

Every Type of Baby Cry Explained

9 MIN • YOUTUBE • [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=3G5AAQL3R_G](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G5AAQL3R_G)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G5aAQL3R_g

SUMMARY

Understanding your baby's cries is essential for meeting their needs effectively. The key lies not in the sound of the cry itself, but in the context and the baby's developmental stage. By recognizing early cues for hunger, tiredness, discomfort, boredom, and pain, parents can respond appropriately and reduce unnecessary crying.

- *Babies communicate needs through specific cries that can be decoded by observing context and developmental stages.*
- *Hunger cues progress from subtle signs like lip smacking to crying if not addressed.*
- *Newborns typically need to sleep after 45-90 minutes of wakefulness; tired cues can also escalate to crying.*
- *Discomfort cries indicate something is wrong physically, such as a wet diaper or being too hot/cold.*
- *Boredom can lead to crying when babies are overstimulated or need a change of scenery.*
- *Pain cries are distinct and usually accompanied by signs of distress; persistent crying may indicate a need for medical attention.*
- *The Period of PURPLE Crying is a normal phase where babies cry more, typically peaking at 6-8 weeks and resolving by 3-4 months.*
- *Effective soothing techniques can help calm a crying baby, especially during challenging periods.*

Your baby's cries aren't random. They're actually trying to tell you something specific. And in this video, I'm going to show you exactly how to decode what they need in the next nine minutes. But first, let me let you in on a secret. The key to decoding your baby's cries has nothing to do with the sound itself. All babies' cries sound pretty much the same. They grizzle, they escalate to crying, and sometimes they might even wail. The real secret lies in understanding two things, context and your baby's developmental stage.

Get those right and you'll know exactly what your baby is telling you. Let me show you how this works with the cry that confuses parents the most, hunger cries. Just last week, a friend called me in tears because her two-week-old seemed constantly hungry. She'd been trapped on the couch for days feeding him every single hour and she was absolutely exhausted. But here's what she didn't realize. Newborns typically feed every two to three hours. So when her baby cried just an hour after a feed, he wasn't hungry at all.

He was telling her something completely different. And I'll tell you what that was in just a moment. But first, here's the game changer my friend didn't know and you might not either. Babies actually tell you they're hungry long before they start crying. These early signals are called hunger cues and they happen in three distinct stages. So first you have early hunger cues and this is when you'll notice that your baby starts smacking their lips, turning their head from side to side as if they're seeking the breast or the bottle, and opening their mouth wide.

And if you miss those early signals, they'll progress to mid-hunger cues. And this is when they'll start stretching and squirming, sucking their hands, and making small grunts or sighs to get your attention. And if you miss those too, that's when they move to late hunger cues and that's the crying. So if your little one starts to cry and it's been two to three hours since their last feed, if they're a newborn or three to four hours if they're over three months of age, and you notice those hunger cues building up, then that cry definitely means feed me now and it's time to offer a feed.

But if the timing's all wrong, like my friend's baby who was crying just an hour after a feed with no hunger cues in sight, then your baby's actually trying to tell you something completely different. And there are three possibilities here. Let me start with what was actually happening with my friend's little one. He wasn't hungry at all. He was absolutely exhausted. What my friend didn't realize is that newborns have incredibly short wake windows and at just two weeks of age, most babies can only stay awake for 45 to 90 minutes before they desperately need some sleep.

And just like with hunger, babies show you that they're tired through their body language before they start crying. But here's the tricky part. Early tired cues are subtle. So this is when your baby will start staring blankly into the distance and lose interest in you or the toys that they're playing with. Their eyes will become glazed or unfocused and their body movements will just start to slow down. Then if you miss those early signals, they will escalate to mid-tired cues.

And at this point, they're getting fussy and they're a lot harder to please. Their movements themselves become jerky and uncontrolled and you'll start to see the more obvious tired signs like yawning, rubbing their eyes, sucking on their fingers, frowning or grizzling. And if you miss those too, that's when you get the late tired cues, which is the crying. So if your crying baby is nearing their wake window and showing tired cues, that cry is saying, "I need sleep now". And it's time to dim the lights and put them down for a nap.

This is exactly what my friend did. Instead of offering the breast every time he cried, she watched his wake windows and put him to bed when he was showing that he was tired. And guess what? That constant crying stopped and she could finally get off the couch. Now, if you're not quite sure what your baby's wake window should be, I've got a free guide that can help. It's called the New Parents Guide to Naps. And inside you'll find exactly how long your baby should be awake between naps based on their age, plus how much sleep they need throughout the day and how many naps you can expect.

You can grab it by clicking the link in the description. Now, if you've checked the timing and your baby actually hasn't been awake long enough to need sleep and they're not showing hunger cues, then it's time to move on to the second possibility, which is actually the easiest to figure out, and that's discomfort cries. Discomfort cries are your baby's way of saying something doesn't feel right on my body and I need you to fix it. Now, this is different from pain.

When babies are in genuine pain, their cries have a very distinct characteristic that I'll go through in a moment. But for discomfort, there's a simple checklist to work through. First, you would check the diaper. So you would

see if it's wet, soiled, too tight around their legs or their waist or twisted and bunched up. And if it is, you would just fix it. Next, you would check their temperature by placing your hand on their chest or their back.

Their skin should feel warm and dry. If it's damp, sweaty or hot, they might be too warm and you might need to remove some layers or turn the heating down. If their skin feels cool, they might be too cold and you might need to add more layers or turn the heating up. Finally, you would check for physical irritants like a hair wrapped around their finger or their toes, scratchy clothing tags or a bunched up blanket under their back.

Now, if you've worked through that entire checklist and they're still crying, then it's time for possibility number three, and that is boredom. Yes, babies get bored. And when they do, they let you know loud and clear through crying. But just like with hunger and tiredness, babies show you boredom cues before they escalate to crying. Early boredom cues include turning their head away from whatever they're looking at. They might also start to squirm almost as if they're trying to find something more interesting to look at and play with, and they might even become more vocal.

So they might start to make grunting noises or coo like they're trying to start a conversation with you. Then if you miss those, they'll go to mid boredom cues, which include arching their back, moving their arms and legs a lot more, and they might start batting at toys or pushing things away. And then if you miss those two, that's when you get the boredom crying. So if your crying baby has recently had a feed, is well rested, seems physically comfortable and you've spotted those boredom cues, then that cry is basically saying, "I'm over this, give me something new".

And you'll know that you've nailed it because the second you switch up the activity, whether it's a change of scenery or giving them a new toy, the crying will instantly stop. Now let's talk about pain cries, because these are different and it's crucial that you can recognize them. When your baby is healthy, there'll be moments during the day when they're calm and content. Even as a newborn, they will have these peaceful moments. Maybe it will only be five minutes after a feed before they fall asleep, but they're there.

As they get older, you'll see more of these calm periods where they'll happily stare at toys, smile and chat with you, or quietly taking the world while you hold them.

But when your baby is in pain, perhaps due to an infection or certain intolerance, those peaceful moments vanish. Instead, they seem constantly uncomfortable. They're fussing and crying on and off all day, and you can't figure out why. And nothing you do seems to help them settle. You might also notice physical signs of pain. For example, they might keep pulling their knees up to their belly. They might arch their back or go rigid when you try to comfort them.

They might suddenly refuse feeds or sleep more or less than usual, or they might just look genuinely distressed. So here's the bottom line. If your little one seems constantly miserable, won't settle or something just feels off about their behaviour, pick up the phone and call your doctor. Your instincts are usually spot on and babies in genuine pain need medical help. Now there is another potential cause for your little one's cries, and that is the Period of PURPLE Crying.

This is a completely normal crying pattern that most babies experience, typically starting at around two weeks of age. And initially, your baby might seem slightly more unsettled and start crying more at a particular time each day. Now, usually this is in the late afternoon and evenings, and you really can't identify why. And these crying spells just suddenly appear and then they disappear. Over the next few weeks, what you'll notice is these crying spells gradually build, reaching their peak between six to eight weeks of age.

And at this point, your baby might spend two to three hours per day crying, though it can be as much as five hours. After this peak, that crying will gradually decrease and disappear between three to four months of age. So if you notice that your baby is having crying spells around the same time every day, nothing soothes them and they're under four months of age and you've ruled out hunger, tiredness, discomfort and boredom, you're likely experiencing the Period of PURPLE Crying.

Now, even when you understand why your baby is crying, there'll be times where they're just a little more challenging to soothe, especially during the Period of PURPLE Crying. And in these moments, certain soothing strategies can be an absolute lifesaver, which is exactly why I created this video. In it, you'll see four easy to follow, yet highly effective holding techniques that you can use to comfort your crying baby. You'll be amazed at how well these positions can calm your little one, particularly when it feels like nothing else is working.

So make sure you check it out.