

Dog Safety



Before you bring home baby Tips for expectant and adoptive families

Every year, thousands of dogs are given up when a new baby/child enters the home.

The reasons for giving up a dog varies: no more time for dog; the dog's behavior has changed; the parents are afraid the dog will hurt the baby.

In other homes, the dog is relegated to a life of isolation and never learns how to interact with the newest family member.

Dogs do not rationalize changes the way humans do.

With a little education, existing dogs and new human arrivals can live and grow together.

Developed by the
The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project
www.SafeKidsSafeDogs.com

Copies of the entire brochure may be made for educational purposes only.

Long before baby

Many things children do can make a dog feel excited, threatened or even scared. Here are some things all owners (future parents or not) can do to help increase a dog's tolerance of children and future life experiences:

1. Begin training and socializing the puppy or dog to ANYTHING it can encounter in life from the moment it enters the home. Delays in this can lead to issues down the road.
2. Enroll in a positively based training program as soon as possible after the dog/pup enters the home. Dogs learn their entire lives. Periodic refresher classes are recommended for dog and human.
3. Set up training scenarios at your home to mimic things the dog could experience in life.
4. Get your dog used to a variety of people of different ages, sizes, genders, and items being carried (like large bags), flowing clothing, uniforms, etc. Dogs may develop fears of what they are not exposed or not positively exposed to.
5. Dogs have different tolerance levels that can vary based on age, mood, health, etc. Learn how to "read" your dog.
6. Never hesitate to address problems with a trainer or behaviorist.
7. Understand that changes in a dog's life or routine can cause regressions in training and manners.

When you know a new arrival is in the future.

As soon as a pregnancy is confirmed or adoption proceedings have begun, start preparing the dog for the new changes.

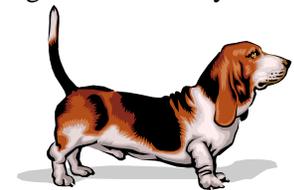
This is a good time to refresh training and manners work. Enroll in a fun obedience/manners program. Talk to the trainer about the pending child and how to best work with the dog.

Consider hiring a trainer for an in-home consult to assist with preparations and training in the dog's environment.

Consider how the dog's schedule will change when the child arrives. Start making any adjustments gradually so the dog is acclimated to the new schedule long before the child enters the home.

Set up the child's room months in advance, let the dog observe the changes and make them positive ones. Once the room is set, begin manners training in it.

If you have a friend with a baby, borrow items that smell like the baby, make recordings of the different sounds a baby makes. Get the dog used to walking next to strollers or seeing you carrying a doll in a baby carrier, etc.



The more you can prepare the dog for ahead of time, the better!

When the child is on the way



A woman going into labor can be extremely stressing for the dog. Someone to help alleviate the dog's anxiety is important. Make sure you have someone who will watch your dog when labor intensifies and you go to the hospital.

After the baby is born, have your spouse or partner bring home items from the hospital (blanket, infant hat, etc) and let the dog have the short time you are not home to get used to the new smells.

If you are adopting, ask if there is something the child has handled that you can bring home ahead of time to help prepare the dog. Ask if the dog can visit the child before the adoption so the child and dog can become familiar ahead of time.

If the child you are adopting is old enough, talk to the child about the dog and dog safety.

Make any child coming into the home a POSITIVE experience for the dog and family.

The day baby/child comes home

Before the new child comes home, have someone exercise the dog well. You do not want an excess of canine energy when you first enter the door.

The mother should enter first and take the dog into another room to spend a few minutes of quiet time greeting and giving the dog a special treat. The spouse or partner should bring the child into the child's room.

When the dog enters the child's room, allow the dog to calmly check out the child. Praise gently when the dog behaves. If you get excited, the dog will get excited. You want to remain calm. If the dog gets rowdy, have someone call the dog out and redirect the dog's activity to a toy.

If the dog shows any negative response to the child, address it immediately with a good trainer or behaviorist.



Remember, the dog is a member of the family unit and needs to adjust to changes just as the parents do. Dogs and children are not natural buddies. Parents need to do all they can to ensure that their best friend and new arrival will coexist safely.

Other tips

NEVER leave the dog alone with a child – even for a moment. Even in play, a dog can seriously injure a child. It only takes a second for an injury to happen.

When the baby is sleeping, keep the door to the nursery closed. If you do not like keeping doors closed, use a baby gate or install a screen door so the dog cannot enter the child's room unless you are there.

Address regressions in the dog's training and manners immediately. Waiting to see what happens can make handling these regressions harder down the road.

Hire someone to exercise the dog for the first few weeks while you recover or help an adopted child adjust. The more help you can get, the better for all.

Do not forget about your dog. It is very easy to do this with the excitement and stress of a new child. All too often, dogs end up ignored or shoved aside and this can lead to problems.

Resources

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers,
www.APDT.com
1-800-PET-DOGS

Resource providing information for finding a trainer and what to look for in a program.

Dogwise
www.dogwise.com
1-800-776-2665

Source for books and other materials for all levels of dog ownership: novice to experienced.