



Last year, U.S. consumers spent more than \$9.8 billion on infant, toddler, and pre-school furnishings and accessories, according to a May 2008 study by the research group Packaged Facts. Luxe cribs, haute couture high chairs, and fancy changing tables aren't merely for the upper crust, either. "Practically this entire market has gone premium," says senior analyst Timothy Dowd, the study's author.

This non-infantalizing infant aesthetic is usually called Modern Baby design: The names of distributors—All Modern Baby, Modern Nursery, Modern Tots, Modern Mini—stoke the mad hope that you can contain your kid's id with the clean lines and flat surfaces of Modernity itself.

As the movement's name implies, it's clean, crisp, and minimal, featuring lots of geometric shapes and sans-serif fonts. Though the Modernism conceit may be dusty, the word shines with market value. Retailers are handing parents a design buzzword that means little more than "contemporary"—that this is not your mother's baby furniture. "There's not a lot of intellectual rigor in what constitutes 'Modern Baby' design," says Greg Allen, who writes Daddy Types, a blog about his search for well-designed baby gear. "It's what people latch onto in order to be 'of the moment.'" Designer baby goods haven't always had this contemporary twist. "It's always been possible to spend a lot of money on baby stuff," says Allen. "But, before, it meant you bought a hand-carved crib that looked like a Cinderella crib."

