



DOG MEETS BABY

Despite your best intentions, when a baby arrives, your relationship with your pet will change. Chances are, your pet was your first “baby” — but soon a new person will arrive who requires your full attention. This can be a trying time for dogs, but there are many things you can do to make the transition go smoothly.

Prepare Ahead

- Make sure your dog has appropriate manners and training well in advance. You may want to train your dog to stay off your bed and furniture, and address any rude behavior they may have (such as snatching treats or toys, jumping up, or door dashing). Pay close attention to anxious or fearful behaviors or any concerns your dog may have around food.
- Desensitize your dog to the sound, sight and smell of a new baby - play recordings of baby noises (especially crying babies); get a realistic baby doll, preferably one that makes noises, and carry it around the house, practice putting it in the car seat, crib, or stroller; when the baby is born, have someone bring home a blanket or a cap that the baby has worn so your dog can investigate the new smell.
- If your dog displays any questionable behavior that concerns you, contact a professional trainer **before the baby arrives**. This is your opportunity to address concerns while you still can.
- Modify attention and interactions - Given that you are going to be preoccupied with your new baby, focus on increasing the *quality* of time you spend with your dog, and reduce the *quantity* of time.
- Maintain the same level of mental and physical exercise for your dog. As the arrival date of the baby approaches, you may find you have less time to exercise and interact with your dog. Consider engaging the services of a pet sitter, dog walker, or doggy daycare to alleviate some of your dog's boredom that may result from decreased interactions.

The Big Day

- Have a helper come to the house to exercise your dog prior to your arrival home.
- When you get home, greet your dog while someone else waits with the baby **outside the house**. You may smell differently or your dog may have missed you if you've been gone for a few days. Once your dog is reacquainted with everyone, it's time to meet the new baby.
- Ask your helper to carry the baby into the house while you stay with your dog. You may want to put your dog on leash to ensure calm, appropriate behavior. Encourage happy, relaxed greeting from your dog and let them sniff the baby's feet if they are calm. If you have multiple dogs in the home, they should meet the baby one at a time.
- If your dog displays any questionable behavior, remove the baby - not the dog - from the area (do not punish the dog!) and try again later. If your dog displays aggression at any time, contact a professional right away.

Safe Kids, Happy Dogs

- NEVER leave ANY baby or young child alone with your dog.
- Keep babies and children away from stressed pets.
- Establish a baby-free zone for your dog. They should have a calm, quiet spot where they can go to retreat.