A golden retriever is sitting on a light-colored rug in a nursery room. In the background, there is a white wooden crib, a dresser with a lamp, and a framed picture of a plant. The room is dimly lit, creating a calm and cozy atmosphere.

How to Prepare Your Dog for a Baby

Welcoming a baby can be a fun and exciting experience for us but a stressful one for our dogs. Check out these tips to help ensure a smooth transition when your little one arrives.

Why Preparing Your Dog Matters

Stress Prevention

Dogs can experience major stress from sudden changes in routine, sounds, and smells. Without proper preparation, these overwhelming changes can trigger anxiety and behavioral issues.

Safety First

Unprepared dogs may feel jealous, anxious, or confused by the new baby, potentially leading to protective or territorial behaviors that compromise everyone's safety.

Harmony at Home

Early preparation helps your dog adjust smoothly, creating a peaceful environment where both baby and pet can thrive together from day one.

Start Early: The 9-Month Preparation Window



Maximum Preparation Time

When preparing for a baby it is best to start introducing your dog to the changes as soon as possible. Beginning to gradually introduce changes months before baby arrives can help reduce the chance of conflict arising. Pregnancy provides the perfect timeline to adjust your dog's routine and environment slowly.

This early training and exposure will reduce anxiety while also building positive associations with baby-related changes. This gradual approach ensures your dog sees the baby as a positive addition rather than a negative or scary one.

Exposing Your Dog to Baby Items

1 Visual Preparation

Place baby gear like cribs, strollers, and toys around the house weeks before arrival. Let your dog sniff and explore these items, rewarding calm behavior with treats and praise. This will help your dog get used to these new and weird items before they are in use by a new and weird person.

2 Sound Conditioning

Start exposing your dog to baby noises before your baby arrives. Play recordings of babies crying, laughing, etc. at low volumes randomly throughout the day. Gradually increase the volume as your dog remains relaxed and comfortable. By doing this early and setting an expectation with your dog that you have things handled will help reduce the stress when your baby arrives and is making these noises in real time.

Adjusting Your Dog's Routine and Environment



Schedule Changes

Think about what your routine with your dog may look like after your baby arrives. You will want to start gradually shifting your dog's feeding and walking times to match your post-baby schedule. Make these changes slowly over several weeks to avoid any stress and confusion. This way, when baby arrives your dog's routine is the same which will lead to less stress.



Space Management

Install baby gates early to create pet-free zones. Practice being in these pet-free zones so your dog doesn't feel stressed out when you are later in them with a baby. If you don't want your dog on the couch, work on setting this boundary now before baby arrives so it isn't an expectation that suddenly changes.



Support System

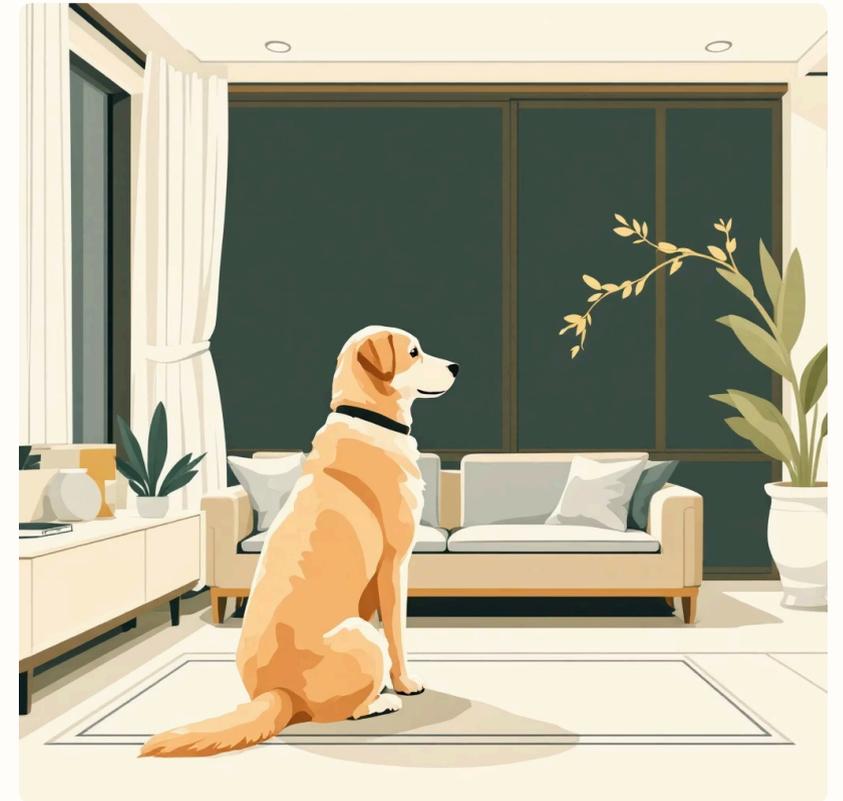
Consider hiring a dog walker or arranging help from family if your available time will be significantly reduced after baby's arrival. A dog can become overwhelming when their needs are not being properly met, so coming up with a plan for help ahead of time can greatly reduce your overstimulation and everyone's happiness.

Essential Commands to Solidify Before Baby Comes

Core Commands

- **Basic obedience:** sit, down, come, off, and wait at doors
- **"Leave it" and "drop it"** to keep baby's belongings safe from curious mouths
- **"Place" command** to encourage calm settling during baby time
- **"Out" command** to help your dog move away when feeling overwhelmed
- **Crate training** to ensure your dog is comfortable and relaxed in their crate if you need to put them away when overwhelmed

Practice these commands daily in various settings with various distractions. Proofing these commands now will help ensure your dog understands and listens to these commands when your attention is divided after baby arrives.



Simulating Baby Interactions

1

Practice Sessions

Use a doll for short practice sessions around the house. This will help your dog get used to your changed body language and movements as well as learn what is expected from them when you are holding the baby.

2

Reward Calm Behavior

Always reward the behavior you are wanting around the baby. By rewarding calm and gentle behavior you are reinforcing and setting an expectation for how you want your dog to behave when around the baby.

3

Safe Observation

Start using baby gates during training to get your dog used to this new boundary. These will allow your dog to safely observe the baby without having direct contact. This is the best way to have everyone involved in a safe way.

Building a Harmonious Home

Preparing your dog for your baby's arrival is one of the most important things you can do to ensure a positive relationship between you, your dog, and your baby. With patience, consistency, and proper supervision, you're building a harmonious home where everyone feels loved and secure.

Professional Support

When in doubt, seek guidance from your trainer to help you navigate this exciting transition.

Long-term Success

Your effort now ensures a joyful, harmonious home for your growing family. The sooner you can start the better your results will be.