



Helpful Tips for Introducing Your Dog to a New Baby

Bringing home a new baby can be confusing, stressful, and possibly frightening for your dog. This new person smells, sounds, and moves like nothing they have seen before, and is taking up a lot of the family's time and attention. Planning ahead and helping prepare your dog for these changes can greatly reduce the stress and provide a safer environment for everyone to bond.

Before Baby Arrives:

- Work on basic obedience with your dog. SIT, DOWN, and STAY are very helpful. Developing a solid recall is also beneficial so your dog will come to you when called.
- Play recordings of various baby sounds in the weeks prior to introduce your dog to the new sounds they will be hearing.
- Lessen the amount of play and attention you give your dog 2-3 weeks ahead of the baby's arrival. Develop a "new normal" including feeding and walking times.
- If your dog is going to move to another area of the home for sleeping, start transitioning a few months before.
- If your dog is to stay out of the baby's room, install a baby gate in advance.
- Set up any large items like the stroller, highchair, swing, or car seat ahead of time and allow your dog to get comfortable with them.

When baby arrives:

- Bring home an item of clothing or blanket that your baby wore in the hospital and allow your dog to get used to the smell.
- Allow your dog to get used to the sights, sounds, and smells of the baby for a few days before introducing them in closer proximity.
- After a few days allow your dog to sniff the baby while controlled on a leash. Two people are a must for this! Always allow your dog to make the choice to approach or not. **Never force any interaction.**
- Multiple pets should be allowed to meet one at a time controlled on a leash.
- Once your dog is allowed off leash, keep the baby elevated and make sure an adult is in between the dog and the baby at all times.
- Make sure your dog is getting plenty of exercise and mental stimulation. Hiring a dog walker or taking them to doggy daycare may be a good option.

Do's and Don'ts:

- DO give your dog plenty of attention or a special treat/toy when the baby is around. You want them to realize that good things happen when the baby is near.
- DO establish a "safety zone" for your dog where they can get away in times of stress. A crate or gated off small area is ideal. As children become mobile, they should not be allowed to invade the "safety

zone”. This can also be a great way to implement a safe place for your dog to eat, and set them up for success with their food bowl.

- DO gate off the baby’s room, especially if he is curious about jumping in the baby bed or on the changing table.
- DO watch for signs that your dog is stressed out. Panting, hiding, not eating, and tail tucked are some signs you may see.
- DON’T scold your dog for picking up the baby’s toys. They likely look very similar to his own. Simply trade for one of the dog’s toys.
- **NEVER allow a baby or small child to grab, pinch, or lay on your dog.** Even the most tolerant dogs have their limits. The baby may suddenly scream, cry or kick and frighten the dog, or they may even interpret this as play or a challenge.

Senior or Disabled Dogs:

Older or disabled dogs present a unique set of challenges. Depending on the health and mobility of the dog, it may require extra care to ensure they feel safe, and may need a larger “safety zone”.

IF AT ANY TIME YOUR DOG DISPLAYS QUESTIONABLE BEHAVIOR SUCH AS GROWLING, GUARDING, OR FREEZING AROUND THE BABY IT IS TIME TO CALL IN A PROFESSIONAL TRAINER THAT HAS EXPERIENCE IN MANAGING THESE ISSUES. UNTIL YOU HAVE RESOLVED THIS ISSUE YOU MUST KEEP THE BABY AND DOG SEPARATED AT ALL TIMES.

If, after trying these suggestions, you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your dog, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: www.waysidewaifs.org.

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