

# What kind of adoption is right for you?

Work your way through this decision matrix for a preliminary indication of the adoption that may be right for you. See it online at [www.theadoptionguide.com/tools/planner/matrix.php](http://www.theadoptionguide.com/tools/planner/matrix.php).

<b>Characteristics of the prospective parent</b>	<b>International Adoption</b>	<b>U.S. Infant Adoption</b>	<b>Foster Care Adoption</b>
<p><b>1. My age is:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Under 25</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>25 to 45</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Over 45</b></li> </ul>	Age requirements vary by country. Most countries require parents to be between the ages of 25 and 45 for an infant referral. Older parents may adopt toddlers and older children.	No specific age requirements. Birthparents, however, may more readily select parents perceived as neither “too young” nor “too old.”	No specific age requirements.
<p><b>2. I have the following financial resources to dedicate to adopting a child:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Less than \$10,000</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>\$10,000 to \$25,000</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>More than \$25,000</b></li> </ul>	Most international adoption costs range from \$25,000 to \$45,000. Many families are eligible for the federal tax credit of up to \$13,360 per finalized adoption.	The cost of U.S. infant adoption varies widely, from \$5,000 to more than \$40,000. The average cost is \$20,000 to \$35,000. Many families are eligible for the federal tax credit of up to \$13,360 per domestic adoption attempt.	Expenses are minimal, if there are any at all. Additionally, many families are eligible for the federal tax credit of up to \$13,360.
<p><b>3. I am:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Part of a married couple</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Single</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>Gay/lesbian</b></li> </ul>	For married couples, guidelines on length of marriage and number of previous divorces may apply. For singles, countries may prohibit placement or limit the number of children placed.	Typically, there are no fixed rules regarding marital status, but some birthparents prefer married couples. However, adoptions of U.S. babies by singles (both straight and gay) are not unusual.	There are typically no specific requirements regarding marital status. Research requirements for single and gay/lesbian adoption in your state.
<b>Characteristics of the child</b>	<b>International Adoption</b>	<b>U.S. Infant Adoption</b>	<b>Foster Care Adoption</b>
<p><b>4. I am interested in adopting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>A newborn</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>A child younger than one year old</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> <b>A toddler or an older child</b></li> </ul>	In 2009, 25% of children adopted internationally were younger than 1 year old; 52% 1-4 years; 23% older than 4.	Almost all U.S. private adoptions are of very young babies. Many newborns go home from the hospital with their adoptive parents.	Children adopted from foster care range in age from infants to 17-year-olds. The average age of waiting children is 8.1 years old. Many foster children have siblings with whom they are placed.
<p><b>5. It is important to me to know the complete medical and social history of my child.</b></p>	The quality of medical and other background information varies widely by country and by adoption situation. Parents will want to research the availability of information in countries under consideration.	Medical and other background information is usually, but not always, available in domestic adoptions.	Although background information for a child in foster care may be incomplete, current medical information will be available.

**Characteristics of the child**

**6. I can consider parenting a child with some level of disability.**

**International Adoption**

Quality of early care varies widely by country. Where foster care is available, children usually fare well. Where children are adopted from orphanages, there are virtually always developmental lags and sometimes other medical consequences.

**U.S. Infant Adoption**

Keep in mind that there are no guarantees of perfect health for any child.

**Foster Care Adoption**

Children in foster care may experience consequences from neglect prior to entering care.

**7. I am prepared for the visibility and responsibilities of raising a child who is racially dissimilar to me.**

The majority of children adopted internationally are Asian or African. Less than 20% are Caucasian (primarily from Eastern Europe).

Infants adopted domestically can be of any race.

Of children in foster care currently waiting for adoption, 30% are African-American, 38% are Caucasian, and 22% are Hispanic.

**The adoption process**

**8. I hope to adopt a child within:**

- 1 year**
- 1 to 2 years**
- Longer is OK**

**International Adoption**

The average international adoption process is two years from start to finish. Wait times vary significantly, depending on circumstances in each country.

**U.S. Infant Adoption**

The timeline is unpredictable. The average adoption is complete within two years.

**Foster Care Adoption**

Both for placement and for adoption the wait is unpredictable, but placement can be rapid.

**9. I would like to know the total cost of the adoption in advance.**

Total adoption expenses usually can be predicted by knowledgeable adoption providers.

The cost of a domestic adoption can vary widely, depending on advertising costs to identify a birthmother, as well as birthmother medical expenses.

Total adoption expenses are negligible.

**10. I am emotionally prepared for uncertainty in the adoption process.**

In most cases, international adoptions follow a predictable path. Families can normally count on becoming parents by the end of the process. However, changing laws and practice in individual countries can lead to midstream process changes.

Families who want to adopt a newborn domestically can almost always count on doing so. Yet, along the way, as many as 50% of birthparents who initially consider adoption decide not to place the baby. Post-placement revocations, however, are rare.

Children may be placed with foster families who hope to adopt them before they are legally free for adoption. There can be uncertainty as to when or whether a child will become free for adoption.

**11. I prefer the following level of contact with my child's birthparents:**

- None**
- Some**
- Significant**

In most international adoptions, there has been little to no contact with birthparents. This is changing; an increasing number of parents are opening international adoptions.

Most birthparents and adoptive parents meet at least once. It is unusual to have no significant contact with birthparents.

If you foster your child before adoption, you may have some contact with the birthparents. If not, you are unlikely ever to have any contact with them.

**12. I'd like to control the way the adoption proceeds and the professionals I work with as much as possible.**

In international adoption, parents typically choose the adoption country and agency. Beyond that, the process is dictated by the requirements of the U.S. government and those of the child's country of origin.

Adopting parents will choose their social worker, their attorney, and, sometimes, the process by which they identify a birthmother. The timing of a birthparent match will not be predictable.

Adopting from foster care involves state adoption offices and courts. It is difficult to have control over the process.