

Is it a boy or girl? I peeked all three times I was pregnant. My lengthy résumé as a Peeker dates back to nursery school, when I organized the great underwear peek-off, held behind the corner paint easels. So it should come as no surprise that as an adult, while lying next to a picture of my unborn child on an ultrasound screen and being tended to by a technician who knows whether my fate is Barbies or Hot Wheels, I can't bring myself to say, "We don't want to know."

In my own defense, there are sound reasons why I've peeked. While pregnant with my third and final child — with two young boys already — my husband and I sort of hoped I might have a girl. If Nicole turned out to be Nicholas, the ultrasound would give us some time to get excited about raising three boys. Which it did.

While pregnant with Connor, my second son, we decided to peek for his older brother, Dylan's, sake. We figured that anything we could do to help Dylan prepare for the baby's arrival would help him make the transition from being an only child to sharing our adoration with a sibling.

"Dylan, you're going to have a baby brother!" I announced after the ultrasound.

"Where? Where is he? Can I see him?" he asked, lifting my shirt to expose my beach-ball belly.

Clearly, there is a peeking gene.

Which takes me back to my pregnancy with my first son, Dylan. We peeked, of course. We peeked because I wanted to get the nursery ready ahead of time, which was really quite helpful. Well, OK. We peeked because I could not bear the suspense.

While we're on the topic, I have a tiny issue to discuss. It's about Non-Peekers. While chronic Peekers (like me) might express admiration for Non-Peekers' resolve, in truth, they bug us. One of my best friends (a Non-Peeker!) said this when asked if one little look would kill her:

"I know how hard that last month of waiting will be, and reminding myself that I have such a wonderful surprise ahead will help get me through." I find this a little bit show-offish. If we were little girls, I'd pull her hair. And the



peeping mom

Writer Megan Ault
can't resist
finding out her
baby's gender.

wonderful surprise part? The surprise is that most babies can squeeze out of such a normally small opening in the first place.

Being pregnant at the same time as a trusted friend and finding out she's a Non-Peeker can test the friendship. That's why I've come to realize that the only way for Peekers and Non-Peekers to remain friends is to be forth-

right about who they are and then see what shakes out.

So when faced with a Non-Peeker, I don't waste time. I admit that I always peek at the last pages of a novel first and compulsively glance through newspaper headlines before reading the articles. I proudly tell them about the Christmas I was 10, when I expertly cut the taped ends on my gifts, then eased them out for a look before retaping them. When they hear this, they give me something completely unlike a peek; they give me a *look*. You know the kind.

Because Non-Peekers can be rather self-righteous, I never admit that the Christmas I was 10 was the worst. But I also never say that if I had their will, I'd do things the old-fashioned way, too, and wait to find out if it's a boy or girl. That might imply that I'm ashamed of my peeking heritage, which has shaped my very being.

What I do tell them is this: If I could just quietly accompany them to their ultrasound appointment, I would promise not to tell them what I see. ■

Megan Ault lives in Bozeman, Mont. She still admits to the occasional peek at her Christmas presents.