



Preparing Your Dog for Baby

Congratulations on the new upcoming addition to your home! I am sure you are very excited and have been getting yourself and your home ready for the new baby. But have you thought about what you will do with your fur baby? A lot of people forget that they need to prep their dog/dogs for this new change in life as well. And unfortunately, many dogs are signed over to shelters or given away because owners are overwhelmed with taking care of a baby and dogs. When a dog is not prepared properly, we see issues arise and the dog is given up because of these issues.

I want to help you and your dog be ready for this new baby. The more you prepare the easier it will be for everyone. There still may be issues that pop up, but you will know what to look for and how to manage those issues. One thing to remember is that dogs are living creatures. Each has their own personality, fears and instincts. They are still animals and even though they are a part of our family we still need to teach them the rules and boundaries. We also need to make sure everyone (baby and dog) in the house are safe. Below is a timetable of when is the best time to start working with your dog. The earlier the better! But don't get discouraged if you start late. Any training and preparing is better than nothing!

- Jessi Lane, RVT KPA-CTP
Owner and Head Trainer at ROC Animal Training and Behavior

When you find out you are expecting:

If your dog has not been through an obedience class or needs a refresher this is a good time to take one. Your dog will learn basic manners such as sitting nicely, walking on a leash, stays and leave its. These are all crucial for when baby comes. You may not mind your dog jumping on you now. However, you will when you are 8 months pregnant. So not fun! Neither is it fun to have your dog jumping on you while you are holding your newborn in your arms. Start now so you won't have this issue later!

If your dog has any aggression, fear or anxiety issues now is the time to contact an Animal Behaviorist to set up a plan with protocols for working with those issues. These can take a little longer to work on. Research before you hire and make sure they are using positive methods and know dog body language and how dogs think and learn. If your dog is very protective of his home, then this is something you would want to correct or find out how to manage before visitors come by to see baby. If you have a dog that resource guards food, toys or beds it is important to work on this before baby starts crawling.

Now is also a good time to see how your dog will do around kids. Your baby will not be an infant for long and you need to see how your dog handles being around kids. Kids can be scary! They are small, unpredictable and makes lots of noise. It is more normal for a dog to be worried about kids than to enjoy being around them. Take your dog to lots of parks and walk around the playground. Watch your dogs body language and look for stress. Do not push your dog too much too fast. If you have any friends with kids, ask if you can go on a walk with them. Get your dog used to being around strollers as well. This will help your dog ease into being around kids. If you are having a hard time contact a professional trainer or Certified Animal Behaviorist.

Three months before your due date:

Start prepping your dog for a baby in the home. This will be extremely weird at first but get a toy doll and carry it around like you would an infant. Put the doll in the crib, bassinet, stroller and carrier. Have your dog do any training while you are holding the toy. You want your dog to become familiar with all the baby equipment and you always holding something. We want this to be very boring for your dog so it's no big deal. You can also introduce new smells such as baby powder and lotion to your dog. Play sounds from YouTube of babies crying, laughing and kids playing to get them used to those sounds.

You will also want to practice walking with your dog and the mode of transportation you will carry baby in. If it is a stroller get your dog used to walking nicely by your side. Never tie the leash to the stroller! If your dog runs off after a squirrel, they can tip over the stroller and take baby with them. Teaching your dog nice leash manners is very important.

Now is the time to start working on specific behaviors in the home. **Leave It, Drop It, Go to Place, Back and Out** are important behaviors to work on. **Leave It** is great for getting your dogs nose out of the diaper pail or laundry basket. **Drop It** is a must for if your dog gets a hold of a pacifier or toy. **Go to Place** is important for when guests come over, you need your dog to relax while you feed, or you are changing a diaper. **Back** is important to teach your dog to back away from you and give you space. **Out** is wonderful to use if you need your dog to leave the baby room, kitchen or living room at that moment.

Start decreasing your dogs' activities. If you go for daily walks start to go every other day. Unless you think you will be able to keep up that schedule when baby gets here. Increase training times to help with mental stimulation but start decreasing activity. This will help teach the dogs to be a little lazy when baby comes home.

One month before your due date:

When you go to the hospital to deliver you will be gone for a few days. Who is going to be watching or checking in on your dogs? Will a friend come over? If so, who will call that friend and let them know they are needed? Will they need to go to a boarding facility? If so, are their vaccines up to date and who will be taking them there. It may be helpful to have a back up person for your plan as well.

Once you bring baby home do you want your dogs there or do you think you will need some more time to get used to baby? If so, where will they stay? During the first month do you have exercise times planned for your dog? Someone to walk him or take him to doggie daycare? These are all things to plan for instead of struggling with at the last moment. You will want to have a plan in place!

Two weeks before your due date:

Unless you have a scheduled cesarean or induction the delivery date is just a guess. So, make sure plans are in place for your dog. Start by dividing out their food and getting medications ready. Write down notes on any special care they need. Have their veterinarian's information written down. Have leashes, toys and treats quickly accessible in one space. This is about the time you would pack your own hospital bag so you might as well get your dog ready to go!

Stock up on rawhides, puzzle toys and stuffed food kongs to give your dog when baby comes home. Also, keep in mind they can tell if you are anxious and that things are getting ready to change. So be patient and consistent with them during this time as well. Give your dogs as much attention as possible during this time. It's the last time it will be just you and them for a while!

While you are in the hospital:

Hopefully you had everything set up to have your dogs taken care of. Have a special blanket, that baby has been wrapped in, taken back to the house for your dogs to smell and check out. This way they start to get used to your baby's smell.

Coming Home:

Be ready for lots of attention! Have your significant other hold baby as you come in. You may be excited to see your dogs as well but make sure they are not jumping on you. Love on them and give them some attention. Have them remember the rules and boundaries you have set in place the past few

months. Do not let your dog go straight up in baby's face to lick or get excited. Teach them to be in a down stay or go to place. Feed your baby and let them check out baby from afar at first. Have your significant other give treats as you take care of baby, and they are being quiet and relaxed. After a few days they will get used to being relaxed around the new sounds and smells. Then you can let them sniff and check out baby. Let them start by sniffing baby's feet. Do not let them lick the baby in the face. If your dog is too excited, do not let them near the baby. It's cute but not worth any accidents that could happen. Have someone there to help you watch as well.

Over the next few weeks:

Remember to use those behaviors that were taught earlier. If your dog is having a hard time, it's okay to put barriers up such as baby gates, crates or putting your dog outside. Give them lots of toys, chewies and things to do. Line up a dog walker or take them to doggie day care. Your dog will get in the swing of things with the new schedule and routine. Never leave your dog unattended with your baby. It is easy to leave the room and have your baby in their bed or swing and the dogs in the room. But anything can happen, and you want to err on the side of caution.

As baby gets older:

Teach your baby and dog the rules and boundaries. Have an area that is dog free and an area that is baby free so each can have their own space. Always supervise if dogs are in the same room as baby. Supervision means 100% attention on baby and dog. This is crucial once baby starts to move. Many children are bit, scratched or knocked around because 100% attention was not given to the dog and baby interacting. Do not let your baby crawl on the dog, pull their hair, ears or tail. Your dog may have the patience of a saint, but it's still not fair if your dog does something to say they don't like it and the baby gets hurt. Keep your baby away from your dog's food and water bowl. As baby turns into a toddler continue these same rules. Toddlers and dogs can live together peacefully. But great care must go into teaching both dog and Toddler the rules.

This may seem like a lot of work, and it can be. But this training is well worth it in the long run. Your dog will appreciate you and the new change in life so much better. And your baby will be safe and be comfortable around dogs as well.

For additional training needs, please call or email us.