

iPhone and iPod Touch Baby Care Application Review – Part One

(sponsored by Bimlin LLC, owner of BabyDailyLog.com and Baby Michael iPhone app)

This is the first of several parts report that will compare many of the baby care and milestone applications available for use with the iPhone and iPod Touch. In this section, baby care applications will be discussed and compared based on just what aspects of baby care and development they track, how they achieve this, and how the apps then display and allow a user to share the information you've taken the time to record.

As a father of a 9-months old boy, I must say the ability to track aspects of your baby's development and daily care on a device such as the iPhone, is a wonderful concept. I remember with my son, meticulously recording feeding times, diaper changes, and his sleep schedule especially for the first two months after we came home from the hospital. It's one of the best ways to know your baby is growing and healthy. I kept those papers as a souvenir, and perhaps one day I'll show my sons how crazy it really was those first few weeks home. How much simpler my life would have been if I owned an iPhone or iPod touch back then! Trying to remember how long you've been breastfeeding, or the last time their diapers were changed is next to impossible when your eyes are too tired to see the clock in the first place.

	Baby Michael	Baby Log	Tracker: Diapers	Tracker: Nursing	iBear Baby	Baby Rec
Cost	\$4.99	\$4.99	\$1.99	\$7.99	\$9.99	\$1.99
No. Activities Tracked	8	5	1	1	3	3
Track Multiple Children		X	X	X	X	X
Ability to Add Photos	X				X	
Voice Recording	X					
Timer function	X					X
Ability to Share Results	X	X			X	
Supporting Website	X					
Total No. of Features	14	7	2	2	6	5
Price per Feature	2.8	1.4	1.0	0.25	0.60	2.5
Overall Grade	7.5	6.5	3	3	5	5

Table 1. Key feature comparison of six of the available baby care applications. For more detailed information, please visit Apple's iPod store.

Bimlin LLC: BabyDailyLog.com, “Baby Michael” iPhone app

These apps all serve a variety of purposes and so a direct comparison between them is nearly impossible. Instead, the overall grades I’ve given for each app are based on how each application performs for what it claims to track. Price point, interface usability, and intuitiveness of use are all factors in determining a final score for each application, as is anything obviously missing that should be present for a baby care tracking log.

The price per feature ratio is my attempt to assign a value to each app based upon the functionality and what you can do with the application, versus how much you have to pay. Baby Michael and Baby Rec clearly have the highest values, however as users of both will see, Baby Rec is not nearly as polished and lacks many features I find imperative aspects of baby care (such as the ability to input length and weight).

Overall, I had two pet peeves with most of these apps: many didn’t offer other units of measure than standard, and when recording weight of the baby (if you could even do that), most apps did not allow a pound and ounce entry and instead required parents to convert ounces to a fraction of a pound. Many apps didn’t even allow a parent to input length and weight (two very easy to measure and important numbers during the early days when you need to make sure baby is being fed enough) was a big surprise to me. Only Baby Michael and iBear Baby even allowed a user to enter their baby’s vital statistics and none allowed a pound, ounce entry.

In the category of baby care tracking, Baby Michael is a clear winner. Not only can you easily track and record your baby’s daily activities, Baby Michael is the only app to feature a timer and alarm that can be set for how long a parent wants a session of breastfeeding or tummy time to last. Baby Michael also allows a parent to add photos, and with an iPhone to record their baby’s “coos” and “ahhs”. There is clearly a lot of thought put into this application, and though there are a few kinks the designer seems responsive and willing to put in the time to iron out any issues.

Below is a summary of each app, as well as their major pros and cons. Really there are nearly as many apps as there are parenting styles, and most parents who have an iPhone or iPod Touch will find an application that suits their needs.

Baby Michael

Number of Features: 14

Price: \$4.99

The most comprehensive baby care application, it also offers a supporting website www.babydailylog.com for guidance and information based on your baby’s age. In addition, this app allows an iPhone user to take photos and record voice clips.

Pros: The report function on this app is amazing – not only can a user select detailed lists for each parameter tracked, but Baby Michael also provides clear graphs and charts to satisfy any parent’s needs. This app calculates the amount of time baby has been awake or asleep, as well as the ability to set an alarm for tummy time or breast feeding.

Bimlin LLC: BabyDailyLog.com, "Baby Michael" iPhone app

Cons: There are a few kinks that need to be worked out for this application. First and foremost, the time editing function needs polish. Since busy parents typically can't enter all information in real time, this could be a problem. Thankfully once the data is uploaded to the site, it can be edited there as well.

Baby Log

Number of Features: 7

Price: \$4.99

With simple one-touch entry, a parent can record diaper changes, sleep, feeding, bath and a user-defined "other" parameter. Each entry can be easily edited, and notes can be added. Parents can then email data and export into Excel to take along to the doctor's or keep a more permanent record.

Pros: This app offers a professional, polished look. It's clean, easy to use, and easy to edit information.

Cons: Baby Log loses points because it does not have a timer function, with the exception that the app tracks time since last entry for each category. Parents are then expected to calculate how long their baby slept, or how long they breastfed baby.

Tracker: Diapers

Number of Features: 2

Price: \$1.99

The beauty of this application lies in its simplicity; designed only to help a new parent track the frequency of wet and dirty diapers.

Pros: Very easy to use. Parents can input not only time of dirty diapers, but consistency and color.

Cons: This app has very limited application. At a minimum, this app should also include a function for tracking the baby's length and weight, since weight especially is indicative of baby's progress early on.

Tracker: Nursing

Number of Features: 2

Price: \$7.99

This is another easy-to-use, one-touch tracking app for breastfeeding useful for multiple children. It will help new parents remember which breast was used for the previous feeding, and keep track of how long the baby spent breast feeding.

Pros: This app is easy to use. I contacted tech support, and they answered my question in less than 24 hours. It is clean-looking and self explanatory.

Bimlin LLC: BabyDailyLog.com, “Baby Michael” iPhone app

Cons: This app loses most of its points because for what it tracks, the price is ridiculously high. This app tracks only breastfeeding and is the second most expensive app available. At a minimum, users should be able to track baby’s weight.

iBear Baby

Number of Features: 6

Price: \$9.99

Baby is chiefly a milestone and memory saving application, though it does allow the user to track weight, height, and (oddly) feeding times. Height and weight are nicely displayed in growth charts.

Pros: This application is easy to use, and allows a user to track baby’s milestones and events with ease, especially since many of the “firsts” are preset. The ability to add a photo with each milestone and have that photo viewable in the logs is also a nice feature.

Cons: At \$9.99, this is the most expensive application, and yet other apps have more features and can track baby’s milestones and daily activities more completely. The choice of allowing a user to track feeding considering the interface of this app is unusual and actually makes the app seem cumbersome.

Baby Rec

Number of Features: 5

Price: \$1.99

New parents require a tracking application that is simple to use and understand – Baby Rec delivers on both counts. This app tracks baby’s sleep and feeding schedules and allows the user to track multiple children.

Pros: Easy to set up for multiple children and simple to switch between them. This is the only app that has a built-in feature that allows parents to enter foods other than formula or breast milk.

Cons: There are no user defined tracking capabilities, which exacerbates the problem of several key tracking features missing, such as length, height, and diaper changes. Logs are simply lists by day and are not presented in any meaningful way.