

Preparing Your Pet for a New Baby

When anticipating the arrival of a new baby, special care must be taken to prepare the family pets for the big changes to come. Here are some tips to ensure a smooth transition from pet-centered to baby-centered living.

Before baby comes home:

Change your pet's environment gradually

Whether adding new furniture to your home, or creating a nursery, do so in small stages to allow your pet time to adjust. Pets rely on consistency, and even small changes to their environment can cause considerable stress. When the various areas are finished, play with your pet in those spaces to help build positive feelings about them.

Create barriers to areas of the home

It can be exhausting to supervise pets while caring for an infant – especially when you're home alone. One easy way to manage this is to keep your pets on another level or area of your home by installing gates or closing doors. Whether your baby is sleeping in your bedroom or a nursery, be sure to keep the door closed to limit your pets' access. If your pet typically follows you around the house or sleeps in your room, gradually practice keeping them separated so they're accustomed to it by the time baby comes.

Prepare your pet for baby sounds

A baby's crying and screaming can be disturbing to animals, so preparation is key. YouTube has plenty of videos of baby noises to help you. Play the recording at a low volume while your pet is eating or playing. With each session, raise the volume just a little until your pet appears more comfortable with the sounds. Expose your pet to various baby toys and other sound-making devices before the baby arrives.

Start training now

If you have a dog, enroll them in obedience training. Once your dog can perform the basics, practice them while doing soon-to-be familiar baby tasks. For example, practice a down stay while walking around with a doll.

After baby comes home:

Try to keep your pet's schedule intact

While everyone is busy with a new baby, try not to neglect your pet. Have one person play or walk them while someone else tends to the baby. Use calming pheromones to mitigate the stress of multiple visitors and confine the pet to a safe room if necessary.

Always Supervise

Never leave a baby or small child unattended around an animal. No matter how young the child or gentle the animal, too many things can go wrong, and both parties could get hurt. When the baby grows into a mobile child, supervision will be more pressing than ever. Your child can never be allowed to grab, chase, or pick up your pet, so keep them separate (behind a locked door, if necessary) when supervision isn't possible.