

Introducing Your Dog to a New Baby



Owners of restrBringing a new baby home is a huge change for everyone, including your dog. With a little preparation and careful management, most dogs adjust well and can become calm, gentle companions for your growing family.

Preparing for the Arrival

Help your dog adjust to new sounds and smells

Play recordings of baby noises at a low volume and gradually increase them over time. You can also introduce baby-related scents (such as lotions, powders, or wipes) so they become familiar before the baby arrives.

Set boundaries early

Decide in advance which areas will be off-limits (such as the nursery) and introduce baby gates or closed doors well before the birth. This helps prevent your dog from associating new restrictions with the baby.

Make routine changes gradually

If your walking, feeding, or play schedule is likely to change, start adjusting it ahead of time. This reduces stress and prevents your dog from linking the baby with a sudden loss of attention.

Reinforce training and calm behaviour

Practice basic obedience commands such as sit, stay, down, and leave it. These cues are especially important for keeping your dog calm and under control during exciting or unpredictable moments.

The First Meeting

Keep the introduction calm and controlled

Make sure your dog has had exercise and is relaxed before meeting the baby. When you arrive home, greet your dog first (without the baby) so their excitement can settle.

Allow gentle, supervised sniffing

With the baby safely in an adult's arms, allow your dog to sniff briefly. Many people find it best to let the dog sniff the baby's feet first rather than the face.

Reward calm behaviour

Use treats and praise to reinforce gentle, relaxed behaviour. This helps your dog form a positive association with the baby.

Keep it short and stress-free

If your dog loses interest, that's perfectly fine. Avoid forcing interaction, short, positive encounters are best.

Long-Term Management

Always supervise

Never leave a dog and baby alone together, even if the dog is extremely gentle and well behaved.

Provide a safe retreat space

Create a "safe zone" for your dog (such as a crate, bed area, or separate room) where they can rest without being disturbed.

Maintain attention and routine

Continue giving your dog regular affection, exercise, and engagement so they don't feel displaced or overlooked.

Teach safe interaction as your child grows

As babies become toddlers, teach them to be gentle and respectful. Prevent ear pulling, tail grabbing, climbing, or rough handling, these are common triggers for stress in dogs. If you are unsure whether your dog is classed as restricted, or if you need advice on compliance, contact your local authority or a reputable animal welfare organisation for guidance.

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