



EXPECTING A BABY

Tips and advice for all the family



PREPARING FOR THE NEW ARRIVAL

Having a baby is a big event for the whole family, including your dog. You should begin to prepare them as soon as possible for all the excitement. The more time you spend on training your dog and helping them adjust to the changes that are coming, the easier the whole process will be.

Your dog will experience changes in routine as well as new sights, smells and sounds that may upset and distress them. Start working with your dog as soon as you can to help the process go as smoothly as possible.

Don't wait until your baby arrives to start training.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

1.

Consider how well trained and behaved your dog is. Before the baby arrives, it would be a good idea to make sure that they:

- 🐾 Are confident and happy to be apart from you
- 🐾 Will not expect attention when you are busy
- 🐾 Know how to settle down when asked
- 🐾 Have good basic training e.g. coming back when called or staying still when instructed
- 🐾 Are able to walk on a lead without pulling.

If you need to brush up on their skills, you could attend a local training class as well as working with them at home. For information on Dogs Trust classes visit www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk

2.

If your dog has specific behavioural problems, such as not being able to be left alone (separation anxiety), or shows signs of fear or aggression then you should seek professional help before the baby arrives.

Ask your vet for a referral to a qualified behaviourist; it is important to see your vet first to make sure there are no medical reasons that could be influencing your dog's behaviour.

3.

Make sure that your dog is up to date with all their vaccinations, flea and worming treatments.

This is important anyway, but even more so with a baby coming in to the home.



LIFESTYLE CHANGES

When the new baby arrives, a lot will change for your dog. Their feeding times and walks will often need to be adjusted to a new routine. You can help to manage your dog's stress and anxiety by getting them used to lifestyle changes before your baby arrives. Making small changes gradually can make the transition easier.



- 🐾 If your dog is going to be kept out of certain rooms once your baby arrives, start doing this as soon as possible. Ideally your dog should be kept out of the baby's bedroom.
- 🐾 If you will be making new rules, such as keeping them off the furniture, then introduce them as soon as possible. Giving your dog other options such as their own bed and praising/rewarding them for using it. It's important not to tell them off for getting on the furniture as this can be confusing, especially if they were previously welcomed on the sofa for a cuddle.

🐾 Your dog might be used to getting lots of your attention, and this is likely to change when you have a new baby. You can help prepare them for this, so that they don't get frustrated and associate the loss of your attention with the baby.

- Be clear with your dog when you are interacting with them and when you are not. For example, only interact when you call them or by giving them a clear signal when your attention is available, so they will learn not to try and say hello at other times.
- Every day separate them away from you in the house for short periods, so they can get used to being happy on their own whilst you are doing other things. If your dog is distressed by separation then seek the help of a qualified behaviourist before the baby arrives.





🐾 Think about the daily routine you are likely to have once the baby arrives, and prepare your dog in advance. Dogs learn to expect things to happen at set times and can get anxious or frustrated if this changes suddenly, so should be done gradually.

- If you intend to change their set walking or feeding times, then gradually introduce the new routine.
- Alternatively if you don't plan to have a set routine and think your dog's day will become much less predictable once the baby arrives, then prepare for this by mixing things up now so your dog no longer expects things at certain times.

🐾 Consider using a dog walker – you may not have the time to give your dog the exercise they need for a while. Start before the baby arrives, so that they are happy and comfortable walking with a different person.



NEW SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND SMELLS



Bringing a baby into the house for the first time could be overwhelming for your dog. There will be many different smells and sounds that they may have never experienced before.

You can help them by:

- 🐾 Introducing new equipment and furniture, e.g. cots, playpens and high chairs, into the house gradually so your dog can get used to them.**
- 🐾 Practising to walk calmly next to the pram.**
- 🐾 Teaching them the difference between their toys and those that belong to the baby. You can get some second-hand baby toys before the baby arrives and leave these around the house. Give your dog lots of praise when they pick up their own toys and none when they pick up the baby toys; they will very quickly learn to leave the baby toys alone.**
- 🐾 Buying a CD of baby noises and playing it for short periods of time will help your dog get used to the noise, and after a while they will pay no attention. You can download the sound of a baby crying here www.soundcloud.com/dogstrust.**
- 🐾 Using some of the baby's lotions and creams on yourself so they get used to new smells.**
- 🐾 Borrowing some friends' baby clothes, so your dog can become familiar with general baby smells.**

This might sound like a lot of work, but being well-prepared will help your dog with the transition and make a happy household for all.

WHEN YOUR BABY ARRIVES

When you come home with your baby there will be a lot to deal with. Even with preparation your dog may find it stressful, especially if they have never been around children before. You can help your dog adjust quickly and see your baby as an integral part of the family by:

- 🐾 Trying not to overexcite or stress your dog by staying calm and relaxed when you bring your baby home.
- 🐾 Teaching them how to approach the baby properly and gently. Allow them to make safe initial investigations and approaches under your supervision.
- 🐾 Giving them treats and lots of praise when they behave well around the baby. This will help them see the baby as a nice thing to be around and nothing scary or intimidating.
- 🐾 Not placing your baby on the floor. Your dog could innocently hurt your baby.
- 🐾 Not shouting at or hitting your dog if they approach your baby in the wrong way; they are still learning and will not understand what they have done wrong.
- 🐾 Making sure that your dog has enough to do and is kept well exercised, use a dog walker if you don't have the time to take them out. There is also a range of other things you can do to keep them entertained at home such as puzzle feeders, toys which the dog plays with to release food gradually. Giving them lots to do will mean that they will be less worried about the baby or being with you.
- 🐾 Your dog must have a place that they feel safe and relaxed; somewhere that they can go to if things are getting too much for them. This should be a place that young children cannot get to and older children know to stay away from. If your dog is worried you must allow them to go to their safe place to be alone, to avoid problems caused by them feeling cornered or trapped.

Remember; never leave your baby or child alone with ANY dog – no matter how well you know the dog.



HELPING EVERYONE BE DOG SMART!

Dogs Trust are offering FREE antenatal workshops for parents, offering tips and advice on how to prepare you dog for your new arrival and how to teach your child to interact safely with dogs.

If you would like to arrange a Be Dog Smart workshop with your local antenatal or postnatal group, please visit our website and contact your local Education Officer.

Also, as your baby grows and becomes increasingly curious of their surroundings, it's important to ensure the safety of your child and that your dog is not put in any situations that they feel uncomfortable. Therefore, we offer additional Be Dog Smart materials on our website which offer important dog safety advice for all the family. To download, please visit www.bedogsmart.org.uk



learnwithdogstrust.org.uk