

The Magazine for Multiples Since 1984

# TWINS

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Looking to  
London and  
*Going for Gold!*

**How to  
start  
your own  
Support  
Group...**

**Sizzling  
Summer  
Fun with  
Twins**

**Tips on  
Moving  
With  
Twins...**

June/July 2012

From  
**ETHIOPIA**  
to **Hollywood**  
Twins Defy Odds!





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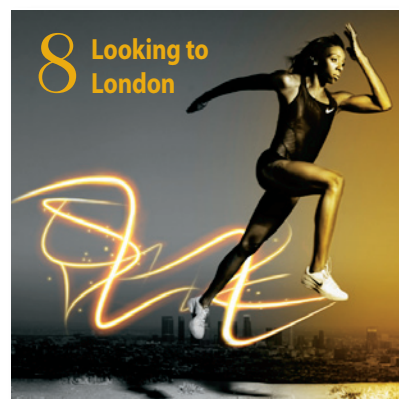
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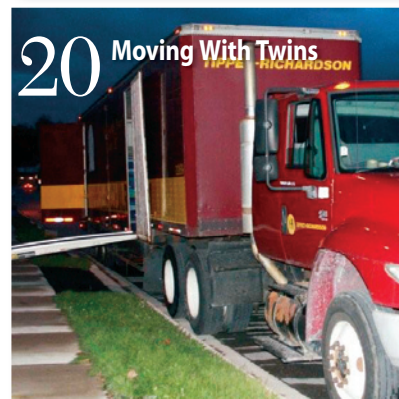
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## On the Cover:

Pearl and Jewel are a joy to everyone around them. They enjoy spending their free time going to the beach, playing outdoors, and "cooking" in their play kitchen. We are constantly in awe of the bond they share. Where one is the other is also. They are truly best friends. We are blessed with two little gems!

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**Getting Support & Giving Support...**

I can still remember that exhilarating moment when I first found out I was going to have twins... So many questions started rushing through my head like "Exactly how big will these babies get inside my belly?" and "Our one-bedroom apartment isn't going to be big enough, we have to move, NOW!" to "This is so crazy, how did this happen?" (Sigh!)

When I was expecting my twins, there wasn't nearly the information available on the internet that there is today. Since they were my first experience at going through a pregnancy, I can remember feeling desperate to get any information on having and raising twins. I wanted to prepare my mindset for what life would be like for me in the coming days, months, years...but just wasn't exactly sure how I could do that. At that time, I was working full-time as a publicist/PR Director for a Photography/Motion Picture College in Santa Barbara and had a co-worker that told me about this support group she heard about called the Santa Barbara Mothers of Twins Club... What? There is actually a club for mothers of twins? They have those...wow, who knew?

After a few phone calls, I was able to reach this super nice mom with 2-year-old boy/girl twins from the local Twins Club. She was the President of the club and became my "mentor". She was so knowledgeable and would share such great information with me. We would talk on the phone and she would answer all my questions as I would listen intently while her toddler twins would laugh, scream and cry in the background... and I would imagine what my life was going to be when my bundles of joy arrived. To me, there was something special about this club... it just seemed like such a fun and supportive group. They would have meetings, family outings and clothing exchanges where each person would bring in clothes their twins had outgrown and would swap/exchange with others. When my fraternal twin boys were born 6-weeks early and had to stay in the NICU for 15 days, it was the local Twins Club that organized and delivered dinners for our family so I wouldn't have to worry about cooking and could just take care of my precious preemies. All the advice I received was invaluable and they always made me feel like I had the support of others who actually understood what I was going through.

When we moved from Santa Barbara to Colorado when our boys were only one and I didn't know a single soul there, it was the local Parents of Multiples Club that connected me in with other moms of twins the same-age and made me feel so welcome. I started going to playgroups, club meetings, clothing sales (they have a very successful clothing sale that also raises money for their club!), fun family parties and outings and met a great group of ladies along the way. I received the most helpful advice from other moms and the support every new mom of multiples needs!

As my twins grew, so did my interest in supporting other moms that were beginning their journey just like that mom back in Santa Barbara did for me so I became an active volunteer in my local, state and national clubs. There is nothing like the network and support of other parents of multiples and this is a great way for you to connect and experience this special bond first hand. Now that my twins will be starting high school this fall the need for information and support has changed but the issues and questions are still there...they are just different. They now involve issues like peer pressures, competition, driving and preparing for college someday (it will be here before I know it!) The need for support will always be there through every age and stage so it's nice to have other moms to talk to about all this stuff.

Do you live in an area that doesn't have a Parents of Multiples club? Read more in this issue on ways you can form one where you live. Also read about Lashinda Demus, a track superstar and mother of twins who is going for the GOLD at the summer Olympics in London and be sure to read all the great tips and advice for summer that we have included in each of our Ages & Stages sections. We also have tips on moving with twins and a touching story about a set of twins from Ethiopia that have defied the odds and now live in Hollywood working aside J.Lo, plus much more! We sure hope you enjoy your summer with your little ones and create lots of wonderful childhood memories just for them!

Sincerely,  
*Christa D Reed*  
Christa Reed, Editor-in-Chief



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## New Australian Study finds Moms with twins benefit from earlier delivery...

(June 13, 2012—NewsCore) Women carrying twins are being advised to give birth at 37 weeks to avoid serious complications, following research conducted by an Australian university. Results of the biggest study of its kind in the world found babies born to women in the early birth group (37 weeks) were less likely to be small for their gestational age compared with babies born to women at 38 weeks or longer. The study compared 235 women with twin pregnancies in Australia, New Zealand and Italy, and was published recently in the British Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

Study Author and Professor Jodie Dodd, from the University of Adelaide's Robinson Institute and the Women's & Children's Hospital, said there was a great deal of uncertainty around the optimal time for twins' birth in clinical practice. "We found that at 37 weeks, elective birth is associated with a significant reduction in the risk of serious morbidity for infants, without increasing complications related to immaturity or induction of labor," she said.

"We hope this study will help clinicians to make recommendations to women with healthy twin pregnancies that lead to less complications at birth, and therefore lead to happier, healthier lives for their babies." Twins are at greater risk of problems during pregnancy, particularly from a slowing of the rate of growth in one or both twins. "This slowing of the growth rate can result in low birth weight, which is associated with an increased need for care in the neonatal nursery in the short term and increased risk of health problems in later life, including heart disease and diabetes," Professor Dodd said. "There is also the risk of one or both twins being stillborn." A normal full-term pregnancy is 40 weeks.

## NOMOTC Attends Joint 2nd World Congress on Twin Pregnancy and the 14th Congress of the International Society for Twin Studies in Florence, Italy

Franklin Tenn, May, 24, 2012—Terri Gills, Co-chair of International Council of Multiple Birth Organizations (COMBO) and NOMOTC past president and advisor and Pam Krell, NOMOTC President, presented "The Power of Numbers – Research Can Make A Difference." at the Joint 2nd World Congress on Twin Pregnancy: A Global Perspective including the biology, genetics, clinical challenges and uniqueness of twin gestation and the 14th Congress of the International Society for Twin Studies held in Florence, Italy, in April 2012. (Congress website). Members from the International Council of Multiple Births Organizations (ICOMBO) and physicians, scientists and researchers gathered from around the world to share information on issues specifically pertaining to multiple births. "The Congress provided an ideal international forum for sharing ideas on the most effective ways to work with others in conducting research on multiple births," said Ms. Gillis, "Getting the numbers provides for robust data yielding very credible studies that are valued by medical providers and parents and help in making critical decisions on care." Using multiples as study subjects to obtain knowledge specific to multiple births as well as singleton births is providing to be extremely beneficial as was portrayed in a January article published in National Geographic entitled "A Thing or Two About Twins."

The NOMOTC presentation highlighted the value of having a strong research department within an organization. Specifically, it showed NOMOTC's organizational structure, the mission of the Research Department and the process

cycles for how both internal and external research studies are simply managed, through the use of online tools and social media, resulting in a greater response rate and survey penetration by NOMOTC membership, other organizations and parents of multiples worldwide. It also shared the 100+ Research reports currently on file. In addition, results on the newly completed study on Autism and Multiples were presented at the Congress. The primary intent of the NOMOTC presentation was to assist other countries in understanding the value of creating a research focus within their organization and/or assist them with further development of their research efforts.

Ms. Krell says, "NOMOTC is a lean nonprofit organization and we have earned credibility in the scientific and medical communities for our methods of accomplishing our research goals and for the riggers of our data and, therefore, are honored to have presented at this biannual conference. Our methods of collaborating and conducting our studies allow us to study the issues that NOMOTC, the medical community, our members and others deem important to multiple birth children and their families. Many multiples birth organizations don't have the benefit of a research department so it is our hope is that we provided some helpful ways to support any research efforts they are interested in undertaking."

Recently available Centers for Disease Control data indicate that multiple birth rates have risen 70% from 1980 to 2004. Given this, Ms. Krell stated that "It is critical to maintain an ongoing credible research effort to better understand specific issues pertaining to potential serious medical and other challenges that can impact the pregnancy, delivery and raising of two, three or more children of the same age at the same time."

Representing the United States at the conference was NOMOTC and Dr.



Ruben Quintero, who chaired a track on Twin- to-Twin Transfusion and helped the medical community better understand the staging of Twin-to-Twin Transfusion, which is now actually recognized as the Quintero Staging. Additional countries in attendance were Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Czech Republic and South Africa, as well as several others. Susan Griffith, M.D., NOMOTC Education Department summarized the philosophy of the conference, "We may speak different languages, but our common bond of raising multiples and supporting parents of multiples is the same. We plan to harness the knowledge of all our global partners and pass it on to the members of NOMOTC."

## "Twins Days Festival" in Twinsburg, Ohio is scheduled for August 3-5, 2012... a festival celebrating everything 'twins'!

Did you know that there is a festival just for twins called the "Twins Days Festival" held each summer in Twinsburg,



Ohio? It is a super fun weekend packed with so many activities and events just for twins! There is a golf tournament, corn hole tournament, field games for kids, inflatable bouncers, a 'Double Take' parade, twins contests, a twin talent show, a 5K race/walk, entertainment, food and so much more. Check out the official website for the "Twins Days Festival" and make plans to

bring your twins to this year's festival if you can! Visit <http://www.twinsdays.org> to learn more.

## Twin Sisters Launch Fashion Forward: Webcomic

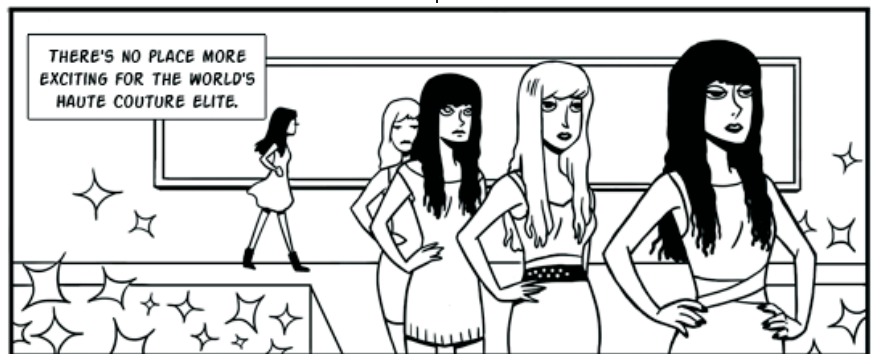
Comics and Fashion have had very long and very separate histories in the art world, but this summer, a pair of Los Angeles based writers and twin sisters are bridging them together for a first: a fashion based webcomic. Not since Marvel's *Millie The Model* (which began in the 1940's and ran for a record 28 years) has there been such a bold attempt.

Debuting on Friday June 1st, the webcomic, *Fashion Forward*, follows the incredible adventures of New York Fashion Assistant Sam Tate, as she navigates the cutthroat world of couture and the ever-changing landscape of technological innovation.

Shawnee Gibbs and Shawnelle Gibbs created the series out of a desire to see more fun, adventure-driven female stories in comics. The sisters, who make a living in television, tapped their own backgrounds as inspiration for *Fashion Forward*. Shawnelle used her fashion expertise as a producer for shows such as the Emmy Winning *Project Runway* and NBC's new hit *Fashion Star*. Shawnee, who's worked on Disney's Emmy Award winning *Wizards of Waverly Place*, put her background to work with her sister to help shape a compelling story for audiences of all ages.

The sisters paired with Linda Chung, a talented young San Francisco-based artist to illustrate the story. Linda's bold and vivid illustrations help New York City and its occupants come alive in a striking way.

*Fashion Forward: A Webcomic* premiered on Friday, June 1st at <http://www.gofashionforward.com/> and updates every Friday.



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# Heidi Green's Top 10 Tips on Photographing Twins



1. Know your subject. Choose a location where your twins feel comfortable and at ease so that they'll be themselves. If they love to curl up at home and read their favorite book, there's your perfect setting.
2. Use natural (sun) light as much as possible. A flash can frighten babies and young kids; add harsh shadows and produce red eye.
3. Focus on their eyes. A sharp tight shot of their eyes is like looking into their soul.
4. Get down low so that you're eye to eye with your subject. The shots taken from a child's perspective will be more unique and personal than those taken from above.
5. Don't be afraid to get close to the subjects and fill the whole frame. With more active kids, this won't be easy; as an alternative, keep your distance and use a zoom lens for the same effect.
6. Have fun and experiment with various compositions and angles. You can get a little artsy by focusing in on different body parts: hands, ears, lips, belly buttons, etc.
7. Take tons of photos. Don't be too concerned about getting the "perfect shot". If you're patient and relaxed, there will always be some great ones in the end.
8. Include other people and family pets in the photos. This is a great way to capture memories of your family and pets together. I'm not a fan of props, but it's a good idea to include your child's favorite doll, ball or toy—something you'll associate with them when you look back on the photos.
9. Choose non-distracting backgrounds. Some of the most picturesque settings are wide, green fields and well-lit rooms with simple walls and floors. If something in the background doesn't add to the photo, remove it so that the subject matter remains the focus.
10. Be Playful so that your children have fun. Make sure to capture them doing what they love most whether it's running, jumping, swimming, laughing or playing with their favorite toys. Even simple activities like coloring, watching TV, eating and sleeping can produce beautiful, intimate photos. ♥

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**Heidi Green**, mother of twins, is a well-known family and celebrity photographer specializing in kids' parties, special events, and unique family portraits. Visit her website at [www.heidigreen.com](http://www.heidigreen.com).

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# Looking to

# London

Lashinda Demus  
(Mother of Twins)  
is going for  
**GOLD!**

by Christa D. Reed

**A** day at the office for working mother of twins Lashinda Demus is nothing by 'typical.' This world-class track superstar phenomenon sets the standard for women as athletes, wives and mothers. Lashinda is one of the best female hurdlers in the history of American track and field and is an inspiration to women striving to remain competitive while balancing a family.

Born in Southern California, at the age of two, Lashinda's mother (her coach and a former NCAA champion) introduced her to the track, not realizing that her admiration for running would eventually lead her to a #1 world ranking in the 400 meter hurdles.

In 2001, Lashinda set the national high school record in the girls' 300 hurdles, and then went on to help South Carolina win its only NCAA track and field championship as a freshman. In 2005, she earned the first of two national titles in the 400 meter hurdles. She was ranked #1 in 2005-2006. In 2007 she experienced some amazing life changes when she got married and then gave birth to twin boys. At 5'7", Lashinda gained more than 50 pounds during her twin pregnancy and successfully delivered twin boys in June 2007. Despite her success on the track, Lashinda will be the first one to tell you there is no substitute for hard work and astonishingly she was back in training just weeks later collectively regaining her health and strength to recapture her #1 status. Lashinda's return wasn't an easy transition, and there were many setbacks including finding a balance between her physical, emotional, and spiritual self. For the better part of a year, like so many other new mothers, she struggled with Post Partum depression, something that affects nearly 13% of pregnant women and new mothers according to government statistics.

At the peak of her career, she was forced to filter through the feelings of being trapped and alone all the while juggling a career, husband and twin babies. True to form, she overcame these obstacles to find the balance required to maintain optimum health, her position as a hands-on mother and wife, as well as an elite athlete at the top of her career.

Only six weeks after delivering twins, Lashinda's mother helped her bridge the gap with drills that included cardiovascular activity, strength training and adherence. Months later,

*Continued on page 23*



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# A unique idea... Plan an online baby shower!

by Rebecca Johnson

Recently I was presented with a challenge. My sister, who lives in Florida, became pregnant. I wondered how I was going to give her a proper baby shower with the rest of her family living in Pennsylvania. After what seemed like hours on the internet searching, I came up short. That's when I came up with the idea of having an online baby shower for her. Granted, it wasn't a traditional baby shower, but it was a shower none the less.

**Rebecca Johnson** is a freelance writer the mother of two beautiful girls. Her work has been published on a Yahoo Contributor website a number of times.

I found that there is a way to bring friends and family together for this joyous occasion without feeling pressured to have a traditional baby shower. "No it can't quite be at grandma's house, but it could be at grandma's house on the net at Aunt Sally's and Cousin Linda's. You have the ability to make it global," suggests Robin Elise from About.com in regards to online baby showers. With this in

mind, hosting your own online baby shower can be fun, easy and economical. Here's how I did it.

## HOW TO START

If you are familiar with Facebook at all you will know that they have an "events" page where you can create your own event. After you have clicked on that page you enter in the span of time you would like your party to run for. A month or less is more than enough time for everyone to leisurely decide if they want to attend the party or not. You can chose any amount of time that suits you for your own party. With the soon-to-be parents involved in the invitation sharing, this takes the guess work out of mailing out invitations. We all know that the first baby shower is the most important and sometimes the only shower for the parent's-to-be, so let the sharing begin!

Next upload a picture to spiff up your events page. Choose a cute photo from Google images that suites your shower theme nicely. You can chose any image you'd like from your own computer. A picture of the parent's-to-be or an ultrasound picture would be suitable as well.

Since this is such a new concept, many people are not aware of what is expected of them. That is where your hostess skills come in. In the description portion is where you introduce yourself, explain what exactly a virtual baby shower is and what is expected of your guests. If you know the gender of the baby I would recommend adding this in your party description as well. It just makes gift buying easier for your guests. I had a lot of questions in regards to how this works and my standard answer was, "it is simple." And it really is that simple once you wrap your brain around the fact that it is casual and not very traditional.

## GAMES

In order to keep things fun and upbeat introduce party games. Every week for the entire month you can post new game in the comments section of the events page. All your guests are required to do is to check into the events page every week



and give their

answer. Keeping in the party game spirit I offered a \$20 gift card to each winner.

Here are some popular games I chose:

- How big is mom-to-be's belly?
- How big do you think the babies will weigh?
- On what day do you think the babies will be born?
- And last, but not least, your traditional word scramble. The quickest person to inbox me the correct answers won.

## GIFT BUYING

To make gift buying easy and economical for your guests, ask the parent's-to-be to register at any number of stores that have registries. This makes shopping easy for your guest and takes the guess work out of buying for the new parents. Posting links in the description that take your guest directly to the registrant's page is also very helpful. Once the guest had access to the registrant's gift registry, they were given the option to have the item they purchased shipped to the registrant's house or to the store for pick up. Most orders over a hundred dollars were eligible for free shipping. This is a very popular option.

The most popular stores that had online registries included:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <a href="http://www.toysrus.com">www.toysrus.com</a> | <a href="http://www.thebump.com">www.thebump.com</a>                         |
| <a href="http://www.Walmart.com">www.Walmart.com</a> | <a href="http://www.buybuybaby.com">www.buybuybaby.com</a>                   |
| <a href="http://www.Target.com">www.Target.com</a>   | <a href="http://www.childrenswonderland.com">www.childrenswonderland.com</a> |
| <a href="http://www.Amazon.com">www.Amazon.com</a>   |  |

The second gift buying is an easy one, simply post the soon to be parent's address. This mailing address can be used for those who would like to buy something other than what was in the registry.

What if the mother-to-be asks, "How am I going to host this shower in a way that people don't feel like they are just sending presents?" I would encourage her to get as involved as possible by posting comments and responding to them as well. Get the soon-to-be daddy involved as well. He can respond to comments and post videos and picture as well. My sister posted many photos of her voluptuous baby bump and responded to many of our guest's comments. This created a very warm comfortable feeling within the online baby shower that I had created.

With a little added humor, you can even enjoy party cake. Virtual party cake, that is, but what woman isn't counting calories as they sit there with a plate full of guilty pleasure at a traditional baby shower? I found a picture on Google images of an absolutely adorable shower cake and posted it for everyone to take a virtual bite out of. Our virtual party cake was calorie free and the best part was, you could eat as much as you want without feeling bad. So why not have a second helping? This was a great way to end a happy occasion.

So how do you include people who are not on social media sites or technologically savvy? Send paper invitations out to those individuals with the same instructions that you had posted

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# Are Your Twins Identical?





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INFANT

## IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT

New parents have lots of questions. How much? How long? How hot or cold? When it comes to choosing outfits or wrapping summer babies in lovely new blankets, it's sometimes difficult to know what qualifies as the right amount of clothing or protective covering. One of summer's colorful imprints can take the form of something that's not very pleasant for newborn multiples—heat rash. It generally appears when babies are dress too warmly. Small, red spots spread across the upper chest, back, neck and arms during periods of warm, humid weather. Heat rash is not serious and usually disappears when you uncover the affected area and expose it to the air. A tepid bath sometimes helps. Circulate the air in the room where your babies sleep. If the rash persists, call your pediatrician. ♥



## Protecting those pearly whites

When your multiples flash those precious, toothless grins, take it as an invitation to begin an oral hygiene routine. Following each feeding, you can wipe down their gums with a soft cloth. As teeth begin to appear, gently rub them with a damp piece of gauze in the morning and evening to help deter decay. A soft baby toothbrush is appropriate

as more teeth come in, but don't introduce toothpaste until the age of three. ♥



## No peaches 'cream here

Most new parents are surprised when their babies' skin isn't always picture perfect. Infant acne affects most babies between birth and 4-months. It is caused by a combination of their own oil glands adjusting to elements outside of the womb and from a remainder of mom's hormones still inside their little bodies. During the summer months, don't confuse this problem with heat rash, which can occur in older babies as well. Excess heat causes the skin to become red and blotchy. Infant acne is bumpy. Caregivers should not put lotion or soap on young babies' faces. Instead, use a cool, wet washcloth three times a day to wipe hot little cheeks, chins, necks and noses for both problems. ♥

## The great outdoors

With the arrival of warmer temperatures, multiples under the age of one will begin exploring the great outdoors for the first time. Remember to exercise caution when placing your multiples in this new environment. Poisonous leaves and tiny insects can go right into little mouths. Twins, triplets, or more can safely play in a fenced backyard, or use a blanket, play pen or Exersaucers to safely set up baby boundaries. If your babies are fussy, the fresh air and sunshine alone are sometimes enough to put smiles on their faces—and yours! ♥

## Sunscreen and shades

The best protection against the damaging rays of the sun is full coverage. Look for a shady spot when outdoors and be sure to use a canopy on the stroller. Take an umbrella to the beach. Because infants and young children may be at increased risk for eye injury from the sun, choose hats with brims and—if you can get your twins to wear them—sunglasses that block at least 99% of the sun's rays. If you can't find a shady spot, the American Academy of Pediatrics now says it is safe to use a small amount of sunscreen on infants under 6-months of age. Cover those easily overlooked areas of the hands and top of the feet. ♥



Life is better when twins dine together!



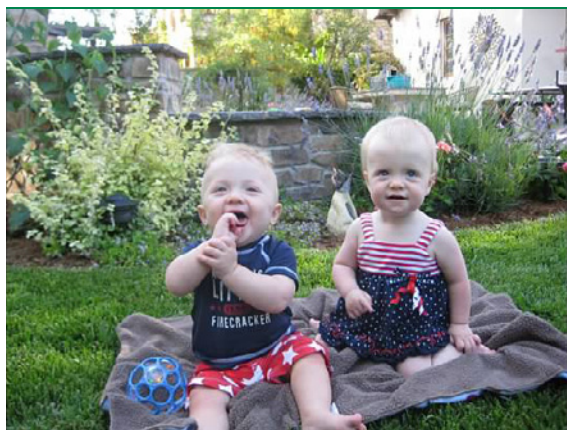
### Cut Feeding Time and Hassle in Half!

Table for Two is a comfy and secure twin feeder that lets you feed two babies at the same time without stress, strain or mess! Cut your work in half and feed your twins in half the time! Table for Two is a must-have item for parents of twins!



[www.buytablefortwo.com](http://www.buytablefortwo.com)





## “S” is for Safety

The tranquility of a beautiful backyard can quickly vanish if you don't employ some basic safety rules when your twin toddlers are in the vicinity.

Don't light the grill when children are present.

Stand guard over a hot barbeque when preparing outdoor delights.

Shiny cooking implements attract attention.

Don't hang them on the side of a heated cooker or grill.

Don't risk your children pulling the grill over on themselves. Separate the cooking and play area.

If you are doing yard work, keep the trimmers, extension cords and chemicals well away from the kids. Never hold a child on your lap when operating a riding mower. And beware of flying stones and twigs from a push mower. To avoid calamities, know where the kids are at all times. Inside might be the safest place for your little ones until the work is done and you can devote your full attention to having fun in the backyard. ♥

## SUNSCREEN SAVVY

When applying sunscreen to your little ones test a small patch of skin and wait 10 minutes to check for irritation. If there is no reaction, apply lotion about 30 minutes before walking out the door so that it will be fully absorbed into the skin. Lotion should be put on again after swimming or every few hours. Johnson's Baby Lotion with Daily UV Protection (SPF 30) is recommended for children over 6-months of age and is safe enough to use every day. Use sun block sticks with SPF 30+ for more sensitive areas like cheeks and the tips of little noses. Their waxy consistency helps the sun block stick to the skin. Avoid the most intense sunlight hours between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm. An umbrella on the beach will not protect against reflected rays, which can be equally damaging. Sunscreen is a must—even on overcast days.

If your toddler does get a sunburn...

- Give juice or water to replace lost fluids
- Cool water soaks may make your baby's skin feel better
- Avoid medicated lotions

Keep your baby completely out of the sun until the burn heals. ♥



Summer equals playtime outside. It also means itchy ouchie bug bites! In *Caring For Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to age 5*, the American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents to stock up on calamine lotion. It's skin-friendly and relieves the itchiness associated with the bites of mosquitoes, flies, fleas and bedbugs. "Apply calamine lotion freely onto any part of your child's body except areas around his eyes and genitals," say the book's authors. For bee stings, the AAP recommends soaking a cloth in cold water and pressing it onto the area of the sting. This should reduce the pain and swelling. If the stinger is visible, don't try to pull it out; you could end up squeezing more venom into your child's skin. Instead, the AAP says to gently scrape it out of the skin horizontally. If you suspect the sting is that of a honey-bee, because its stinger is barbed, it's best to just wash the area well and let the stinger dissolve. For the summer, it's a good idea to keep your children's fingernails short and clean. This will minimize the changes of infection due to scratching. ♥



## Choking hazards

Your twins are becoming adventurous explorers. As they begin to crawl and toddle around the house, they test everything by tasting. Keep the following items away from babies:

- Latex balloons
- Coins
- Marbles
- Small toy parts
- Pen or marker caps
- Small button-type batteries
- Small compressible toys that can fit entirely into a child's mouth

Food can also be a choking danger. Do not feed children younger than 4-years-old any round, firm food unless it is chopped completely. When infants and young children don't grind or chew their food well, they may attempt to swallow it whole. Babies with few or no teeth should not eat foods that require chewing. Toddlers should not walk and eat at the same time. The following foods can be choking hazards to children under the age of four:

- Hot dogs
- Nuts (until the age of 7)
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Whole grapes
- Hard or sticky candy
- Popcorn
- Chunks of peanut butter
- Raw carrots

—Courtesy of the American Academy of Pediatrics

## A Cute safety measure

Sun screen is always a must but if you're worried about exposing your multiples' sensitive skin to dangerous ultraviolet rays, double up on protection with bonnets. Big-brimmed hats can shade faces and eyes from the bring summer sun, as well as add ad adorable fashion touch to your already adorable kids! ♥



## Identical or Fraternal?

**You think they're fraternal, your friends say identical. We'll give you the answer.**

### TWIN ZYGOSITY TEST

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- 99% + Accuracy.
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## Hard Hat Required

Dressing for success definitely includes protective head gear when multiples hop on their bikes this summer. Pediatricians and safety experts recommend that little bikers wear helmets the very first time and every single time they ride. Football type helmets cover the head and ears. The classic oval covers the top and head only. Helmets should fit comfortable close to the head. They must be sufficiently padded on the inside and smooth on the outside so they will slide over the ground if impact occurs. A secure chin strap is essential. Look for helmets that meet the standards of The Consumer Product Safety Commission. ♡

## BEE Careful

Most insect bites are relatively minor and can be soothed with cool compresses and medicated lotions. But with twins or more, there are multiple chances that your children could be allergic to insect bites or to bee stings. Symptoms of an allergic reaction



## Water Safety

Swimming pools are the number one drowning risk for preschoolers. Your twins may love splashing in a play pool to cool off this summer; others may be wary. Don't force the issue. They are developing their attitudes toward water. Your main job is to keep them safe.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting until the age of four for swimming lessons. Before you jump into the deep water, determine if your twins are ready for swimming lessons. Ask yourself:

- Do they love or fear the water?
- Are they developmentally mature?
- Are they able to follow instructions?

Many swim programs require mom to be in the pool with her child to help him or her learn to swim. With twins, this is not realistic or safe. If you decide to enroll them in swim lessons, consider private lessons, find a program that provides assistants or recruit a friend or dad to help.

Proponents of infant swim lessons claim that babies as young as 6-months-old can learn a back float and save themselves from drowning if they fall into a swimming pool. Teaching children to never go near the water without an adult present is the most important part of any swim lessons. Just because your twins learn to swim does not mean that they are safe in the water. In fact, many parents report that learning to swim gave their twins a false sense of security. Never turn your back on children in the water.

If you don't already know CPR, take a class. In a heartbeat—while you are helping one twin—your other twin could land face down in the water. Always have a helper when you have twins in a wading pool, and be sure to have your phone with you at all times. Don't let an accident spoil more than their play time. ♡

## Treating cuts

During the summer months, kids tend to get more cuts and scrapes. It's important that caregivers take them seriously, as an infection can easily set in. Cleanliness is the key to keeping infection away. Always wash the area gently with soap and water. Make sure to stop bleeding by applying pressure with a clean cloth or gauze pad. Then apply a sterile bandage to keep the area clean. Remember that cuts from a dirty or rusty object may require a tetanus shot. Also be sure to see a doctor if the wound is deep or punctured and if bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes of applying pressure. ♡





to a bee sting include: numbness around the mouth, flushed cheeks and difficulty swallowing, followed by severe swelling of the throat and nasal passages and wheezing. The biggest concern when this happens is respiratory distress, which can cause a loss of consciousness. Children exhibiting these symptoms should receive emergency medical attention. To help prevent bee or other insect stings, avoid wearing brightly colored clothing outdoors and using scented lotions or perfumes. ♡

## AVOIDING CAR SICKNESS



It's travel season and time to pile the kids into the car and hit the road. Before you do, you may want to consider the following suggestions offered by Traveling Healthy Newsletter. These tips are sure to keep your multiples' tummies settled during summer road trips.

Offer your multiples plenty of water or juice to drink. Don't let your kids ride on an empty stomach. However, avoid large meals before and during the trip.

Keep the car cool and ventilated.

Arrange the car seats so kids can look out the windows during the drive. They're less likely to feel ill if they are looking out into the distance.

Drive at night whenever possible so kids can sleep through the ride. ♡

## Play it Safe this Summer on the Playground

Every day more than 500 playground injuries require visits to hospital emergency rooms. The Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Program for Playground Safety have some suggestions for making sure the play area you choose for your multiples is a safe one. This is also valuable information for assessing the recreation area at your twins' preschool or day care facility.

All equipment must be age-appropriate.

Areas for preschool and school-age children must be separate.

To prevent little heads from becoming trapped, ladder rungs and other openings should be at least 9-inches wide.

Guardrails should be 29 inches high on preschool equipment and 38 inches high on equipment for school-age children.

Swing seats should be of soft material, not metal or wood.

Inspect the area very carefully. Equipment with missing bolts, broken steps, and sharp edges, splintered wood or rusted parts is off limits. Make sure there is no broken glass or other potentially hazardous material lying around. ♡



## Surviving allergy season

Runny noses and watery eyes can indicate allergy problems. If your twins are affected, it is best to limit outdoor activities in the early morning and on windy days when pollen counts are generally highest. According to Dr. Richard Wasserman, a Children's Medical Center of Dallas allergist, if parents know their children have difficulties during specific seasons, they should start medications before the children react strongly to allergens. He also recommends keeping your home and car windows closed to reduce exposure. ♡



by Kindred Howard



# From **ETHIOPIA** to **Hollywood**

## Twins Defy the Odds and Hit the Big Screen with Jennifer Lopez

In 2010, after nearly thirteen years of marriage and the birth of three beautiful children, Meredith and I decided the time had come to fulfill our long-time dream to adopt. Given that we already had two boys, we told our adoption caseworker that we would like to adopt a little girl age eighteen months or older.

That same June, a social worker arrived at the door of an orphanage in southern Ethiopia carrying two frail infants. The boys, twins named Abenet and Afework, had been born several weeks premature. Their mother had died in childbirth. Their father, a poor farmer already struggling to keep two older children alive, lacked the resources to care for them. The boys' health had worsened since their birth. They were malnourished and barely responsive to stimulation. After many tears, the twins' father made the agonizing decision to relinquish custody to an orphanage in order to keep his sons alive.

When the social worker arrived at the orphanage, he was met by the institution's director and women who would serve as the boys' caregivers. They were shocked to see that the boys were small enough to fit in the palm of a person's hand and that their umbilical cords were still attached. Racing against time, they rushed the boys to the nearest hospital. All the way they blew on

the babies' faces to keep them alert for fear that if they fell asleep they would never awake.

Thousands of miles away, my wife and I waited to hear news from our adoption agency. In September, we received an unexpected email informing us of four-month-old twin baby boys who desperately needed a family. One of the boys had recently survived a bout with meningitis. The other was severely malnourished and had contracted sepsis. Drawn to the children, my wife and I contacted the adoption agency for more information. We learned that two families had already declined their referral and that no other couples had inquired about the boys. We had the twins' files forwarded to a medical expert. She confirmed that the boys could potentially have special needs; possibly even requiring life-long care, but that there was no way to know for sure. Having counted all the costs, we told our agency that we wanted to adopt the twins. A few weeks later we were on a plane to Ethiopia.

In November, we visited the orphanage and met little Abenet and Afework, then almost six months old. Although very tiny, their health had improved. In December, I stayed home with my two older sons while Meredith returned to Ethiopia with our

daughter and my father to bring Afework and Abenet (whom we named Samuel and Asher) home. During the journey, Meredith traveled to the village where the boys were born to meet their father, grandmother, and older siblings. The family was incredibly hospitable, welcoming Meredith, Emerson, and my dad with open arms. After meeting my wife, the twins' grandmother hugged her and stated, "Now I know their mother can rest in peace. She knows that her sons will be cared for."

Meredith returned with our new sons on New Year's Eve, 2010. Over the next several months, Samuel and Asher saw numerous doctors and began physical therapy. To the experts' surprise, they thrived beyond everyone's expectations. By the summer of 2011 they had made their way onto US growth charts and showed no signs of serious health issues.

Then, last July, we received word that a movie was being filmed in Atlanta and that the casting department was looking for Ethiopian babies as extras. On a whim, Meredith emailed the twins' picture and a few sentences recounting their story. To our surprise, the casting director called us personally and asked to meet. The next day, we met the director, Kirk Jones, who was enthralled by the twins' story. A few hours later, we received a call telling us that Samuel and Asher had been chosen for the movie and asking if we could meet the next day with the actress who would portray their adoptive mother, Jennifer Lopez.

When Meredith and I entered the room to meet Ms. Lopez, Kirk called Jennifer and the actor who would portray the boys' father, Rodrigo Santoro, over to meet us. "This is Kindred and Meredith Howard," he said. "They've done what you are going to do in the film." Kirk's tone suggested that he was trying to honor us for having adopted Samuel and Asher. In truth, we felt that we were the ones blessed to have Samuel and Asher as sons. The ones who truly deserved honor were their Ethiopian mother who had given her own life for them and their father who, out of love, had made the difficult decision to give them up for adoption.

We spent eight of the next fourteen days on the set of *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, a movie based on Heidi Murkoff's best-selling book. Watching Sammy and Asher take turns cuddling with Jennifer Lopez on camera and playing peek-a-boo with her in between takes, it was hard to believe that four-


teen months earlier our sons had lain dying in a rural Ethiopian village. Now they were playing pat-a-cake with J-Lo and winning the hearts of the cast and crew of a major motion picture.

In May 2012, my wife and I held Samuel and Asher as they "toddled" the red carpet outside Grauman's Chinese Theatre at the premiere of *What to Expect...* We were even escorted to the event by Entertainment Tonight and featured in a brief interview on the show's website. Pretty amazing for two little boys who most thought would die in an African orphanage.

This past May, Samuel and Asher made their movie debut as Lopez's adopted son, Kaleb. They were only in a couple of

scenes—certainly not central characters in the film. But Samuel and Asher's story is inspiring not for the amount of time they are seen on camera. Rather, our sons' journey is powerful because of what the movie represents. It represents the other end of the spectrum from where they started. It represents hope and the possibilities of what can happen when people choose to follow their hearts and do what is right.

Samuel and Asher are living testimonies to the heroism of their Ethiopian parents and caregivers. They are real-life examples of the amazing and unforeseen blessings that await those who choose to adopt children in need. Their story is already opening doors of possibility to shine light on the plight of mothers in developing nations in desperate need of better maternity and health care. Hopefully, by telling their tale, future mothers will survive and families will remain intact. Our sons are special not because of a movie role, but because of what their journey has done and will do to impact the lives of other children and families in Ethiopia and, perhaps, around the world.

Learn more about Samuel and Asher's amazing journey at [www.oursammyandasher.com](http://www.oursammyandasher.com). 

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**Kindred Howard** is an award-winning writer and author of the recently released book *Cavemen in Babyland: What New & Expecting Mommies Should Know About New Daddies (So That They Won't Kill Them)*. [Rameses Publishing 2011]. Kindred is also a professional marriage and parenting counselor and an acclaimed public speaker. ([www.familyupward.com](http://www.familyupward.com)).

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by Steven Jeffries



# Moving With Twins

**W**hen my wife Lisa and I bought our first house together, when we got married, we thought that we were going to be living there for at least 15 to 20 years. That was the plan until we had our twins, and we decided that we wanted to be in an area with a different public school. So about seven years after we arrived, we were looking for a new home, and now we had to contend with our almost four year old twins.

Josh and Abby were still in the same room together, and we were about ready to separate them; they had been together since birth. However, we wanted to wait until we were in the new house. But we weren't having much luck finding a house that matched our needs in the area we wanted to move to. Hopefully, our experience will give you some insight, if and when you are moving with young twins or multiples.

## SELLING FIRST

Once we had a real estate agent, we made the decision to buy first and sell later. It is true that many homeowners cannot do this. But we were pretty sure that our current area was in demand and our house could sell fast due to its location, which was walking distance to a major shopping mall, two community centres, and several places of worship. Our new area had limited homes available, so the decision to buy first was easy. However, we told our real estate agent that we could only see serious opportunities, because due to work and the twins, babysitting might have to be arranged. Actually, the first house we went to see, my in-laws weren't available on short notice, and so my wife and I had to trade off. She went through the house first, and I followed shortly after.

After awhile we had to expand our search to another nearby area, and eventually in late July we found the house of our dreams and managed to purchase it. But we were able to purchase the house without disrupting our twins' lives too much. Selling the house would be a different story.

Just a couple of days after we had completed the safety inspection on the new house, we listed our old house and started a five day window for viewings before offers could be given. One thing that worked to our advantage was that we were already prepared to sell, for the most part, and so showcasing the house was not that difficult. If you think or know that you are going to sell your home, start straightening it up early, so that you have less to do at the last minute. The hardest part for us was the playroom which actually occupied our living / dining room area. We tidied it up, stored excess toys, and made it much smaller in order to make it clear that it had space for a dining room table. But having to explain what was happening to Josh and Abby was difficult, and keeping them out of the playroom was more difficult still.

Luckily, they were in a summer day care program during the week, which kept them out of the house during most viewings. Another option would be to have an open house, but our agent thought appointments while the kids were out would be better to showcase the home. We had appointments scheduled for no later than 6:30pm for the first five days and, an offer was taken on the first evening of taking offers, and we accepted it conditionally. This definitely helped keep us sane! A few days later we finalized the sale.

## PACKING AND MOVING

Now it was time to pack! We decided to do so room by room, a couple of boxes a night. I have to give my wife Lisa the credit for this idea, and it made things a little less hectic. We chose our movers after getting a few quotes (which is well worth the effort), and they included dropping off boxes and packing supplies for us to use. When the truck arrived on an August Saturday morning, I started to move the boxes into the garage. Well, my two children became curious and came outside with their mother to watch. Josh was the first to ask to help and I reluctantly gave him the lightest box to carry. He did so, and not only did he manage to carry it, but in hilarious fashion lifted it over his head to carry into the garage. And so his twin sister naturally asked to do so as well, and copied this behaviour successfully! Both our children continued to do this for several more boxes, much to the amazement of the moving truck driver.

Including our twins in helping to pack up their own stuff was a key component to our moving strategy. They packed up many of their toys, and even placed things in bags and boxes for the move. We also took them to visit the new house on one of our visits, and to play in the park across the street. Josh actually wanted to play with the previous owners' children's toys. We had to explain to Josh and Abby that our toys were coming with

us to the new house and these toys would be moving with their children.

Finally, the move date came, and we chose to move on a school day so they would be out of the house all day. By choosing to move on a weekday, you may also have the added benefit of saving money over the weekend rate. At the end of the day, the kids were both tired as usual, and Josh originally said he didn't like the new house. However, he asked to see the loft and once he saw what it looked like with our furniture in it, he exclaimed, "Daddy, I love our new house!"

The final detail was purchasing furniture for their new rooms. We ordered the furniture through a store and it took several weeks to deliver, but was worth the wait. Until that time came, they slept in their junior beds in Josh's room, but each of them had their clothes and some toys in their own room. It actually worked out as a nice transition period, before separating them. When their new furniture and full size beds arrived, they were very excited! It capped a successful move for our family. This time we really do plan on staying for at least 15 to 20 years! ❤️



**Steven Jeffries** is the father of five year old twins, Joshua and Abigail. His wife Lisa is the photographer in the family. He lives and teaches near Toronto, Canada.





I was obsessed. My wife and I were in the process of planning our first family vacation since our twins were born one year ago, and I had become tenaciously focused on minimizing the volume and weight of our carry-on luggage. I have always been a luggage minimalist. I became this way after watching exhausted dads lurching through airports like pack mules. They carried giant car seats, beer coolers filled with baby formula,

## OPERATION DIAPER DROP

and bulging diaper bags crammed with clothing to cover all possible climatic conditions from arctic tundra to subtropical rain forest. Early in my travel life I swore: "That will never be me."

When it came to organizing our week-long trip to Florida, I silently vowed each adult would be permitted one small carry-on

bag. Each carry-on bag would contain only the in-flight essentials. After we packed our bags I went through the contents to remove duplicate items. Trouble is, when you have twins, everything is a duplicate item.

I planned the operation with military precision. Had they been able to stand on their own, I would have lined the twins up, drill sergeant style, and screamed at them: "You

will each be given one standard issue 'Winnie the Pooh' jumper to wear on the mission. Should you soil this jumper, you will not, repeat, not be issued a second jumper. Is that clear? I can't hear you?"

Like any good military mission, I had an advance team. Marshaled by my father-in-law, the team deployed to Florida by car with the bulkier command post gear such as the baskets of beach toys, cases of diapers, and a brightly colored indoor plastic play fence. (Don't knock this last item if you haven't tried it.) This freed me up to obsess over the luggage of the squadron which, in addition to my wife and me, included our saintly baby-sitter, our 3-year-old son, and the twins. All were going on the trip, and it was my responsibility to get them to Florida with a minimum of hassle and stress.

### DAD'S IN CHARGE

On my command, the squadron moved out to the minivan... so far so good. Minutes later we arrived at the airport terminal to unload the troops and our gear. I had thought of every detail, such as remembering to bring change to put in the meter at the curbside 10-minute unloading zone. I watched vigilantly to make sure that none of the members of our party tried to smuggle anything on board like an extra overnight bag or a contraband Tickle-Me-Elmo. We checked in at the counter, received our boarding passes, and before we knew it, the whole squirming family was winging through the sky toward Atlanta to meet our connecting flight.

Those of you who have been in the Atlanta airport know the horrors of the place: gates set miles apart, crowded concourses,



pale people caged inside those glass smoking rooms. As we deplaned, a sympathetic airport employee took pity on us. He placed us on a beeping golf cart and drove us to our connecting gate. As people leapt out of our way, I could practically hear them say: "Oh, look at that efficiently packed family. If only we could be more like them." Needless to say I was taking a lot of pride and most of the credit for the smoothness of the trip.

Carefree days...almost!

Even though I initially balked at the idea of taking this trip, (too expensive, too much hassle, too much this, too much that) once we arrive in Florida I had a great time. Sara and I had a rare morning together taking a canoe trip through a bird-filled estuary. I spent hours pedaling the island trails with our 3-year-old on the back of the bike. It was on one such bike ride when Thomas spotted a white minivan just like ours back home and said, "Daddy, where is our car?" I replied, "Well, you see, Daddy had to leave our car at the..." Like the jolt of an electric shock, I suddenly remembered that I had left the van in the curbside 10-minute parking space at the airport. Good thing I remembered that extra change...

An hour later I was on the phone with an airport security officer who confirmed that, yes, the van had been towed away and impounded. After the requisite lecture from the officer about the danger of unattended packages and cars left in and around airports, he admitted that I was not the only one to have ever done this. He also volunteered that it doesn't take most people three days to remember.

Even with the parking debacle, the trip was a success and it gave us the courage to plan our next family adventure. I think I will let her plan the packing next time. For my part, I will call the taxi for the airport. ♡

Continued from page 8

she was working out at an elite level just in time to compete at the 2008 Olympic trials. She led for most of the race but slowly faded to fourth missing the Olympic 400 meter hurdle team by .14 seconds. This loss only increased her drive to succeed.

In the 2009 season, Lashinda lit up the Europe running world leading times in four out of seven races. She set world best times in Monaco, London and Crete, Greece and posted the then fourth-fastest time ever when she blistered the track with a personal best of 52.63 (beat the 2008 Olympic Champion at the time). With this time, Lashinda is now two hundredths (2/100th's) of a second away from securing the American record. A month later she went under 53 seconds after a flawed race in the 2009 World Championships in Berlin, running a time of



52.96s for the silver medal (also 11th fastest time in history) and securing Gold in the 1600 meter relay.

During the 2010 season, Lashinda competed in the Diamond League which is composed of 14 meetings spread across Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the USA. Not only did Lashinda finish with the Diamond League Champion title and a #1 world ranking, she allowed the world to embrace an athlete representing something more than apparel. With much enthusiasm and focus to succeed, she then secured the women's 400m hurdles world title and the American record during the 2011 world championships in Daegu, Korea. Lashinda ran the fastest 400 meter hurdle time this year, setting a new world best (52.47) to defeat defending champion Melanie Walker of Jamaica. Lashinda's time was the third fastest ever.

Recently, Lashinda partnered with the US Dept of Women's Health for National Women's Health week 2012 and was also able to check off two items on her bucket list, securing the American record and earning a Gold medal. Now, Lashinda is looking to London to bring home the Gold Medal in this summer's 2012 Olympics.

With nothing but love for her sport and a heart to help, she can be found giving back the community through various organizations as well as volunteering at many marathons in her region. If asked about her motivators, she will simply respond, "I just want to see people happy, that's all that matters." She is most definitely a triple threat and continues to redefine the role of women athletes as mothers and as a mother of twins; we take our hats off to her for finding and achieving that balance and going for the GOLD! We will certainly be keeping an eye on Lashinda this summer and wishing her nothing but success... ♥



Continued from page 11

PREGNANCY

on the web for our virtual baby shower guests. There is no reason why these people can't participate as well.

There are many other ways to have an online baby shower if you don't want to use Facebook. As [www.webbabyshower.com](http://www.webbabyshower.com) states on their Long Distance Baby Showers link under Blog It, "You can set up a "home page" for your long distance baby shower at any free (or even paid) blogging services. Most are very simple to set up and use." Google's BlogSpot, WordPress or even Type-Pad.com are also great blog services to use if this is the avenue you'd like to take.

This same site also suggests trying a video baby shower by using such services as:

- [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)
- [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)
- [www.Oovoo.com](http://www.Oovoo.com)
- [www.FreeConferenceCall.com](http://www.FreeConferenceCall.com)
- [www.Ustream.com](http://www.Ustream.com)

So break out the video camera or camera on your laptop and give it a whirl!

Minus all the decorations, invitations, stamps, confirmation phone calls, and food, I'd have to say this is by far the most stress free and economical way to host a long distance party. I would highly recommend this concept to anyone looking to bridge the distance between loved ones. As my sister stated after the shower was over, "This was by far the best way to have a shower under the circumstances. We received so many gifts and it was so easy!" So get the most out of your social media and host your own online baby shower today. ♥

Resources:

<http://webbabyshower.com/baby-shower/long-distance/>

<http://pregnancy.about.com/cs/babyshowersmenu/a/onlineshower.htm>



# ALL I REALLY NEEDED TO KNOW I LEARNED AT Kindergarten REGISTRATION

by: Amye Barrese Archer

When I brought my identical twin girls home from the hospital five years ago, my mind could not comprehend the madness that awaited me. Two of everything: two diaper changes, two midnight feedings, two missed naps, two cranky babies, two bottles to be warmed, two sets of clothes to be washed, two mouths whining, four clumsy feet walking (stumbling), two temper tantrums, everything was amplified, intensified, multiplied. But for as hard as all of that was, and believe me it was difficult, my biggest challenge has come many years later: Kindergarten.

I am a working mother. I don't work a typical nine to five job, but I did attend graduate school for my MFA in Creative Writing while my girls were only a year and a half old, and I have been launching a writing and teaching career over the past four years. Because of this, my girls have seen the inside of a daycare center, two of them in fact, and while leaving them in daycare a few days a week was difficult, one thing always left me with a shred of comfort: they had each other. In my mind I imagined that if one was scared, the other would be there to sooth and protect her, and vice versa. This is one of the advantages of having twins, the knowledge that when you are not with them, they can take on the world as a team.

But that comfort in which I had allowed myself to bask for so long, through two years of daycare and one year of preschool, came to a screeching halt on a cold morning in March, otherwise known as Kindergarten Registration Day. I had assumed that my life,

the boat on which I was steering us, would remain on course. I had assumed that my girls would take on Kindergarten as they had everything else: side by side. Then I was met with our school's principal and her "policy." Apparently, the district in which I live has an official, unofficial, policy that twins are to be separated in Kindergarten.

This blew my world apart. All I could see in front of me was a world of separate and varying tasks: homework, in-class parties, out-of-class birthday parties, parent-teacher conferences, science projects, show and tell days, and field trips, just to name a few. I imagined a world with two magnetic refrigerator calendars, each covered with miles of magic-markered things to remember. It was like I was being thrust backwards into that beginning stage of twinsanity again. All of the progress I had made, the routines I had established, the ease I had managed to create, gone.

Then, one day it hit me. Well, it didn't exactly hit me, as it was thrown at me by a good friend who has two children (not twins). After an hour of listening to me whine about the upcoming separation and subsequent workload I would be straddled with, she simply said, "Welcome to our world, this





is what it's like having two children." But wait, I don't have two children, I thought to myself, I have twins! That's different...isn't it? Then it occurred to me: I have been raising my girls as twins, not siblings. There is a big difference, a wide gap between those two labels, and I had never noticed it before.

My first instinct was to fight. I called the principal and immediately voiced my concern. She went on to tell me, in a very authoritarian tone, that she had been an educator for twenty-eight years, and that during that time, she has separated many twins and all of them have not only survived, but thrived. But you have not been a mother of twins for one day, not one single day, I wanted to shout. I kept my cool and tried a different approach. I gathered support from some online sources and visited with my twins' current teacher who assured me that, yes, my daughters work independently of one another. Great! I thought. There was no way I could be turned away now! I had all of the proof and statistics I needed, and with that, I called and scheduled another meeting with the principal. Then, a week later, something happened: a birthday party.

It was a Friday night and a little girl named Lily was celebrating her fifth birthday. My twins were invited, so of course I found myself there, commiserating with the other preschool moms about the frequency of these birthday parties, when I noticed something. This was really the first time I was observing my girls in their school environment, and what I saw saddened me. All of their classmates, running, bouncing, and laughing together, while my twins played alone in a blow-up jungle. Later, at cake time, one refused to stand near the birthday girl and sing if the other wasn't right next to her.

Oh no. My twins were lost in one another. Then, like a river, all of these little moments: my girls sequestered in the corners of birthday parties, refusing to include friends in play dates, whispering to one another instead of joining the group, combined to create a current that washed over me and changed everything. My girls needed separation. I was the one who feared it, not them. Later that night when I asked how they felt about being in different classrooms, they were excited at the thought. Less fighting at home, my husband pointed out. Maybe this could be a good thing!

I spent hours looking for research and the most practical and conclusive research I came across was from The Parents of Multiple Births Association, Inc., of Canada, which provides a list of possible circumstances to be considered when making a decision about separation. The organization suggests asking yourself one general question: By five years old, are each of the twins capable of initiating and maintaining satisfying relationships with nonsibling peers? In other words, do they have friendships outside of one another? The answer for my girls was no. That's a problem.

Some other questions to consider are:

Do classmates constantly compare the twins? Which may lead to feelings of negativity in one over the other.

Are your twins causing a disruption, or not paying attention to the teacher when they are together?

In the case of boy-girl twins, is the female "over-mothering" the male?

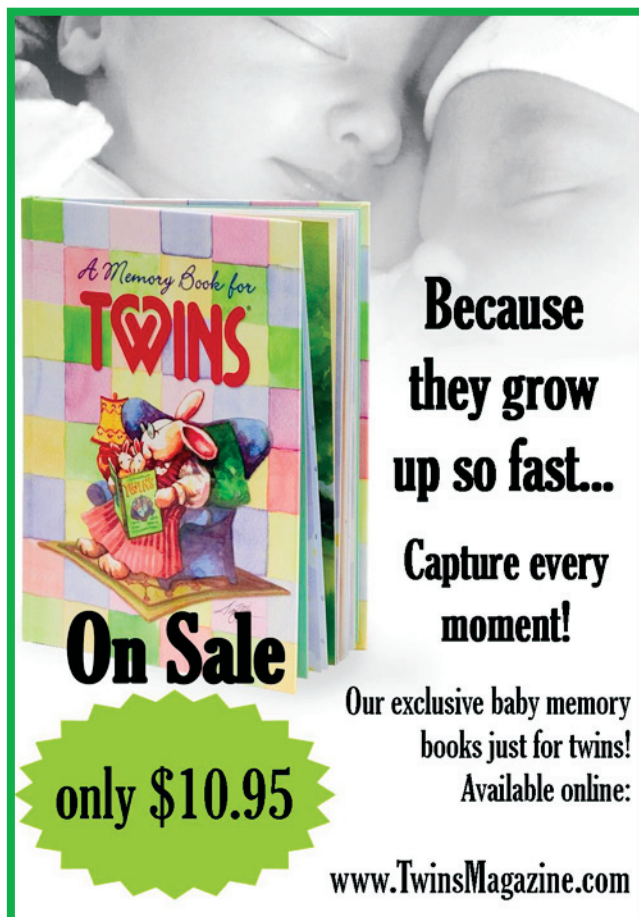
Is one twin always helping the other? This could lead to social and academic dependency.

Are other students and/or the teacher constantly mixing identical twins up?

Your answers to these questions will determine which choice is right for your children. Each set of twins is different and has a unique dynamic. In the end, my girls will be going to separate Kindergarten classes in the fall. But that conclusion was one I had to come to on my own. The frustration I felt and many twin moms feel, is that the school should not have the last vote in this very critical decision. Unless you've parented twins, you have no idea how big these seemingly small issues can become.

For more information on what to look for when making this decision, visit [www.twinslaw.com](http://www.twinslaw.com), a website dedicated to enacting national legislation to help put the decision-making into the hands of the parents and not the educators.

And above all else remember this: listen to your children, both verbally and nonverbally, and trust your gut. Remember those days of infancy, when problems seemed to loom so large? You knew what to do then, and you'll figure it out this time, too. You're a parent of twins, after all, you can do anything...remember? ♥



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# Sharing My 29TH BIRTHDAY

by Jenny Peterson



When my twin sister Joy and I were little, we hated when we'd have to "share" birthday presents.

We already shared every other possible thing in our lives.\* Not to be gross, but it all started when we shared the same sperm.

Growing up, we shared a bedroom, a school, a best friend, parents, a brother, birthday parties and a Barbie doll house.

We shared the same haircut, the same clothes (sometimes), the same boombox, the same toys and the same snoballs (why couldn't we just get two separate snoballs??? WHY DID WE HAVE TO SHARE????).

I don't know if people realize this about twins, but aside from just physical things, we also shared the completely same schedule.

Since we were the exact same age, we were always in the exact same grade in school, we did the exact same homework and we had the exact same bedtime.

In middle school, we were in all the same classes together all day every day, making it a straight 16 waking hours together.

Our freshmen year of high school, Joy and I took the same public bus home and had to *share* who would pull the cord at

our stop to make the "ding!" sound come on.

And, we both needed to take showers at the same time, before our shared bedtime.

Joy and I got into numerous fights over who was going to take a shower first.

I don't know why we were so particularly competitive over the shower, but it was a very big deal to call it first, and it was hands down the one thing we fought over the most.

There were several times when one of us would completely ignore the other's calling-of-the-shower-first and would race upstairs after school, strip down and hop in and the other couldn't do anything about it.

(Or so we thought.)

One time, I ran to the shower first, undeservingly,

and Joy sneaked in and turned off the cold water as my back was turned.

Three seconds later, I had scalding hot water all over me and screamed bloody murder as Joy cracked up laughing by the sink.

I did one better.

The next time *she* was in the shower, I waited outside (creepily) with a bottle of baby powder.

The second she pulled back the curtain, I blasted her with the baby powder up and down and all over, and laughed as it turned into a white paste when mixed with the water all over her.

You couldn't tell if the smoke rising was powder particles or steam.

(She had to take another shower.)

Um, anyway.

When we got older, and wiser, we welcomed shared gifts for our birthday.

Our senior year of high school, we shared a car. We shared a fake ID. We shared our older brother's separate phone line when he went off to college.

Shared gifts were especially useful when we bought a house together in South Carolina. We quickly found we could milk getting a big TV or an entire living room set from IKEA from our parents that we'd "split."

And even today, even though we live 800 miles apart, the sharing never stops.

We still share friends, Christmas oyster roast parties, a Gmail account (it's really mine but she uses it), a bank account, a house and a phone plan.

My name is also somehow on Joy's car insurance.

We share memories and stories and experiences. At one point we shared a cat. This past Halloween, even, we shared the same costume.

What I wouldn't give today to spend 16 waking hours with Joy instead of our usual thrice-daily phone calls (on our shared plan).

Why today? Because TODAY IS OUR 29th BIRTHDAY!!!

What will we share today? Double-tagged Happy Birthday Facebook wall posts from our friends!!

Hahahaha.

In addition to everything else listed above.

Happy birthday Joy!!!

There's no one else I'd rather share every single thing with!!! But give me back my dress. That's mine.

\*No, we did not ever share the same boyfriend. Gross. ♥



Read more articles from Jenny on her blog *JennySays* at: <http://jennysays-hellofools.blogspot.com/2012/04/post-about-sharing-on-our-29th-birthday.html>





Need some ideas to keep em' busy this summer? Try these **7 Cheap Activities** for Kids!

by Maise Knowles

Parents all over the United States are tackling the age old question: How on earth do I keep my kids busy during the summer without breaking the bank? Vacations and overnight summer camps can be expensive...believe me, I've checked! Here's my list of cheap and money-saving activities for kids this summer.

### 1. Free Bowling

Yes, that's right FREE bowling through the summer, two games per child per day. That's over \$500 in savings per child. Kids Bowl Free is a program that community bowling centers participate in during the summer months as a way to give back to their communities and provide a safe and fun environment for local children. Sign up your family at [KidsBowlFree.com](http://KidsBowlFree.com) and bring on the free strikes!

### 2. Rainy Day Crafts

Follow my board on Pinterest this summer where I'll continue posting cheap and easy kids crafts. Create a rainy day craft jar and put the name of each craft on a slip of paper. When the rain starts to pour, let your kids pick a craft from the jar and spend the day inside letting the creativity flow.

### 3. Grocery Hunt

Save Sunday newspaper ads to your local grocery store or check out Coupon Sherpa's grocery coupon page. Clip coupons with images of products or use a grocery store ad insert and bring your kids to the grocery store. Instruct your kids to be on the look out for the products on your coupons or store ad. This is a great way to keep them occupied while in the grocery store, but also an opportunity to teach your kids about saving money with coupons.

### 4. Cheap Summer Movies

Many movie theaters offer a summer movie lineup that are both kid- and wallet-friendly. Cinemark is hosting a Summer Movie Clubhouse where you can buy 10 movie tickets for \$5 or just \$1 per movie at the ticket window. AMC is offering baby mammas a guilt-free way to catch "What to Expect When You're Expecting" through their Bring Your Baby Day program. Select AMC theaters will feature dim lights and lower volume where breastfeeding, strollers and crying babies are permitted. What a genius idea!

### 5. Local Deals and Activities

If your city has a parks and recreation program, look into activities they offer for your children's age group. My city offers everything from dance and swimming to basket weaving (yes, I'm serious), all at an affordable price. Subscribe to group-buying sites like Living Social, Groupon and Seize the Deal where you can often find deeply discounted activities for children. Also check your local Entertainment Book for coupons to area museums, zoos and sporting events.

### 6. Kids Eat Free

Take your kids out to eat, but make sure to look at this list of 101 restaurants where kids eat free. If you have more than one child, take full advantage of a kids-eat-free deal by ordering one meal for each kid and saving any leftovers for later meals.

### 7. Volunteer

This summer, teach your kiddos that it's better to give than to receive. Spend some time volunteering together. Ask your local soup kitchen what their need is and check nursing homes or senior center for visiting hours. Visit [VolunteerMatch.com](http://VolunteerMatch.com) where you can find a comprehensive list of opportunities that are age appropriate. There's nothing better than seeing your kids put a smile on someone's face. ❤️

# HOW TO START A "Parents of Multiples" Club IN YOUR AREA

by Christina Baglivi Tinglof

When Jana Werksman arrived at her first South Palm Beach Parents of Multiples meeting, she realized that they were in the middle of their annual clothing exchange. In spite of all the excitement and jubilation surrounding the sale, a club member was there to greet the pregnant mom to boy-girl twins. "She handed me a large shopping bag and guided me around the room," Werksman remembers. "At each table someone gave me something whether it was baby clothes or gear, or even a hug. They were so welcoming." They also assigned Werksman a Mommy Mentor, a veteran member of the club who had four-year-old twins. "She was amazing," Werksman says. "She called me weekly and even came to the hospital when I had my twins to teach me how to breast-feed. She never said anything negative and built my confidence as a new mother."

## THE POWER THAT COMES FROM JOINING A TWINS GROUP

Every year, thousands of moms join a local parents of multiples club to link up with other women expecting twins or more. Being an active member of a twins group not only eliminates the anxiety that often accompanies a multiple pregnancy and the crazy months to follow but the friendships members make often last a lifetime. "Without the support of this club, and more importantly, the connection to these parents, I truly do not think I would be the parent I am today," says Susan Bauer, president of Saddleback Mothers of Multiples Club located in South Orange County, California. This mom to four girls including identical twins believes that other moms of multiples just get it—they understand the unique challenges that come with raising multiples. But for Bauer, the benefits of joining her local group went beyond just affirming that she's more than capable for the job ahead. "The group taught me the importance of giving back to our community through our philanthropic endeavors, as well as

passing on what I've learned to new moms just beginning their journey into the world of parenting multiples."

Although there are hundreds of clubs throughout the United States—307 according to the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs—many moms can't find a group in their area. For instance, there is no formal group in the state of Mississippi, a sad reality for Barbie Whitehead, a mother to three daughters including fraternal twins. Although she's connected with other twin moms through her blog, The Ssippi Scoop (<http://ssippiscoop.blogspot.com>), it's just not the same as one-on-one interaction, leaving this magnolia-state native feeling a bit left out. "I can't help but feel jealous when I see other twin moms getting together in their area," she says.

## STARTING YOUR OWN PARENTS OF MULTIPLES CLUB

So is Whitehead and other women just like her destined to be club-less forever? Not necessarily. In fact, starting a group is not as hard as you might think.

Just ask Kelly Carter. When she was a new mother to fraternal twin girls, she quickly grew frustrated with her local twins group as they weren't fulfilling her needs as a new parent. "Most of the moms at the meeting were also grandmothers interested in knitting, crocheting, cross stitching and following Roberts Rules of Order when it came to running their meetings," remembers Carter. So she took matters into her own hands and started Multiple Moms Mingle, a club for new and expectant mothers of multiples. Now seven years later, this Syracuse, New York gang is still going strong with more than 150 members. "Our group is full of fun, supportive, and encouraging moms," she adds. "Many of the moms in this group have become my closest friends."

Jennifer Strickland found herself in a similar situation. When this North Carolina mother to four was pregnant with twins, she drove more than an hour to check out the closest twins club meeting. But the long commute proved to be too much. (Who could blame her?) "I attended one meeting," she says. "Then I vowed to help other twin moms in the future so they wouldn't feel so lost." So just seven months after her identical twin sons were born, Strickland started the Goldsboro Parents of Multiples Club. Although the organization was small, they were mighty helping many new moms of twins feel confident in their ability to care for two or more babies at a time. "Although we no longer meet regularly, we are all still very good friends and talk often," Strickland says adding that there's been renewed interest in restarting it. (Maybe this article will be the catalyst!)

These moms weren't marketing geniuses or social media gurus; they just saw a need in their lives and communities, and decided to fill it. And you can, too.



## CONTACTING NOMOTC

If you're thinking of forming a group, your first step should be the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs (NOMOTC), the only national nonprofit support group for parents of twins and higher-order multiples. Their free publication, *How to Organize a Parents of Multiples Club*, takes you step-by-step in the set-up process from how to run your first meeting to the job descriptions of committee chairs. Furthermore, NOMOTC will contact you shortly after sending out the booklet to see if you have any questions.

"The amount of work in the short term will be worth it in the long term," explains Tiff Wimberly, Membership Vice President of the organization. The benefits to being a part of NOMOTC, she says, are numerous from group exemption with their non-profit tax status and access to a Parliamentarian who can help you in writing your club's bylaws to discounts on publications and convention registration. "But to me personally, it's the feeling of being a part of something bigger than just your local club," she adds. "Just as members rely on each other for support, our member clubs rely on us for support."

Jennifer Strickland contacted NOMOTC before starting her multiples group. "I read all of their information on forming a club," she says. The booklet inspired her to find other moms to join up. She put up flyers around town and contacted her local newspaper for a free news brief in the Sunday edition. Kelly Carter created postcards and mailed them to families after reading about the birth of their twins announced in the paper. You can also post a flyer at your local hospital or doctor's office, too.

"As you find potential members in your community that are interested in participating in the club, delegate a task to them," suggests Wimberly. "If everyone does a little then no one person has to do a lot."

Next, decide where you'll meet. In the beginning it can be at your own home, or you can secure a conference room at your local library, hospital, community center or church basement. "Start small and start social and build from there," says Wimberly.

## KEEPING THE LOVE ALIVE

All clubs experience growing pains at some point. As members' children age and begin to matriculate into school, for instance, priorities change for many. When this happens, it can be tough to keep some members' interest in the club alive. Suddenly, soccer practice and ballet lessons, piano recitals and book reports take precedence over Wednesday night's club meeting. The result? Many moms with older twins drop out or simply fade away.

So how do you keep members with older children engaged and active in the club? "Recognize that there are all sorts of parents and a group should be open and supportive to everyone," suggests Lauren Favetti, mom to three children including fraternal twin girls and the former co-president of Moms of Multiples in Essex, an active group of 70 members in Northern New Jersey. "As we get new people coming in, we try to tap into

their strengths and keep them involved with a fun atmosphere." Furthermore, this twins group is flexible in not only when and where they meet—they alternate their monthly gatherings between evening and day, and switch locations from local hospitals to lively restaurants—but they also allow members to participate either online through their Yahoo Groups, in person, or both.

"The biggest fiasco for any group is lack of communication and dialogue between members," explains Kristin Larsen, former co-president of Mothers of Twins Club of Rockland County, a group of 40 strong in suburban New York. Committee chairs need to be in touch with the concerns of all their members. "We encourage our members to share their thoughts, express their feelings, and vote on various activities such as fundraisers and the like." This philosophy has helped the group stay together for more than 40 years. "We listen. We share. We learn. And we have fun," says Larsen, a mom to fraternal twin boys.

Making all members feel valued is paramount. Lisa Hatch, president and founder of North Metro Mothers of Multiples Club near Atlanta Georgia says her group is made up of mostly new moms but they still rely on their "veteran" moms to offer advice. "I leave the breast-feeding questions or which stroller to buy to the newer moms," explains the mother to three including boys including fraternal twins. "But I can totally step in and talk about how we deal with too many birthday presents, separate classrooms or any other older-kid concerns."

## ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES TO AN ORGANIZED TWINS GROUP?

Although having a large, supportive group right there in your own town is optimal, it isn't necessarily the only way to get the support that all moms to multiples need. Take Alyssa Nelson of Oklee, Minnesota, for instance. With no formal group in her area, this mother to two-and-a-half-year-old boy-girl twins started a Facebook group for other moms of twins in Northern Minnesota. They may live far apart from one another but they still manage to rendezvous twice a year for a "Twinfest," a raucous weekend of family fun. "We get together at someone's lake house with all the kids," she explains. "It's a blast! And every year at least two more sets of twins from people we meet throughout the year join us."

With her annual get-away growing each year, maybe there is a formal group in the making after all. How does Northern Minnesota Mothers of Multiples sound? I think it has a nice ring to it, don't you? ♥

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**Christina Baglivi Tinglof** is the creator and editor of *Talk About Twins* (<http://www.talk-about-twins.com>), a website devoted to parenting twins. She's also the author of several books on twins including *Double Duty 2e*, and *Parenting School-Age Twins and Multiples*. This mother of three boys including fraternal twins lives with her husband in Los Angeles. You can read her blog at <http://christinabaglivitinglof.com>.

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# the Spiderman Shoes

by Francesca Kelly

When I found out I was going to have twins, I thought I was prepared. After all, I already had two children close in age. And what I didn't know about twins, people were happy to tell me; for suddenly parents of twins were appearing out of nowhere with advice about diapers, endless night-time feedings and going crazy during the first few months. But no one ever told me about sibling rivalry.

Now you can't blame me for being proud of my high-minded philosophy for raising twins: Don't buy two of everything; let them learn to share. By the time they were three, I had actually done a pretty good job of sticking with it. When Max wanted a cheeseburger and Ned wanted chicken nuggets, I let them order what they wanted even though I knew they'd change their minds and want what the other had. When they fought over

who got to turn the pages of 'The Cat in the Hat,' we patiently worked it out so they would alternate a page at a time. In the interest of keeping the peace, I did sometimes buy two of the same item. However, I still hold that the "you'll-share-and-you'll-keep-smiling" system actually worked much of the time. But finally, not long ago, the system completely broke down. Blame it on the Spiderman shoes!

## The Spiderman era

One day shortly after their third birthday, I took the twins to the discount shoe store. This is the kind of place where what you see is what is in stock. We found the preschool sizes, looked up and down the rows of shoes, and there they were... the Spiderman shoes---one pair. "Spiderman... I want them! I want them!" screamed the two little boys in unison. I was doomed. "Hold on, guys. What about these Winnie-the-Pooh shoes here? Aren't they nice?" They didn't fall for it. In desperation, I asked the salesman to make sure there weren't any more. Of course there weren't. "We might get more in soon," he shrugged. So I bought one pair of Winnie-the-Pooh shoes and the coveted Spiderman shoes. "You can take turns wearing them," I told the boys.

## Off on the wrong foot

The very first day, after flipping a coin, it took an hour to cajole Ned into wearing the Winnie-the-Pooh shoes. This involved making Pooh, Tigger and Piglet cry in little A.A. Milne voices because no one wanted to wear their shoes. That worked long enough to get the shoes onto Ned's feet. "I've

got Spiderman shoes!" Max crowed all day long to everyone he met. To this Ned quickly bleated, "And I have Winnie-the-Pooh."

Each day one boy skipped down the street with Spiderman while the other dragged along glumly with Eeyore, only to switch roles the following day. Ned took it the hardest. He started getting up progressively earlier and coming into our room, cradling the precious shoes. Our wake-up call became a small anxious voice pleading, "My turn for the Spiderman shoes?"

One desperate day, when both boys would not budge and I couldn't even remember who'd worn the Spiderman shoes the day before, I put one of each shoe on the boys' feet. They both thought it was hysterically funny.

My heart grew light. Why hadn't I thought of this before? It lasted all of one sweet, peaceful week. How could this have happened? They had never even watched Spiderman. They love their Winnie-the-Pooh DVDs.

## We got shoes!

Finally, one glorious day almost eight weeks later I called the clerk at the shoe store. "Yeah, we've got more Spiderman shoes in," the salesperson said. "Boys! Boys!" I cried out excitedly. "Guess what? Now you can each have your own very special pair of Spiderman shoes!"

Max's feet were always a little bigger than Ned's, and the Spiderman shoes, now a bit scuffed and gray, were actually getting too small for Max. So I figured I'd get new ones in a bigger size for Max and let Ned keep the ones we already had. I explained this to Ned, who seemed to understand enough to know that the Spiderman shoes in our house would at long last be his and his alone.

Off we went to the shoe store and, sure enough, there were now lots of Spiderman shoes. I picked up a pair in Max's size. "Well, here they are, Max," I said brightly. "Your own new Spiderman shoes, finally!"

He took a long, hard look at them. "I don't want those," he said. I felt a twitch developing in my right eyelid. "Well, you're getting them anyway!" I said through the gritted teeth of a forced smile.

I bought them and brought them home. We put them by Max's bed and by bedtime he was excited again. The "old" Spiderman shoes were put by Ned's bed. The next morning we were awakened by a small figure standing at the size of the bed. It was Ned, and he was holding something. "My turn for the new Spiderman shoes?"

**Francesca Kelly** is a freelance writer and mother of four, including twin boys and lives in Ankara, Turkey.

# Double Takes

June/July 2012



**1** Sofia & Abigail  
Age 4 • FR  
Lindenhurst, NY



**2** Brendon & Mason  
Age 2 • ID  
Brooklyn, NY



**3** Jordan & Christian  
Age 2 1/2 • ID  
Tyler, Texas



**4** Laila & Peyton  
Age 3 • FR  
Indian Head, MD



**5** Avery & Bailey  
Age 3 • ID  
Bryan, TX



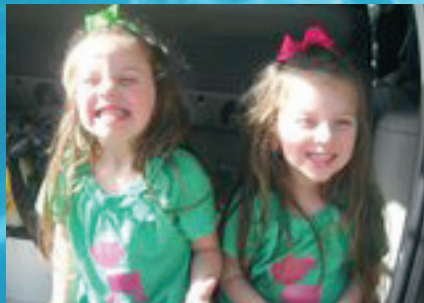
**6** Alexis & Noah  
Age 15 months • FR  
Rowlett, TX



**7** Colton & Dalton  
Age 2 yr old • ID  
O'Fallon, MO



**8** Hailey June & Kassidy Rose  
Age 8 months (in photo) • FR  
Granite City, IL



**9** Madelynn & Emily  
Age 5 • ID  
Grandlake, LA



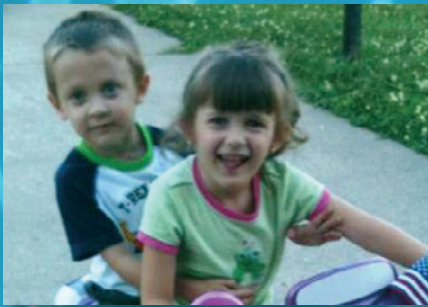
**10** Andy & Aaron  
Age 5 • ID  
Pleasant Hill MO

# Double Takes

## June/July 2012



**11** Jailynn Marie & Jordynn Paulette  
Age: 9 months • ID  
Zebulon, NC



**14** Justin & Jessica  
Age 4 • FR  
Frankfort, KY



**15** Justin & Jackson  
Age 2-months (in the photo) • ID  
Glen Burnie, MD



**16** Jenna & Tony  
Age 4 • FR  
Fanwood, NJ



**20** Mallory & Madilyn  
Age 6 • ID  
Hickory, MS



**21** Joseph & Brett  
Age 10 ½ months • FR  
Philadelphia, PA



**22** Joshua & Matthew  
Age 3 ½ • ID  
Pittsburgh/PA



**26** Rachel & Sarah  
Age 20 • ID  
Molalla, OR



**27** Levi Rai & Liam Jacob  
Age 3-months • ID  
Sydney, NSW, Australia



**28** Genevieve Caroline & Nicholas Earl  
Age 3 1/2 • FR  
Shelburne Vermont





**12** Natalie & Kirsten Albert  
Age 5 • FR  
Elkton, MD



**13** Anna & Elizabeth  
Age 4 • FR  
City, State?



**17** Andrew & Ryan  
Age 4 • ID  
Mineola, NY



**18** Tanner & Kate  
Age 16 months • FR  
West, TX



**19** Shelby & Brandon (Twin Friends)  
Age 6 • FR • Bunker Hill, TX  
Claire & Cole  
Age 6 • FR • Bunker Hill, TX



**23** Parker & Garrett  
Age 6 • FR  
Centerburg, Ohio



**24** David & Dylan  
Age 7 • ID  
Miami, FL



**25** Ezra & Evelyn  
Age 7-weeks • FR  
Chickamauga, GA



**29** Christian & Alexander  
Age 2 1/2 • ID  
Akron, Ohio



**30** Hailey Alyssa & Peyton Aubrey  
Age 3 • ID  
Chugiak, Alaska



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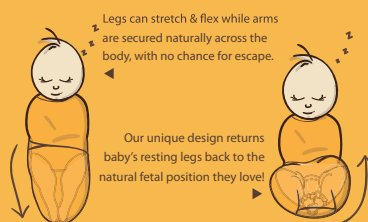
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by Miriam Salerno

# Working Hard OR Working Harder?

So about two months ago I started working full-time again (a real 9-5ish full-time job in an office, with colleagues, a conference room, and actual water cooler.) It's a big transition for this mom of twins. But it's one that has been, truthfully, just amazing. Not only is it possibly the best job I've ever had (so far!) working with incredibly smart and dedicated people on a worthwhile project that will make everyone's life better (for real!), I got to buy some super sharp dresses AND a new mascara. Yeah, I look hot with a briefcase.

The only problem is that I was worried all this working would take away from my good quality hobby time. My days are now full and my evenings are now packed with all the crap that I didn't get done during the day (and that I used to do while "on conference calls" from home). Not that my husband isn't helpful. He is. He is fantastic. But the sheer number of things there are to do in a day is just mind-blowing sometimes. I will guarantee that in any given day a working mom has accomplished more by 8:30 am than most single men do in an entire week. I hate to spoil the mystique (or terrify my under-30 audience), but I'll just say it includes, but is not limited to, making breakfast, feeding breakfast, cleaning up breakfast, cleaning kids, dressing kids, packing lunches, packing backpacks, wiping butts, drying tears, drying spills, the get-your-shoes-on-already-get-your-SHOES-ON rant, two loads of laundry and roasting a chicken. Every day that I get to work on time (without looking homeless) is nothing short of a caffeine-induced miracle.

But look at me. Here I am sitting outside on a quiet evening alone...just me and my laptop...back together again. My kids are asleep, my husband is traveling for work and I'm writing. And so what if I ate pretzels for dinner. I found time to write. I did it. I proved everyone wrong. I can work full time and be a mom and a wife and a friend and go to the gym at 5:45 am and ALSO write my blog. I am super woman. I CAN DO ANYTHING!!!!

Well, almost anything... except maybe (long pause)... ummm...(sigh)

- Pay my phone bill on time
- Go to the dentist
- Call you on your birthday
- Call you on your not birthday
- Obey traffic laws (turning on red saves so much time)
- Keep houseplants alive
- Find my keys
- Return anything I borrowed from anyone. Ever.
- Get to the post office
- Find time for a haircut
- Shop anywhere besides Target (they sell spanx and string cheese - in one place!)

- Change that battery in the smoke detector
  - Read the Economist
  - Read anything for more than 5 minutes
  - Remember when it's "sharing day"
- And I also might...
- Have coffee for lunch
  - Forget we had plans
  - Leave my keys in the door (blimey hell!)
  - Run out of food
  - Run out in my slippers (those ugg ones trick me. they feel so much like shoes)
  - Shampoo twice in the shower (please tell me it's exhaustion not early onset dementia)
  - Frantically dig through my purse at drop-off (No? You don't want to "show and tell" my vintage Banana Republic credit card from 1998? Really? How about this super cool lip liner?! It's a crayon for your face!)

And perhaps once and a while I might actually briefly consider...

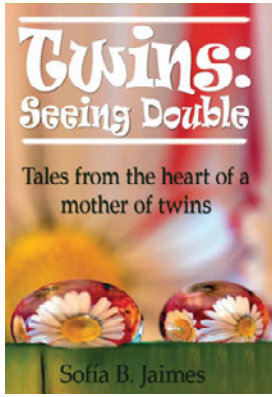
- Polygamy... if she'd do the laundry and pack lunches



Miriam Salerno

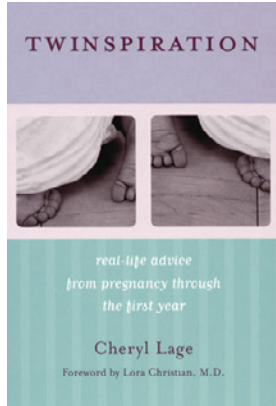


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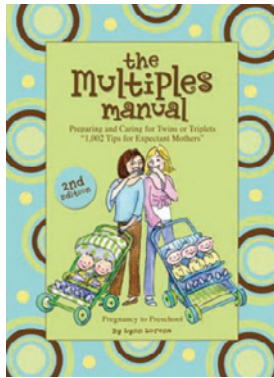
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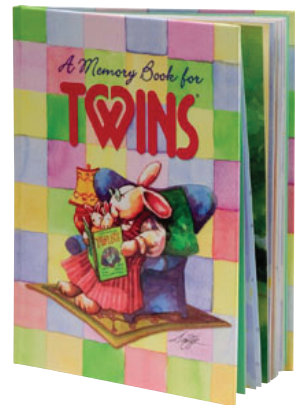
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