

PREPARING YOUR DOG FOR A NEW BABY

Expecting the arrival of a baby is an extremely exciting time for everyone involved, and we're here to help you prepare your dog(s) so the transition is as smooth and positive as possible. This is a major life change for the home, especially if this is your dog's first. Dogs typically love daily routines and familiar people (which will all change once baby comes), so we want to get them adjusted as stress-free as possible. Follow these tips to start preparing your resident dog(s) for your baby now, so the only change once the baby comes is the baby themselves!

BEFORE THE BABY ARRIVES

INTRODUCE AS MANY SMELLS THAT WILL BECOME NORMS IN THE HOME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Use baby powders, baby soaps, and lotions that you plan to use once the baby comes on yourself regularly so that these become familiar and not associated with the brand new addition. This will help your dog slowly adjust and feel less of a change at the time the baby comes home. These small changes will make your household smell different and your dog **will** notice it, so introducing these smells before the baby arrives helps create less of a major change once the baby is home.

SET UP THE NURSERY AND ANY BOUNDARIES

If you expect to let your dog into the nursery, let them familiarize themselves with it so they can get adjusted to the new layout and furniture. If you expect to limit your dog's time in the nursery, begin to teach your dog that certain areas (including the nursery and anything else you think will be restricted) may be off-limits. Get them used to this now so by the time the baby comes, they are used to not always being allowed in this space.

SET UP OTHER SPOTS IN YOUR HOME TO LOOK LIKE THEY WILL WHEN THE BABY ARRIVES

Cats are sensitive to change! Set up other areas of your home to look how they will be set up when your baby arrives. This includes setting up objects like your stroller, baby swings, bassinets, etc, so the home isn't suddenly filled with too many brand-new things as soon as the baby comes home. Allow your dog to sniff them and get used to their presence in your home without making it a big deal. The more casual you act, the more quickly they will accept these new items as being a part of their norm.

AT LEAST 1 MONTH IN ADVANCE: ESTABLISH CHANGES TO THE DAILY ROUTINE

Adjust walk times and feeding schedules to match what you anticipate it will be after the baby arrives. Keep feeding, playtime, walk time, and other routines your dog is in on a schedule and keep these consistent once the baby comes home. It is important that your dog's needs for play and attention are not ignored with the arrival of the baby. You should also get them used to other routines, such as always closing the nursery door at night, or throughout the day when the baby would be sleeping, so that your dog gets used to things sometimes being off-limits.

WORK ON TRAINING

Reinforce basic obedience commands that your dog already knows and work on teaching some new ones, such as “Gentle” and “Go to your Spot”. Create a safe space where your dog should settle when they need a break, and where you can direct them to go if they need to lay down.

ONCE THE BABY IS HOME

PLEASE BE PATIENT!

It’s completely normal for dogs to show changes in their behavior when a new baby comes home. Give them time to adjust and make sure to keep their routine as consistent as possible.

INTRODUCING THE BABY

- Keep interactions brief and positive. Give them something they love like treats, affection, or playtime when the baby is nearby, and end the interaction before the dog starts showing signs of stress. We want to create positive associations with your baby- when your baby is nearby, your dog gets exciting and great things!
- Make sure the first meeting is in a calm and controlled setting. Hold the baby securely and let the dog sniff from a safe distance.
- Always supervise interactions closely, even as your child grows
- Continually use positive reinforcement to keep the dog associating good things when the baby is nearby. Reward your dog for calm behavior. In the beginning as your dog is getting used to the baby’s presence, reward the dog for being in the same room as the baby. Every time your dog sees the baby they should be rewarded so that they learn really good things happen whenever the baby is around!

KEEP THEM INVOLVED IN THE FAMILY

Include your dog in family activities and interactions when you’re able to. Bring them on family walks, make sure they still get enough exercise and play time with you, and build positive associations as much as possible.

AS YOUR CHILD GROWS

Make sure to keep interactions positive as your child grows. Once a baby is able to move around and grab, they should be supervised closely any time they are near your dog. Teach your child the appropriate ways to interact with your dog and make sure they respect your dog’s personal space and boundaries, and learn to recognize signs of discomfort from your dog. Please see our guide [Introducing Dogs to Children](#) to learn the best ways to do this and ensure safety for your whole family!