

Bringing Home Baby










Tips for Preparing Your Dog for Baby's Arrival

If you are expecting a baby and you have a dog, take time now to prepare your dog for the day you bring home your new child.

Dogs can feel shunned and become confused and stressed when parents suddenly shift their attention from dog to baby. A dog does not understand why a baby is automatically elevated above the dog in the pack. In trying to regain his pack position, the dog may begin attention-seeking behaviors such as barking at the baby's cries, jumping up, or chewing on baby's things.

The following tips will help reduce bad behavior, ease everyone's stress, and help keep baby safe.

-  **Set new rules before baby arrives.** For instance, if you decide to keep your dog out of the baby's room, start this new rule several weeks or months before the baby arrives. By doing so, your dog will not associate baby's arrival with exclusion from the room. Also, begin to introduce an erratic schedule so the dog does not know when he will get walked, fed or played with.
-  **Prepare your dog for baby's arrival.** Accustom your dog to the new sights and smells he will soon encounter. An easy way to do this is to buy an inexpensive doll that makes baby sounds. Wrap it in a blanket and hold it in your arms as you walk around the house. Apply to the doll the same baby products (powder, shampoo, lotion) you will use on the baby. After the baby is born, bring home the newborn's blanket prior to baby's arrival home to allow your dog to become accustomed to the scent of the newest member of the family.
-  **Make introductions on the first day baby arrives home.** Your dog will need to "touch scent" the baby to find out what it is. While another adult controls the dog on a loosely held leash, hold your newborn up high and let your dog sniff the baby's bottom or feet. If the dog misbehaves or is too exuberant, correct his behavior.
-  **Allow frequent, supervised visits by your dog.** The more the dog and baby are together, the better behaved and less stressed your dog will be. However, neither newborn nor toddler should ever be left unattended in the same room with any dog.
 -  Teach your dog the difference between his toys and your child's things.
 -  If and only if you catch your dog chewing on something unsuitable, interrupt the behavior, then give the dog an acceptable chew toy and praise him lavishly when he takes it in his mouth.
 -  Dogs can be possessive about their food, toys and space. Although this is normal, it is **NOT** acceptable for him to growl or snap at you or your child. At the same time, children need to learn to respect a dog as a living creature that is not to be teased or purposefully hurt, and that needs time to himself. If your dog is growling or snapping at your child for any reason, the situation needs **IMMEDIATE** attention.

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