

Preparing Your Dog for the Arrival of a New Baby

Helping your dog feel safe, confident and secure as their world changes.

Preparing your dog before your baby arrives helps them a new sights, sounds, smells and routines, making the transition for everyone. Small, positive changes introduced before your baby can help your dog feel safe, confident and secure as your family starts this exciting new chapter together.



1 START PREPARING EARLY



- Begin several weeks before your baby is due.
- Gradually adjust routines such as walks, feeding and play.
- Introduce baby equipment such as prams, cots and changing mats.
- Encourage your dog to relax independently and enjoy quiet time.



Small, gradual changes are much easier for dogs than sudden changes overnight.

2 INTRODUCE SOUNDS, SMELLS & EQUIPMENT



- Play recordings of babies crying at a very low volume whilst providing treats or another enjoyable activity.
- Gradually increase the volume over several sessions, ensuring your dog remains relaxed.
- Introduce baby lotions, powders and blankets in a calm, positive way.

The goal is for these new sights, sounds and smells to become familiar before your baby comes home.

3 TEACH USEFUL LIFE SKILLS



Your dog should be comfortable with:

- Going to their bed or mat.
- Settling calmly whilst you are occupied.
- Waiting patiently.
- Walking politely beside a pushchair.
- Responding reliably to recall and basic cues.



These skills make everyday situations much easier to manage once your baby arrives.

4 WHEN BABY COMES HOME

- Keep introductions calm and relaxed.
- Reward calm behaviour from your dog when in the presence of your baby.
- Never force your dog to interact with your baby.
- **IF YOU OBSERVE ANY SIGNS OF YOUR DOG BEING AGGRESSIVE** in anyway speak with your vet and/or clinical behaviourist immediately



- Remember where possible continue spending quality one-to-one time with your dog, and/or consider additional support such as a dog sitter/walks

The aim is for your dog to associate your baby with calm, predictable and positive experiences.

5 CREATE SAFE SPACES



Every dog should have somewhere they can rest without being disturbed.

This may be:

- A bed
- A crate (if already happily crate trained)
- A quiet room
- Behind a baby gate

If your dog chooses to move away from your baby, ALWAYS allow them to do so. Choosing distance is a healthy coping strategy.

SUPERVISE EVERY INTERACTION

- Never leave your dog and baby together unsupervised.
- Babies and toddlers are unpredictable and potentially worrying for dogs
- Dogs communicate primarily through body language and children cannot be expected to understand warning signals
- If your dog appears uncomfortable, calmly increase distance rather than expecting them to tolerate the situation.

MANAGEMENT IS ALWAYS SAFER THAN TRYING TO INTERVENE AFTER PROBLEMS DEVELOP.

KEY TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Preparation is not about teaching your dog to love babies overnight. It is about helping them feel safe, confident and relaxed as their world changes. Small, positive steps before your baby arrives give both your dog and your growing family the very best start together.



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



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Dogs and children

helping your child and dog live safely together

Dogs and children can develop wonderful lifelong relationships. However, even the gentlest dog may bite if they feel frightened, trapped, startled, unwell or repeatedly uncomfortable. By understanding how to manage interactions safely, we can help both children and dogs feel secure, comfortable and protected.



Did you know?

Most serious dog bites involving children occur within the home and involve a dog already known to the child.

HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS

Children should never approach a dog that is:



Eating



Chewing



Playing with a toy



Sleeping



Holding a stolen item



Resting with a favourite person

Even gentle dogs may protect valuable resources or react if startled.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Look for subtle signs your dog may be uncomfortable.



Turning away



Moving away



Lip licking



Yawning



Freezing



Whale eye



Growling



Lip curl



Snap

These behaviours are your dog's way of asking for more space.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Allowing children to disturb sleeping dogs
- ✗ Encouraging cuddling and hugging
- ✗ Taking food or toys away with a child nearby
- ✗ Punishing growling
- ✗ Assuming children can recognise if a dog is uncomfortable
- ✗ Leaving dogs and young children together unsupervised

Remember: don't expect children to manage dogs. Adults must manage the interaction.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Every dog should have a child-free safe space
- ✓ Give dogs the choice to move away
- ✓ Adults should supervise every interaction
- ✓ Respect growling and other warning signs
- ✓ Teach children to leave resting dogs alone
- ✓ Seek professional advice early if concerns arise

Space, understanding and supervision keep children and dogs safe.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Being in the same room is not the same as actively supervising.

Active supervision means:



One adult supervising the child.



One adult supervising the dog.

If there has **ever** been concern about growling, snapping or anxiety around children, management should be put in place immediately.**

This may include:



Baby gates



Separate rooms



Indoor lead



Basket muzzle



Behaviour support

****Until a treatment plan is in place, children and dogs should not interact without active supervision.**



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