that luxury stroller systems are more than just a designer stroller. They are, in fact, full systems, good from birth through preschool, for use in the car, in the park, and even in the house.

They are three strollers in one: a carriage, a toddler stroller, and an all-terrain stroller. They come with detachable carry-cots that can be carried into the house and used as a Moses basket. And many now come with baby rockers and infant car seat carriers.

The core of the system is the chassis—the metal frame of the stroller—and it includes the luscious handlebar and wonderful, giant, air-filled, shock-absorbing wheels. The seats are separate pieces you attach depending on your need: a carry-cot for an infant, a regular stroller seat for a toddler, even "fun seats" for big kids with little steering wheels.

They are very sleek and modern, and sadly lacking parent convenience features. Most have started adding cup holders, but that's about all.

However, they do offer tons of accessories, many included: sun canopies, rain covers, mosquito nets, foot muffs, wheeled boards so toddler can hitch a ride, travel bags, and infant car seat adapters.

Weight

Unbelievably, all that stroller goodness weighs very little. Most luxury stroller systems weigh less than 20 pounds.

Price

Luxury stroller systems range in price from $500 to $1,000; most fall in the $700 range. Sounds like a bomb, but we added up the price of all the individual buys a luxury stroller system would save us from having to purchase:

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Travel system:	$300
All-terrain stroller:	$350
Umbrella stroller:	$160
Rain guard:	$20
Moses basket:	$100
Baby seat:	$40
TOTAL:	$970

Yeah, we were shocked too. In fact, we managed to spin it to our husbands that a luxury stroller system was actually going to save us money!

We can't afford the Hermès Birkin bag. We'll never drive a Bentley. But to discover that the most beautiful, most versatile, designer strollers on the planet actually cost the same price we're spending anyway on lesser quality products was a great, great day for us middle class moms. It's not for everyone, sure. But if you can swing it, you won't regret it.

Special Features

So what special features should you look for in a luxury stroller system?

Fabric

Plush is king, but not always easy to clean. And some fabrics that look good actually turn out to be too hot. Pick a nice, breathable fabric that you can at least spot clean. Or, in the case of a diaper explosion, replace.

Easy-to-Use Clips

Because most systems require you to clip the bassinet or stroller seat onto the frame—and sometimes unclip them every time you want to fold it—look for a system that makes this easy. Some are foolproof; some make us feel like fools.

Folding

Luxury stroller systems have been notoriously difficult to fold, but they are getting better. Look for an easy one to save time and save face.

A stand-up fold is a good, good thing on an expensive stroller, because it brings the frame up to you rather than crashing to the pavement.

Wheels

Part of the secret to their superior handling is in the wheels, which are generally air filled. However, some are puncture proof, and some are not. There's nothing worse than sporting a flat on your luxury stroller. Annoying, embarrassing, and in our opinion, inexcusable for such an expensive product.

Handle Height Adjustment

Most luxury stroller system handles are adjustable, but some move more easily than others. Especially if you're trading off with a taller dad, a single push-button adjustment is much easier than one that requires a screwdriver.

Caché

Let's be honest, part of the appeal of luxury strollers is snob appeal, and that declines dramatically if a hundred other moms are pushing the same stroller at the mall. To avoid this, you might consider looking into the hottest, newest releases. New designers, most coming from Europe, debut their American lines every day. See if you can't score one of the first. You'll definitely score points with the paparazzi.

Why we love them: Luxury strollers are like Christmas morning, full of gifts. Carry-cots and toddler seats and foot muffs, hooray!

Why we don't: They cost a wad of cash, up front. Even though we know we'll spend the same amount on each accessory separately, somehow spreading those purchases out makes them easier to swallow (and explain to our mother!).

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Features to Consider

- ☆ Fabric
- ☆ Attachments
- ☆ Fold
- ☆ Tires
- ☆ Handle
- ☆ Caché

NOTES: *Luxury Stroller Systems*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade



All-Terrain Strollers

The SUVs of strollers, all-terrain strollers are sportier and sturdier than their standard stroller counterparts, but are more maneuverable than joggers. The main feature of an all-terrain stroller is that it sports a triangular design with larger, air-filled wheels in back, a more durable frame, and true suspension, so it can go over "all terrains." They have large sun canopies because presumably you'll be using them primarily outdoors.

Many standard strollers look sporty these days, but take them off the sidewalk and they threaten to shake apart and they overshake the baby. The wheels on all-terrain strollers are large, pneumatic, and well-shocked, giving baby a better ride and parents an easier push through uneven terrain.

Most all-terrain strollers are not meant to be used as jogging or running strollers, however. Jogging strollers have fixed front wheels, hand brakes, and parent wrist tethers. They are constructed to withstand a great amount of rock and roll. All-terrain strollers are great for off-roading excursions: hikes, beaches, and even the uneven urban jungle.

Hard to Spot

Like lightweight-plus strollers, all-terrain strollers are frequently hard to find because they are miscategorized in stores and mislabeled, sometimes even by the manufacturers themselves, as "jogging strollers." The surefire way to spot an all-terrain is to look at the front wheels. True jogging strollers have a fixed front wheel that is 16 inches or larger; all-terrain front wheels swivel and are usually around 12 inches in diameter.

All-Terrain Stroller

Also Known As
Sport stroller, sport utility stroller, terrain stroller, urban stroller

Age Range
6 months to 5 years, unless it has a flat recline seat and can be used from birth

Total Usage
4½-plus years

Recommendation
Nice to have

When to Buy
Before baby is born if you plan on using it from day one. Or as you find you need it because you're off-roading more than you expected.

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To Jog or Not to Jog?

Their bigger wheels, suspension, and sturdier frame mean you can take most all-terrain strollers for a jog around the block. They are great for power walks too. But if you're a serious runner, you should get a true jogging stroller.

Also, while many all-terrain strollers can hold newborns, you shouldn't jog with babies under 6 months old, as they don't have the neck muscles to withstand the jostling.

Age Range

Unlike more serious-minded jogging strollers, all-terrain strollers want to be your primary ride, not just a single-use activity stroller. To achieve this, many of them are packed with features and can actually accommodate newborns. If you are considering using an all-terrain stroller from day one, look for one with a fully reclining seat and infant car seat carrier adapters. Some more upscale models even offer bassinets.

Their extra durability means all-terrain strollers are almost guaranteed to last through your baby's kindergarten days, so you can get quite a lot of use out of them.

Carry-Cots

Many all-terrain strollers come with an optionally purchased carry-cot, or bassinet. If you're considering an all-terrain stroller carry-cot, you have a lucky, lucky baby. Most of them are dreamy. As with any baby bed, however, check that the fabric is breathable and washable, the interior is well ventilated, the mattress is firm, and you can't fit more than one finger between the mattress and any inside side.

Features

Some of the parent-friendly features (sorely lacking on jogging strollers) include storage baskets, parent consoles, height-adjustable handles, all-weather boots, and even reversible seating for newborns.

Color and Fabric

If strollers were Spice Girls, the all-terrain would be Sporty Spice—a tomboy with outdoorsy qualities but girly flair. You can see this immediately in the color and fabric options. The material on all-terrain strollers is more durable and weatherproof, and mostly solid colors—more fun than the somber grays and navy blues of joggers. You will find light greens and pink trim, but never a teddy bear pattern. Many moms make the all-terrain their stroller of choice for this very reason.

The Seat

While many all-terrain strollers do have reclining seats, just as many do not. If you choose one with a fixed sling seat, realize that it is an inappropriate choice for babies under 6 months old.

Folding

All-terrain strollers do fold, but not as compactly as their standard cousins, and many require you to remove the front wheel before folding.

Size

All that all-terrain durability and feature-packed goodness will cost you in size and price. All-terrain strollers are much, much larger than standard strollers, usually as big as double strollers when folded, and they only hold one kid.

Weight

Amazingly, all-terrain strollers aren't all that heavy. Thanks to their innovative aluminum frames, they are generally as weighty as standard strollers: between 21 and 30 pounds. Not nearly as light as luxury or lightweight strollers, but completely manageable.

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Price

Their superior styling and construction does lead to a higher price tag than a standard or lightweight stroller. The price range on all-terrain strollers is from $200 to $450. The most durable strollers start at around the $350 mark. Past that, they are very similar in construction and quality; you'll start to pay extra for brand appeal.

Why we love them: They allow us to leave the pavement. Sometimes a mom has to drive over the mulch at the playground or across the grass.

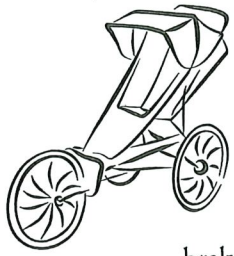
Why we don't: They are very big and that removing-the-front-wheel-when-folding thing is a real pain.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Weight
- ☆ Bassinet option
- ☆ Basket
- ☆ Parent console
- ☆ Handle
- ☆ Boot
- ☆ Reversible seating
- ☆ Seat recline
- ☆ Fold
- ☆ Canopy

NOTES: *All-Terrain Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade



Jogging Strollers

If you plan to run with your child, you should purchase only a true jogging stroller. Other strollers don't have the construction or safety features required to protect your little one. Jogging strollers have running-specific safety features built in, including parking brakes, hand brakes, and an emergency parent wrist tether for runaway strollers. However, it is important to note that pediatricians recommend not running with babies under 6 months old because they lack the proper neck strength and head control to safely manage the motion.

Jogging strollers are well-known for their size, large inflatable tires, three-wheel setup, and brightly colored fabric. Most also feature giant sun canopies for shade, although some are canopy-less.

Jogging strollers are constructed with a sturdy chassis to withstand vibration. With an aluminum frame, they are easier to push than most other strollers, but because of the fixed front wheel and considerable bulk, difficult to navigate around corners. Most feature shock absorbers and plush suspension, offering baby a very smooth ride. However, they have limited storage space and usually no convenience features—cup holders and tray toys would get in the way and add to the weight of the stroller, making it harder to push while running.

Jogging Stroller

Also Known As
Jogger, runner

Age Range
6 months to 5 years

Total Usage
4½-plus years

Recommendation
Must have if you ever plan on jogging or running with your baby; don't need, if you don't

When to Buy
Start looking just before your baby turns 6 months old, so you'll be ready to use it.

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History of the Jogging Stroller

You can thank Jane Fonda for the jogging stroller. The fitness revolution of the 1980s brought about the very first jogger.

Actually, you should thank Phil Baechler, a journalist and long-distance runner who tried bonding with his new baby during runs, but instead ending up trashing his standard strollers. So he invented one specifically designed for jogging with baby. And named it, appropriately, Baby Jogger.

Baby Jogger is still happily in business, and unlike Maclaren, actually offers some of the more reasonably priced jogging strollers to this day. No bling need apply.

Wheels

With jogging strollers, it's all about the size of the wheel. A serious jogger doesn't have wheels less than 16 inches in diameter, although a couple of 12-inchers are out there.

The larger the wheel, the easier the stroller will be to push, especially on more jagged terrain. If you plan on light jogging on mostly flat surfaces, 12-inch wheels should suffice. Serious jogging should be done with nothing less than 16-inch wheels, while serious runners will take nothing less than 20 inches.

Swivel Wheels

While traditional jogging strollers have a fixed front wheel, it does make them a bear to push around corners. Some models have started offering a swivel wheel that can be locked into place. For safety, when you are running or even jogging, the front wheel should always be fixed to not swivel. Why? Ever ride down a big hill in a wagon like Calvin & Hobbes? Ever lose control of the handle, and when the front wheels turned suddenly, you and the wagon flipped over? That's why. A fixed front stroller wheel is necessary

when jogging or running because it won't abruptly turn at high speeds, sending you, the stroller, and its precious contents flying.

But being able to flip a lever and have swivel capabilities when you are just moseying is an attractive feature to many.

Suspension

While not all joggers come with suspension, we highly recommend it to help absorb the shocks of the road so your baby's brain doesn't have to.

Brakes

Most jogging strollers come with both hand and foot brakes. We're big fans of having both. Just make sure they aren't so tight that you have to be a carnival champ to squeeze them.

Wrist Tether

A tether is a strap that goes around your wrist to keep the stroller from getting out of your reach, just in case you stumble or get so tired you lose your grasp on the handle. Because we're almost delirious near the end of even a short run and can sometimes barely manage to stay upright ourselves, we highly recommend this feature.

Aluminum versus Steel Frame

While steel frames are less expensive, they do eventually rust. They are also easily tortured by climate changes, marine environments, and mountain weather. It might cost a bit more at first, but an aluminum frame will add years to the life of your stroller, which could save you money if you plan on using it for more than one kid.

Seating

For safety, most jogging stroller seats are set to a permanent deep recline that your child might not like. Instead of facing forward, they face the sky. Younger kids probably won't mind, but older kids are apt to complain. At least, ours do.

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Safety Straps

For reasons beyond our comprehension, the highest speed strollers in the world also have the worst safety straps. Many models have straps that are too loose, even when tightened as far as possible, to adequately restrain a small child. A 2-year-old being able to eject herself at any time is not something we want to worry about when we're sprinting down a hill.

Know this is a liability of many models, and check diligently for it in the store, as you can't really home sew a safe alternative.

Features

You won't find many convenience features on a jogging stroller. Many don't even have baskets, but do offer a pocket or two. We couldn't figure out why they couldn't at least stick a cup holder or something on them, but then our personal trainer aunt reminded us that you're not guzzling Starbucks when you're running. Touché, Miss Fitness, touché. (Although we are running with a water bottle and we would like a place to put that.)

Canopy

We like sun canopies to shade our babies, but they can add drag to a jogging stroller, and when you're running, you frequently run in directions that make the sun shine directly onto your rider anyway. Just be sure to use lots of sunscreen, a hat, and maybe even lightweight long pants on your little guy.

Size and Weight

Jogging strollers are big, like leave-in-your-garage-unfolded big. They aren't too heavy—about the same as standard strollers, thanks to their light frames and lack of extras. Jogging strollers typically weigh between 20 and 30 pounds.

Fold

Jogging strollers don't fold very compactly, and many require you to remove the front wheel before folding. Not an issue if you're constantly running around your own neighborhood, but if you ever plan on hauling it to the local park, find one that folds.

Price

Unlike all-terrain strollers, many discount joggers are available. Prices range from $99 to $400. Cheaper joggers near the $100 range will not handle well or last long, but can be a good choice for the casual exerciser. Good quality models for serious athletes start at around $200.

Why we love them: They allow us to continue our pre-baby jogs with baby.

Why we don't: They allow us to continue our pre-baby jogs with baby.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Weight
- ☆ Canopy
- ☆ Pockets
- ☆ Wheels
- ☆ Brakes
- ☆ Frame
- ☆ Seat recline
- ☆ Safety straps
- ☆ Fold

NOTES: *Jogging Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade

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Double Standard Strollers

They're big, they're bulky, and they're expensive. But if you're having twins or expecting your next baby before your first is able to walk long distances (like through the mall), you're going to need one. Standard double strollers weigh anywhere from 24 to a whopping 47 pounds, but they're chock-full of features, offer comfortable seating for both babes, and they get the job done.

Most double strollers are unwieldy to steer, but they do offer large baskets, double sun canopies, and parent-friendly features such as cup holders, adjustable handles, and shock-absorbing wheels.

Double Standard Stroller

Also Known As

Full-size double, double stroller, twin pushchair, double pushchair, double buggy, twin buggy, twin stroller, tandem double, side-by-side double

Age Range

Birth to 4 years

Total Usage

4 years

Recommendation

Must have, if you have more than one non-full-time walker

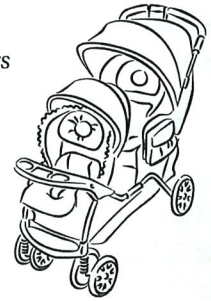
When to Buy

Just before your twins or next baby is born.

Seating

There are actually two different types of double standard strollers based on how they stack the seats: tandem or side by side.

Tandem Seating



The most popular seating arrangement in double strollers is the tandem, where one seat sits in front of the other. Many tandems go one step further and offer stadium seating, giving the little guy in back a view from the top. Tandem strollers are usually very stable, but can be a nightmare to maneuver. To make things easier, you should load the heaviest weight in the back seat, over the

back wheels. While many manufacturers recommend placing an infant car seat carrier in the rear seat for safety (presumably so you can be closer to your baby), if you have a heavier toddler, this arrangement can be almost impossible to push. Many tandems only offer a full recline on the back seat, which is a total pain, because everyone wants to kick back sometimes. We look for tandems that allow both seats to recline. Many newer tandem strollers allow you to reverse the direction each seat faces independently, so your children can see where they're going, look at you, or even face each other.

Why we love them: Tandems are easier to fit through the door, and are more car seat compatible.

Why we don't: Tandems are the heaviest and hardest to push stroller in the free world. And if you have same-aged children, prepare for fights about who gets to sit in the front (we don't know about you, but we prepare by packing M&M's).

Side-by-Side Seating



Side-by-side seats sit, well, we think you can guess. They offer a more democratic view, although they pose a challenge for many doorways, elevators, and small aisles. While each seat reclines, more often than not, neither accepts an infant car seat. If you have same-sized kids, it's much easier to push them in a side-by-side than in a tandem, but if one kid is significantly heavier, these strollers tend to veer to the side, all crazy-like. They are a little lighter than a tandem stroller, but much bigger when folded. Make sure the side-by-side stroller isn't too wide to fit through a standard doorway; less than 30 inches wide is recommended.

Why we love them: They allow our children to play with each other.

Why we don't: They allow our children to punch each other.

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Seats

Look for seats that both recline. You'll need a full recline for infant use.

Basket

Double strollers offer them, but they can be nearly impossible to access, what with four little legs in the way. Also see if you can access the basket when the seats are reclined, as it's no good trying to grab a blanket to cover a sleeping child if you have to wake that child to get to it.

Canopy

Look for a large one that adequately covers both riders.

Wheels and Suspension

Look for good wheels, as the extra weight of two riders will crack little plastic ones in no time. Also suspension on the wheels is not just nice for the rider, but can aid the pusher as well.

Handling

They are all pretty bad, but some are worse than others. No matter how big it is or how much it costs, you'll hate your double stroller if it pains you to push it. Keep test-driving until you find an adequate model.

The Handle

Because you're shoving so much weight down the sidewalk, you need a good, solid handle. A single bar is best. Ergonomically padded is even better. Just make sure it doesn't shake or wiggle too easily in the store when you're not even pushing the stroller, or when you actually try to push you'll end up wanting to push it off a cliff.

Folding

Many double strollers fold quite easily—too easily in fact. Thousands of the most popular models were recently recalled because they kept folding in on tiny riders. Check that the stroller has a foolproof locking mechanism to keep the stroller open when it's in use.

Stroller Weight

Pay careful attention to how heavy a stroller you are committing to, because you might consider committing hari-kari on a large one after you have loaded and unloaded it about three times. Double standard strollers weigh anywhere from 24 to an upsetting 47 pounds. We're just going to go on record as saying that after you leave the 20 to 30 pound range, you leave all good sense behind.

Features

Most double standard strollers come packed with parent convenience features—thank goodness for small miracles! We highly recommend getting as many as you can, without adding too much to the weight, because being able to walk with your drink of choice can make any walk more pleasant.

Price

Double standard strollers range in price from $99 to (are you ready?) $899. Most are firmly in the $150 range.

Other Alternatives

If you have a wide enough range in the age of your children, you might not need a full double standard stroller. You can find much smaller, easier to manage products designed for the older child, think 3 and up, who like to walk but can't make it all the way through a day at Disneyland. You might also consider a toddler footboard attachment to your standard stroller (some luxury stroller systems offer them), or a stroller-and-a-half, which offers a little half seat for your bigger hitchhikers.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Tandem or side-by-side
- ☆ Seat reclines
- ☆ Car seat adaptable
- ☆ Basket

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- ☆ Canopy
- ☆ Suspension
- ☆ Wheels
- ☆ Maneuverability
- ☆ Handle
- ☆ Fold
- ☆ Weight
- ☆ Parent console

NOTES: *Double Standard Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade



Double Lightweight/Umbrella Strollers

About the time your twins or your second baby turns 1, you'll start looking for a lighter stroller to ease your double pushing duties. Double lightweight or umbrella strollers are the lightest double strollers available, but they are still twice as heavy as a single umbrella stroller, weighing roughly the same as a single standard stroller, anywhere from 18 to 28 pounds. While they are the ultimate in convenience (especially important for the mom of multiple children who doesn't need to be weighed down by anything else), the double lightweight stroller you choose should be sturdy enough to carry two children.

Double lightweight strollers share many of the same features and options as single lightweight strollers, so take a peek at that section so you know what to look for. Just know that everything—wheels, handles, and even the folding mechanism—will take double the pressure under double the weight. Here are the features that are specific only to double versions.

Age Range

Most double lightweight strollers are meant for children over 6 months in age. Some do have newborn capabilities, and if you are willing to trust your tiny one in a tiny stroller, look for newborn head pillows, body padding, and secure straps. Babies under 6 months old also require a fully reclined seat.

Double umbrella strollers are the go-to choice for moms with older toddlers who no longer need to tote quite so much stuff. A good one should last you into the preschool years.

Seating

Due to their light construction, double lightweight strollers only offer side-by-side seating and are not able to safely hold infant car seat carriers. (Some claim to be able to hold an infant car seat carrier, but we wouldn't trust them with our newborn baskets.) The side-by-side seating arrangement makes for equal viewing—great for twins—but does make the stroller quite wide, a nuisance in narrow store aisles.

Cheaper double umbrella strollers will have only a single-stop recline, while nicer models will give you more recline positions. Look for seats that offer at least one position of recline, as the rhythmic motion of strolling could put even the most stubborn insomniac to sleep.

Sun Canopies

Make sure canopies are adequately sized to cover both little passengers. And because your riders are sitting side by side, peekaboo windows on the canopy can be especially helpful to see who really "started it."

Features

Many double lightweight strollers do have a few convenience features like moderately sized baskets and parent cup holders, but not nearly as many as a double standard. We're all about convenience, so we look for strollers with the most we can get.

Handling

Because they are wide and weighed down with two kids, double lightweight strollers don't handle nearly as dreamily as single lightweights, but they do steer much, much better than double standard strollers. Nicer, more expensive strollers will push much, much easier and actually allow you to turn corners, unlike some of the cheaper models.

Double Lightweight/ Umbrella Stroller

Also Known As
Double umbrella, twin umbrella, double umbrella buggy, double umbrella pushchair

Age Range
6 months to 4 years

Total Usage
3½ years

Recommendation
Nice to have

When to Buy
Start looking just before your twins or youngest baby turns 6 months old.

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Look for a handle that is at least slightly padded, because you'll be pushing twice the weight. Handles that adjust can save your life, especially as many double lightweight strollers are awkward and can get in the way of your natural stride. Kicking the stroller every three steps does not make for a fun stroll.

Also, if you thought suspension over the wheels was important for an easy pushing experience, double that thought.

Size

Check that the double lightweight stroller you choose can actually fit through a standard door; in other words, it should be 29 inches or less in width. This size can lead to a rather snug fit for wider kids, but you can't exactly park your kids outside while you shop because their stroller doesn't fit through the front door. (We've heard moms do routinely leave their kids outside stores in Iceland, but we're pretty sure that won't fly here. They also get a nine-month maternity leave with 80 percent of their pay in Iceland. We're thinking about moving to Iceland.)

Folding

There are still clever, one-handed folds to be had on double lightweight strollers, but they do require some amount of parent patience. You are collapsing more supports and more fabric, so give yourself some time to perfect it. Seem too complicated or time consuming? Find one that isn't.

One of the biggest advantages of a double lightweight stroller over any other double stroller is how much smaller it is when folded. While other doubles take up the entire trunk on our SUV (Geo Metro? forget about it), double lightweight strollers do collapse into a pretty small size. Not as small as a single umbrella, but comparable to a single standard.

Weight

Surprisingly, double lightweight strollers aren't as light as we'd hoped, but they do have to safely support two kids. They actually weigh as much as single standard, and even some double standard, strollers. Double lightweight strollers weigh between 18 and 30 pounds.

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Price

Just as with single umbrellas, double lightweight strollers have two price groups: cheap and not. Cheaper strollers cost between $59 and $139. More expensive varieties range from $150 to $350. More money will buy you a sturdier stroller, better maneuverability, more durability, and more options. For this type of stroller, we have found that great, long-lasting success starts at the $200 range.

Why we love them: Bringing two kids everywhere means bringing a lot of stuff. We appreciate not having to bring it all in a giant, heavy stroller.

Why we don't: We wish they better accommodated newborns. But then, of course, they'd have to be bigger and heavier. We can't win.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Reclines
- ☆ Canopies
- ☆ Basket
- ☆ Parent cup holder
- ☆ Handle
- ☆ Suspension
- ☆ Width
- ☆ Weight
- ☆ Fold

NOTES: *Double Lightweight/Umbrella Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade

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Double All-Terrain Strollers

Just as the right all-terrain stroller can be used as your primary single stroller, you can use a double all-terrain stroller for more than just casual jogs—it can be your primary double stroller, period.

The features to consider when choosing a double all-terrain are very similar to single choices, so flip back to that section and read all about it.

The specific concerns for double all-terrain strollers include the extra size, weight, folded dimensions, and unique seating arrangements.

Seating

Double all-terrains typically offer two types of seat—side-by-side or tandem. There is, however, a weird new breed: the tandem basket seat, also sometimes called a "second seat."

Side-by-Side Seating

Side-by-side seating is the most popular arrangement for double all-terrains. It gives each child an equal view, although for better or worse, they can easily touch each other. Side-by-side seating makes for the widest stroller, both fully assembled and folded.



Double All-Terrain Stroller

Also Known As
Sport double, twin sport, sport utility double stroller, terrain double, all-terrain double, urban double, twin terrain

Age Range
6 months to 5 years, unless it can accommodate a newborn, and then it can be used from birth

Total Usage
4½ years

Recommendation
Nice to have

When to Buy
Just before your twins or next baby is born.

Why we love them: We like it for jogging.

Why we don't: We hate it for shopping.

Tandem Seating



You won't find as many tandem seats with double all-terrains, generally because it's a harder engineering feat to pull off in a triangular shaped stroller. If you're looking at this type, choose one that is nice and stable and can't tip over easily like a tricycle.

Why we love them: They are much easier to shop with, because we can actually fit into the shops.

Why we don't: The stability thing bugs us. Especially when an overexcited front passenger unexpectedly decides to dismount.

Tandem Basket Seating



As strange as it sounds, this new seating design puts one child literally underneath the other. The front rider sits in a seat that resembles a single all-terrain setup. The second child sits in a sling seat mounted underneath and slightly behind, where the stroller basket would be (and now, most definitely is not). They have room for their legs and all, and there is a high seat back and safety straps. But we still hate it. The kid is inches off the ground. They stare at the back of the seat in front of them. And the wheels are right there, just begging to be touched. Yes, there are parents who love them and kids who swear they love to ride in them. And the manufacturers have finally started adding wheel guards. We're still not sold.

Why we love them: We really don't.

Why we don't: No matter what you say, the kid is riding in the basket and looks like an unsafe afterthought to us.

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Reclining Seats

Look for a recline capability on both seats, or else you run the risk of revealing who really is your favorite kid.

Weight

Of course, double all-terrain strollers are heavier than singles. They range in weight from 28 to 35 pounds.

Price

Double all-terrains are more expensive, too. Price ranges from $300 to $700.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Stroller seat setup
- ☆ Reclines
- ☆ Weight

NOTES: *Double All-Terrain Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade



Double Jogging Strollers

If you are a serious runner and have two children you want to take with you, you'll need a double jogging stroller.

Read our entry on jogging strollers to learn about which features make a good one, but here are the specific specifications for doubles.

Seating

Jogging strollers only offer one seating arrangement for double riders: side by side. The positioning makes the entire stroller much wider, of course, and can make pushing more difficult, but you're guaranteed a better workout.

Look for seats that are wide enough to comfortably seat your children. As with single joggers, seats are typically very deep and tend to force riders to look up rather than out.

Safety Straps

As on single joggers, the safety straps are decidedly loose and lacking on double joggers. Check their adjustability in the store and see if you can actually strap younger children in tightly enough.

Canopy

Because the seats are side by side, double jogging strollers have one giant canopy that shades both passengers. Look for one that provides adequate shade, but beware. Some are so large, a big gust of wind, and poof, you're Mary Poppins.

Double Jogging Stroller

Also Known As
Double jogger, runner double, Duallie, Twinner, twin jogger

Age Range
6 months to 5 years

Total Usage
4½ years

Recommendation
Nice to have

When to Buy
Just before your twins or next baby turns 6 months old.

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Size

The largest of all strollers on Earth, the double jogging stroller is wide as a house. Forget about being able to push it through a single, standard door. Seriously, forget about it.

Folding

Most do fold, with more steps than most strollers. And you'll still need an extra parking spot for it when it's folded.

Price

Double jogging strollers range in price from $200 to over $400.

Why we love them: Because we've never needed to continue our jogs more than after we've had our second kid.

Why we don't: Because we still hate jogging.

Features to Consider

- ☆ Seat width
- ☆ Canopy
- ☆ Safety straps
- ☆ Fold

NOTES: *Double Jogging Strollers*

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade



Strollers-and-a-Half

If you have two children but are worried about the size, weight, and price of double strollers, you might consider a stroller-and-a-half. Meant for moms with children of different ages, they are a great option if you have an older child who likes to walk sometimes and would leave her seat in a full double empty more often than not.

A stroller-and-a-half is a single standard stroller with a regular stroller seat and an additional area behind that seat for the occasional older hitchhiker.

When shopping for a stroller-and-a-half, employ the same tactics and look for the same features found on a single standard stroller, but also consider the following.

Age Range

While the standard stroller's seat can be used on most models from birth up (with an infant car seat carrier only, unless the seat fully reclines and is specifically suited for a newborn), the minimum age for a back passenger is around 2½ years, or when your child is old enough to not just throw himself off the little platform on a whim.

This is not a suitable stroller choice for twins, as they can't be in the back when they're younger, and they'll fight for the back when they're older.

Stroller-and-a-Half

Also Known As
Sit-N-Stand, baby-toddler ride-along stroller, Caboose stroller

Age Range
6 months to 4 years, unless you attach an infant car seat carrier, and then it can be used from birth

Total Usage
4 years

Recommendation
Nice to have

When to Buy
If you have an older toddler (2½-plus years old), buy this stroller before your second baby is born.

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Front Seat

The front seat is a standard stroller seat, although with much less recline than we like. Look for adequate padding and appropriate safety straps. Many models also offer a child snack tray, which we like.

Back Board and Bench

Behind the front seat is extra space with a little board and bench seat for the older child. The back rider can either stand on the board or sit on a little bench. The bench is usually quite small and backless and resembles a tiny camping table. There is usually a strap that hooks between the stroller handles, however, that can give back support to a child when she is standing. We prefer models that have a sliding rather than fixed bench, so it can be moved out of the way when the rider stands.

While some back seats do have a little lap strap, children can easily free themselves, so let only mature kids ride in the back.

Finally, look for a stroller that doesn't allow easy, tempting access to the back wheels. Another reason to not let your 18-month-old ride in the back, no matter how smart he might be.

Basket

The stroller-and-a-half does come with a nice large basket, but it can be difficult to access when the back rider is onboard.

Canopy

The canopy on the stroller-and-a-half only covers the front seat. Back riders are left to their own hat and sunscreen devices.

Size and Weight

The size and weight of a stroller-and-a-half is comparable to a lighter standard stroller. They usually weigh between 21 and 25 pounds. They are much easier to manage, steer, and store than double standard strollers and feel much sturdier than double umbrellas.

Price

The price ranges from $130 to $250. More money will get you a more durable, easier-to-drive stroller with more parent convenience features.

Why we love them: Because they're bigger than a single, but smaller than a double. Perfect for our baby/older toddler combination.

Why we don't: Because our older toddler sure does think it's funny to jump off midstride. We, however, don't.

Other Toddler Seats

Some standard single and all-terrain single strollers actually have their own "stroller-and-a-half" versions with the addition of attachable toddler seats. These tiny seats usually resemble little grocery cart seats and attach directly to the single stroller. The seats have no recline and are meant for older children, up to 35 pounds, but we found that kids over 2½ actually didn't like sitting in them for very long. However, they are a great option to see you through the stage of an older sibling from age 18 months to 2½ years.

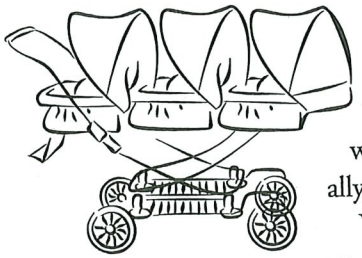
Features to Consider

- ☆ Front seat padding
- ☆ Harnesses
- ☆ Snack tray
- ☆ Basket
- ☆ Bench padding
- ☆ Bench slide

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NOTES: ***Strollers-and-a-Half***

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade



Multiples Strollers

You can get a multiples seat setup on almost any type of stroller, but your options will be very limited beyond that. There is usually only one or two on the market of each style. You'll have to decide which type of stroller you most prefer, and then everything about that stroller will basically be picked for you. What kind of multiples mom are you? There are carriages for city walkers, standard strollers for the budget-minded, minimalist designs for car seat ferrying, all-terrain strollers for the active mom, and even joggers.

Most multiples strollers accommodate triplets, but there are strollers for quads, and even a company that makes six-seaters, called minibuses.

Multiples Stroller

Also Known As
Triplet stroller, Triplette stroller, triple stroller, quad stroller, Minibus, Trio

Age Range
Birth to 4 years

Total Usage
4 years

Recommendation
Must have, for those with marvelous multiples

When to Buy
When you find out you're expecting twins or more, start shopping!

Seating

You can find side-by-side-by-side options, as well as inline (tandem for triplets) arrangements, even those with stadium seating. Look for seats with nice padding and as much recline as possible. A flat recline or infant car seat carrier connection is required for newborns, and we're guessing you are going to want to leave the house at some point during the first six months.

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Handling

Inline strollers feel like you're pushing a semitruck, but they do fit through doorways. Side-by-side-by-sides, not so much. Most multiples strollers will get you from point A to point B, but some require a Herculean effort. Don't expect the maneuverability of an umbrella stroller, but some models made by ex-automobile engineers are modern marvels of mobility.

Size and Weight

Did we say double jogging strollers were the largest strollers around? Multiples strollers laugh at little double joggers—*ha ha ha ha!* They are heavy behemoths, weighing anywhere from 30 to 60 pounds. But they are heavy for a reason. You have lots of babies to protect!

Folding

Remember these strollers are large and bulky and will not be the easiest to fold. Some are definitely easier than others, and some are more compact when folded than others. So if size is an issue, consider the folded dimensions. Also consider if any or all the seats have to be removed to fold it.

Handles

Most have telescoping handles for easier adjustment. Because you won't know how the weight distributes until you start pushing it fully loaded, an adjustable handle is key—but choose a solid one.

Brakes

All strollers need brakes; none more so than one with the extra momentum of multiple little bodies. Most multiples strollers have hand and foot brakes. They should be solid, but not so sticky as to be hard to disengage.

Canopies

Most multiples strollers either come with canopies or offer them separately. We're big fans of big amounts of shade.

Fabric and Color

Don't expect fabulous fabric choices. Sadly, the choice in the style department is much more limited than for other types. You can find pretty nice options, especially if you're only looking for triplets. Got six? The very name "minibus" should tell you it's not going to be that pretty.

Stroller Basket

With multiples, you have multiple diaper bags and more stuff, so look for the biggest basket you can possibly find. And make sure it's easily accessible.

Price

Prices vary according to the number of seats you require and the type of stroller you want. Carriages, jogging, and all-terrain strollers are the most expensive. As with most strollers, the more expensive models will last much longer than the cheaper versions.

Multiples strollers range from $250 to $1,500. Most good ones are in the $600 to $900 range.

Availability

Multiples strollers are hard to find in retail stores. We would drive a good two hours to test-drive one. All can easily be ordered on the Internet.

EBay, Craigslist, and multiples message boards are great resources for secondhand models at giant savings.

Why we love them: Being a product of one, we love any product made especially for large families.

Why we don't: We're not a freak show, people! Triplets are not that amazing. Quit staring! Move along, move along!

Features to Consider

- ☆ Seat padding
- ☆ Seat reclines
- ☆ Car-seat adaptable

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- ☆ Fold
- ☆ Handle
- ☆ Canopy
- ☆ Brakes
- ☆ Basket

NOTES: ***Multiples Strollers***

Model Name / Manufacturer	Store/Price	My Impressions	Grade