

WELCOMING A NEW BABY

Bringing a new baby into a home with a dog requires thoughtful preparation to ensure a smooth transition and foster positive bonds. Dogs may feel neglected or become anxious and act out when they perceive a sudden shift in attention towards the baby or a shift in family dynamics. Dogs do not recognize a baby's 'higher status' in the house and may exhibit behaviours aimed at regaining attention.



Here are strategies to mitigate negative behaviours, reduce stress, and ensure your baby's safety:



Establish Boundaries Early ▶ Begin introducing new household rules for your dog well in advance of the baby's arrival. For example, if your dog won't be allowed in the baby's room, start reinforcing this rule ahead of time to avoid your dog associating the change directly with the baby. At Bark Busters, we refer to these as "no-go zones," areas that are off-limits to your dog. Additionally, try to make your daily routine less predictable—varying walk times, feeding, and play—to help your dog adjust to the upcoming changes in the family schedule.



Familiarize Your Dog with Baby-Related Changes ▶ Gradually introduce your dog to the sights, sounds, and smells associated with the new baby. You can use a doll to simulate baby-related activities and apply baby products to it to help your dog become accustomed to the new scents and actions. If possible, before bringing the baby home for the first time, introduce your dog to an item with the baby's scent, allowing them to explore and familiarize themselves with the smell. This gradual exposure helps ease the transition and reduce anxiety.



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-  **Make a Calm First Impression ▶** When introducing your dog to the baby for the first time, ensure the interaction is calm and controlled. Have someone else hold the dog on a loose leash while allowing them to sniff the baby from a safe distance. Gently correct any overly excited or inappropriate behaviour, staying calm and composed. This is an exciting moment, but maintaining a calm demeanor with confident body language and a soothing tone will help both your dog and baby feel secure and at ease.
-  **Consider a Crate ▶** Crates are good tools as they can keep the dog secured if you must leave the baby and dog out of sight for any reason. Never leave a baby and dog unattended if the dog is not safely secured. Dog owners tend to misunderstand their dogs and think they won't harm a fly, but dogs cannot reason, and they act on instinct and can accidentally cause harm.
-  **Encourage Positive Dog and Baby Interactions ▶** Create opportunities for regular, closely supervised interactions between your dog and the baby to help them build a comfortable and trusting relationship.
-  **Teach Toy Differentiation ▶** Clearly communicate to your dog which toys belong to them and which are the baby's. If your dog mistakenly plays with a baby item, gently redirect them to their own toy and praise them for making the swap.
-  **Address Possessiveness, Teach Mutual Respect ▶** It's natural for dogs to be protective over their belongings, but aggression towards anyone, especially children, is unacceptable. Immediate action is necessary if your dog shows any aggression. Conversely, children should learn to respect a dog's space, not tease, and understand that a dog has its own needs for quiet and rest. It's important that new parents find and teach this mutual respect.

EXPANDING YOUR FAMILY? BARK BUSTERS IS HERE TO HELP!

Implementing these steps can help ease transition and create a peaceful coexistence between your dog and your new baby - ensuring safety, reducing stress, and building a foundation of respect and understanding within your growing family.

