

Here Comes Baby!

What do you need to prepare?

Bringing a new baby home is a wonderful time in a new parent's life! Proper planning and preparation for Baby's arrival and introduction to your dog can enhance the relationship you have with your dog and the relationship he will have with Baby.

Baby means new schedules to juggle. You may wonder if your dog will still get the attention he needs. As you are planning the nursery layout and thinking about how your schedule will change, take time to get your dog ready. With training and some routine changes before Baby arrives, you can help your dog get acclimated before she even comes home. That way there will be no surprises for you or your pet.

If your dog has any unaddressed behavior issues, such as resource guarding, intolerance to handling or reactivity to other dogs, NOW (before Baby arrives) is the time to work on behavior modification. Schedule a behavior consultant or qualified trainer to create a management and training plan to ensure safety for both your child and your dog.

What should you do BEFORE Baby arrives?

Teach your dog how to sleep and relax in one area of a room. You don't want to banish your dog to the garage after Baby comes home. If your dog has run of the house and can rest anywhere he wants, teach him to relax in one special spot while in the room with Baby. Do this by creating a special place for him.

- **Introducing the Bed:** Place a dog bed or blanket in an out of the way spot in the room where he is still included in the family dynamic. Ask him to lie down there and when he does, reward and pay attention to him.
- **Training "On Your Bed":** Toss a treat on his bed and as he moves to the bed say "On Your Bed". Ask him to lie there, and then reward him. Let him stay there for a few minutes, then release him. Practice until he is comfortable lying on his bed for up to an hour during "chill time". Practice many times during a day. (Please review our **Marker & Release Cues** handout.)
- **Generalize the Cue:** You can make special places in other rooms using the same technique. One of these places can become a 'quiet room' for your dog when he just needs time to chill out away from everybody.
- **Start Now!** You want to start this new routine well before Baby comes home so your dog will respond readily and eagerly to the cue.

Get your dog used to a tie-down. A tie-down is a 36" long plastic-covered steel cable that can be bolted to a wall or wrapped around a heavy piece of furniture. It will keep your dog in one spot if you are moving around with Baby or if Baby is on the floor. It is NEVER to be used as a punishment. You have to teach your dog to accept the tie-down in small, positive increments.

- **Setting up the Tie Down:** The Tie Down should be a comfortable spot away from a traffic area, but in the room with you. You can provide a bed and something to chew on or entertain your dog.



- **Training the Tie Down:** Place your dog in the tie-down spot. Clip the tie down to your dog's flat collar and reward him while he is there. Release when he is still calm. Start your training practices at ten minutes, 3-4 times a day. (Please review our **Tie Down** handout.)
- **Practice before Baby comes home!**
- **Tie down is NOT for Toddlers:** the tie-down is not a good choice once Baby becomes mobile. Your dog may feel trapped and unable to leave an uncomfortable situation. A crate is the appropriate canine management tool for a mobile infant whether toddling or crawling.

Crate train your dog. A crate can become a special place for your dog when he gets too stressed out by many visitors and all the commotion. He won't be banished outside, but will be safely enclosed near his pack. Crate training takes some time, so before baby comes is the time to start. (Please review our **Crate Training** handout.)

Take or re-take a dog obedience class. Whether you are brushing up on old skills, or learning new ones, now is the time to work with your dog on basic obedience skills. Along the way he will learn some self-control and you may learn some new techniques for managing your dog.

Help your dog get used to "baby stuff" and new routines. There will be lots of new things around the house and new routines. Now is the time to start so when Baby arrives, the dog won't be too surprised.

- **Are you planning on walking the dog and baby at the same time?** Go out before baby arrives with the stroller and the dog to practice. It will be good for both of you.
- **Will the dog have to ride in a different spot in the car?** Put the dog in his new spot the very next time you take him somewhere. We recommend that the dog ride in a securely fastened crate in the car at all times, but especially when you are transporting a baby or other children.
- **Is he going to be allowed into every room in the house after Baby comes?** If not, start restricting him now so it will be no big deal later. Baby gates and x-pens are great barriers.
- **Are you or your spouse going to walk your dog every day?** The first few months can be very tiring for all. Exercise is a great stress reliever for dogs and people. If you find you can't handle it, have backups ready to help out. Someone you can call when you just can't get up to walk the dog. Get your dog used to these new people now by going on walks with them. Please ask for a Dog Walker referral from Marin Humane or friends.



What should you do when Baby is HERE?

Introducing Baby via Scent: Before Baby officially arrives home, bring home a blanket that Baby has slept in and let your dog smell it. You can even put it on his bed so he can get used to the new smell. Of course, this new smell should be accompanied by much praise and maybe a tasty treat or two (or three or four).

Baby = Good Things: When you are trying to get your dog used to Baby remember your dog gets attention when Baby is present, and gets ignored when she is out of the room. Give your dog praise and treats when you are playing with Baby, nursing Baby or just sitting and holding Baby. Also reward him for being on his special bed during this time as well. If you follow this routine, very soon your dog will figure out: when Baby is here → I get lots of attention; when she is away → I don't. **Bring back Baby!**

The First Introduction! Introducing your dog to Baby the first time is a big step! It is important that you remain calm. Don't try it when Baby is upset or crying. There are several scenarios you can use.

- Let the dog come into Baby's room while Baby is in the crib. Let the dog sniff around and give him lots of calm praise and special treats.
- Bring Baby into the room when the dog is in his special place on the tie down. Sit at a distance with Baby while praising and treating the dog. Once your dog has had some time to adjust to the new scents and noises, gradually move closer.

Your dog may need some quiet time. Use your crate or special quiet room that you have established. Keep an eye on your dog and give him a chance to "check out" if it seems the visitors or the commotion is getting to be too much. You can put a low baby gate in a doorway to keep a crawling or toddling Baby inside while your dog can jump over to find some solace in a quiet room.

Children should NEVER be left unattended with a dog. Babies grow up and become mobile quickly. When that happens, you will have to take even greater care to make sure everyone is safe and happy. Children can step on tails, fall on sleeping dogs, and crawl over to the food bowl. These and any number of things may cause your normally well-behaved dog to react. X-pens or baby gates are some ways to keep a crawling Baby and dog separated but in the same room.

Training Resources:

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training** conducts various training classes. Sign up on our [Behavior & Training](#) page for the next available class series.

We also provide family friendly **Dog Training Instructors** and **Consultants** available for private training or consultations (on-site or in-home) at 415.506.6280 or OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org.

Remember to license your dog (It's the LAW)! If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog's collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by the **Marin Humane**, visit us at MarinHumane.org or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.

