

Babies and Dogs

How Do I Introduce My Dog to My Baby?

With a baby on the way, what preventative measures can parents-to-be take to encourage your dog to accept the new addition to the family? The answer requires preparation and training.

If a dog has never been around babies before they may not look at a baby as a human. To ensure their baby's safety, owners need to step back and look at their dog's temperament. They must ask some questions:

Has the dog ever been aggressive to strangers?

Has the dog ever been aggressive to strange children?

Has the dog ever been aggressive to smaller animals?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," then one needs to be very careful with this dog around a new baby. If the answer to one of these questions is "yes," this does not mean that this dog cannot learn to accept a baby. It simply means that the parents need to be very careful and not make any mistakes. Dog training is not rocket science. Training a dog revolves around common sense and being a responsible pet owner.

Here are some things to consider when a new baby is going to come into a home:

1. Make sure the dog is obedience trained. This means the dog should obey when you tell it to go lay down on his rug, or in his crate. And it will stay there.
2. Crate train the dog. If the dog becomes overly excited when the baby cries it can be put in the crate. Give it a nylabone or a rubber Kong with a little cream cheese or peanut butter in middle to keep him interested and busy. The crate should NEVER be in the bedroom.
3. Get a doll that makes baby noises, wrap it in a blanket and carry it around the house before the baby is born. Practice obedience commands while the doll is making noises. Once the baby is born, bring a blanket with the baby scent home to wrap the doll in.
4. Get the dog a selection of new dog toys before the baby comes home. Some people will keep



the toys available in a basket in the living room. Others prefer to allow the dog to know that there are new toys but they control when the dog gets access to them, so they don't get bored with the toys. Another good idea is to scent the dog's toys with a drop of flavoring such as banana or other unusual flavor.

5. When the baby is brought home, homecoming should not be a loud party. It is a good idea to have it be a nice quiet introduction with the dog. Mom should first meet the dog without the baby.
6. When the baby is brought in, the dog should be placed in a "down" several feet from where mom and baby are sitting. Dogs have an excellent sense of smell. There is no reason to allow the dog to come up and smell the baby as soon as it gets home from the hospital. The dog can smell the baby from across the room without any problem.
7. The dog should NEVER be allowed to be near the baby when it is not being supervised - not even for a minute. If there is any concern about the obedience and control of the dog at any time the baby is present, the dog should either be on leash or in a dog crate. People ask, "When can their dog be allowed to come up and smell or lick the baby?" I cannot answer this question. Although this is usually a sign of acceptance and submission, you should avoid having a dog lick your baby. One never knows exactly what the dog has been licking just before licking the baby.

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If over time your dog is still scared of your baby, i.e., gets up and moves whenever the baby gets near him. DO NOT make the dog stay next to the child. This would be courting disaster. You cannot MAKE the dog feel comfortable with your child. Perhaps he will, when the child gets older. In the meantime, keep a very close eye on the dog when you're with him and the child. Never leave them together unsupervised. For those pet owners who feel their dog cannot accept a baby or may be too dangerous around the baby, there is always a dog crate and/or an outside dog kennel.

Homestead Dogs provides dog training, puppy training and socialization, therapy dog training and dog and puppy boarding to Delaware, Columbus and the central Ohio region.



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