




## Read This, Not That

I am sure that many of you have heard of the International bestseller, *Eat This, Not That*, by David Zinczenko and Matt Goulding. That book got me to thinking. There are so many options in pregnancy and childbirth preparation literature; a newly pregnant parent can become lost in the plethora of pages.

Because of that, I began sifting through my library and categorizing my books. For every mainstream publication that I would *not* recommend to a pregnant woman, I made sure to have three alternate options. This worked its way into a *Read This, Not That* book list that I now have posted in my library.



Each **bypass** provides an explanation of why I would not recommend it, followed by three alternative selections. These alternatives are broken down into three sub-categories:

- **Citizen** (for the average woman, safe to give at a baby shower without offending)
- **Seeker** (for the one who is definitely looking into her options but not sure what she wants)
- **Sold** (she knows what she wants, has done the research, and is a proactive consumer)

**Bypass:** [What to Expect When You Are Expecting](#) - while learning to crawl, my second-born found and proceeded to rip every page out of my copy of WTEWYAE. She had the right idea. This book is chock full of enough scare-tactics and medical promotions to frighten and confuse any mama-to-be right into a panic attack (if not premature labor). I have never seen so many women turned into anxious balls of nervous wreckage after reading this book. Although it contains a lot of relevant educational material, it is delivered in such a way that women are not brought into that knowledge in an empowering and positive way; but instead leads women to believe that there are so many cautions, tests, deviations, and alternatives that *something* is bound to happen, just wait. Empower and educate, it does not. There are many better options.

### Instead Read:

- (Citizen) [Conception, Pregnancy, and Birth](#) - Miriam Stoppard compiled this easy to read walk through of everything from ovulation to breastfeeding. Filled with beautiful photographs and illustrations, it is user-friendly and educational. She treats pregnancy as beautiful, normal, and natural - allowing women to look at themselves in awe. The sections on birth provide step by step information on the stages as well as coping techniques/positions and possible interventions.
- (Seeker) [Pregnancy, Childbirth, and the Newborn](#) - Penny Simkin co-authors this book, which is a much more thorough and in-depth educational piece than it's counterpart above. It deals much more with variations, interventions, medications, and the like while also continuing to provide this information in a non-threatening, non-frightening light. She remains factual without becoming intimidating or sentimental. Some key components that make this a great book: the role of the birth partner, charts on interventions/risks/benefits, and emotional and physical landmarks of pregnancy/labor/birth and postpartum.
- (Sold) [Having a Baby, Naturally](#) - This book is similar to the two above, without the illustrations and photographs of the first and without the non-biased POV (they explain, in detail, their slant and reasoning for *natural*) of the second. This book is a great companion for homebirth mamas or women who are already more 'crunchy-minded'. In particular, I love that they devote a full section to the expectant father. This is a GREAT resource for natural pregnancy, birth, and parenting, but only for those who are already set on that path.

**Bypass:** [Planning for Pregnancy Birth and Beyond](#) - basic. boring. Those are the two key words I can come up with for this particular book. It is written to be very hospital/intervention/test-friendly, giving you lots of good topics, but very hospital childbirth class-like advice. It is written like a text book and not very easy of a reference. PFPB&B definitely writes from the model of pregnancy as a medical condition/event.



### Instead Read:

- (Citizen) [The Pregnancy Book](#) - Similar to my review below, this book is an easy read, never talking over their audience, but providing practical, fun, medical, and optional information in a month by month setting. It is a good pregnancy guide, but when it comes to birth, I defer to my recommendations below.
- (Seeker) [The Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth](#) - A very in-depth look at interventions, medications, and birth, as well as a hard look at the obstetrical system, this book dissects the medical research to give sound, well-rounded information. This book can be hard to digest, but arms women with an arsenal of information to make informed decisions on just about everything they might encounter during labor and birth.
- (Sold) [Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering](#) - Written by Dr. Sarah J Buckley, this book is fully balanced with information on intuitive birthing and parenting, and evidence-based birthing and parenting. She takes the best of maternal/ancestral wisdom and medical/research wisdom and combine the two to give an insightful look into gentle birth and gentle mothering.

**Bypass:** [Easy Labor: Every Woman's Guide to Choosing Less Pain and More Joy During Childbirth](#) - although the authors give well-rounded information on both the medical and non-medical means of pain relief for labor and birth, I felt it was a bit of an overplay on how painful labor and birth was - revisiting pain repeatedly, over-sensationalizing it. They also downplay the risks and side effects of epidurals, while also downplaying the effectiveness of alternate comfort measures; which, as a result, champions medical pain relief options. End result, "Hi, birth is painful, REALLY painful. Non-medical pain relief is ok, but man, just you wait, yer going to want *your* epidural".

### Instead Read:

- (Citizen) [Your Best Birth](#) - Ricki Lake's new book, YBB gives great advise on options, all your options, in a non-biased, non-confrontational way. She presents all concepts of labor and birth, including choosing your doctor or midwife, your birthplace, writing a birth plan, and how to become a proactive consumer in your healthcare. It is not as in-depth as some of the other books, but it definitely gets women thinking, just like her informational documentary, "The Business of Being Born"
- (Seeker) [The Birth Book](#) - Dr. William Sears gives you the good, the bad, the ugly, the best - all in very readable format and without the scare tactics. He gives you the options as well as the risks and benefits of each - no sugar coating it. There is adequate information on various childbirth options, plenty of birth stories to peruse, and no lack of information - this book helps women to become educated to their options without having an obvious bias, treating them as individual's, proactive consumers in their own healthcare options.
- (Sold) [Birthing From Within](#) - Pam England outlines a childbirth preparation by means of discovery; viewing childbirth as a journey, an opportunity to tap into a new woman, the mother. She teaches that, through self discovery, letting go of birth baggage, and learning about the emotional journey of childbirth, a woman can have a truly fulfilling birth experience. This is put on my Sold list as it can come across as rather hippy-liberal.

**Bypass:** [The Best Birth: Your Guide to the Safest, Healthiest, and Most Satisfying Labor and Delivery](#) - I can honestly not find one good thing to say about this book. She poo-poo's on any birth except a hospital, Obstetrician assisted birth, she touts that the only thing that the medical community is interested in is a healthy mom and baby, the book is extremely post-modernistic, idolizes the medical community as 'doctor know's best', and seeks to undermine the assistance of a doula or other childbirth professional stating that 'you already have the only doula you need' (she wastes a whole section on why she would NOT recommend a doula - calling them trendy). She teaches that childbirth methods (goals, plans, preparation) only lead to guilt and miss sight of the real goal: a healthy mom and baby. Though I agree with her end-goal, our path to get there is completely different. She teaches abdication and compliance to hospital policy rather than research and becoming your own informed, educated, proactive consumer.



**Instead Read:**

- (Citizen) [The Official Lamaze Guide](#) - written in a similar vein to Natural Childbirth The Bradley Way, this book differs in that it focuses a great deal on birth when allowed to unfold naturally, how to encourage that, what can disrupt that, Lamaze coping techniques, and how to assimilate personal strengths/traits into the birthing room.
- (Seeker) [Natural Childbirth The Bradley Way](#) - Susan McCutcheon writes this book in a way that some consider it a childbirth preparation class without the classroom. It outlines the reasons for a natural birth, the anatomy and physiology of pregnancy, labor, and birth, the emotional as well as physical signposts of labor and birth, and teaches a number of relaxation techniques and positions for labor and birth, all while encouraging husband's to be active participants and assistants.
- (Sold) [Ina May's Guide To Childbirth](#) - Ina May challenges the cultural assumption that childbirth is a medical, frightening, and painful experience by providing a whole section of amazing childbirth stories that turn your preconceived notions on their heads. In addition, she gives honest, effective, and logical instruction, without getting methodical, on ways to help progress and assist in the labor and birthing process.

**Other Great Reads:**

[Birth - the Surprising History of How We Were Born](#)

[Birth as an American Rite of Passage](#)

[The Birth Partner](#)

[Immaculate Deception](#)

[A Child Is Born](#)

[Spiritual Midwifery](#)

[Heart and Hands](#)

[Supernatural Childbirth](#)

[The Joy of Natural Childbirth](#)

[Active Birth](#)

[Gentle Birth Choices](#)

[The Lord of Birth](#)