

Dogs and Babies/Children

What can I do to make the adjustment easier on my dog?

(Information adapted from Dumb Friends League)

Sounds and Smells

There are several things you can do to start introducing the smells and sounds of a baby to your house before they arrive. The most important thing to do is to make it a positive experience and introduce new things slowly. This can be done with treats, praise, or a favorite toy.

Start with a CD of baby sounds (or use YouTube to find videos). Turn the volume down low and hit play. How does your pet react? Are they curious? Scared? Nervous? Indifferent? Reward your pet if they calmly accept the new sounds, and ignore any behavior you don't want. It is important to do this every day until the baby arrives to allow your pet to adjust to the new noises that will be in the house.

Next, you want to let your dog get familiar with the smells of a baby. Bring out the diapers, wipes, and other supplies that you will be using. Let your pet smell the items while you reward them. When the baby arrives, have your spouse bring home something the baby wore at the hospital. Put that item in your pet's favorite spot to allow them to adjust to the smell before you bring the baby home.

Finally, if you have a family or friend who has a baby, invite them over. Keep your pet on a leash at all times, but this is a great way to introduce them to the extra excitement that will happen when the baby comes home.

Environment

You'll want to decorate the nursery and rearrange any furniture before the baby arrives. Let your pet explore all areas and new items. If you plan to block off the baby's room or other areas, one way that you can do it is with a screen door. The most important thing you can do is to give your pet a place to go where they can retreat when they need a break. Place a water bowl, bed, and other familiar items in the area so your pet knows this is their place. Make sure you can block off or shut the door when you need to, and work with your pet early so they know that it is a positive place to go and being confined there is not a punishment.

Routine

Create a routine for your pet and stick with it. Start this routine early too. For example, block off one hour each night that is just for your pet. This can be time spent on walk, relaxing in the safe room, or another favorite activity. Start this routine before the baby arrives and then stick with it once they

arrive. If you'll be changing your pet's feeding and potty break schedule, start this before the baby too. Pets rely on routine, and this will help them adjust.

Rules and Manners

Working on basic manners before the baby arrives will not only make your life easier, but it will help bond you with your pet. Start with the basic commands, like sit, drop, leave-it, off, and lay down. Once you have the basics down, you can teach your pet any other trick you want to teach them. If your pet likes to jump in your lap or jumps up on people for attention, you can work with them to do it on command, and only when you give permission. The same goes for attention. Don't reward your pet when they are whining, pawing, etc. for it. Setting these rules for your pet will help keep you and your baby safe when they come home.

Another thing to keep in mind is how you use your voice. If you are always saying "no," "off," "don't," etc., your pet will start to associate the baby with negative feelings. Stay positive and reward your pet for calm behavior around the baby. To keep a positive relationship between the baby and your pet, do activities together, like going for walk, spending time on the couch relaxing, etc.

For another resource on what you can do to get your dog ready for the new baby, please visit <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/dogs-and-babies>.

I'm expecting a baby, but my dog is afraid of children. What can I do so I can keep my dog?

(Information from DCHS)

What does fear of children mean?

It means that your dog may look away, put their tail down, hide, cower or even tremble when they see children (generally, any child under 12 years old, though it depends on the dog). Some dogs may show teeth, growl or bark. If the child reaches out to pet them, they may snap or nip. Unfortunately, dogs are not naturally great with children, and children are not naturally great with dogs. The truth is that dogs and children require adult supervision for the safety and comfort of both the dog and the child. To your dog, children are completely different than adults – children move faster, talk louder, giggle uncontrollably, touch them without asking and are more likely to raise their arms above their heads or jump around.

How could this happen?

It is likely that your dog is afraid of children because they were not properly socialized to them during puppyhood. See below for ways to start improving your dog's fear.

Should I invite over a lot of nice children to socialize my dog?

No! His socialization window is closed. Much like humans are more receptive to new things when they are children, dogs are more receptive to new things when they are puppies. Imagine something you are afraid of. Heights? Snakes? Whatever it is, could you overcome your fear by skydiving or being thrown into a snake pit? Ingrained fears require professional help to overcome.

What should I do?

1. Be your dog's advocate. Stay observant, and if you are noticing your dog giving signals of being uncomfortable (tense, closed mouth, tongue flicks, trembling, etc.), prepare to say "no" if children approach or ask to pet him. If children approach without asking, be prepared to step in front of your dog and prevent contact.
2. Have a plan for your dog. If you have children visiting your home, have a plan for your dog. If they are dog-social, take them to doggie daycare for the day. Hire a pet-sitter who will keep them at their house, or ask a neighbor (without kids) to watch them. If children are only visiting for a few hours or less, put your dog in a crate in a separate room with a frozen KONG or other food toy to keep them occupied – but be sure the children are not able to access the room.
3. Have a plan for your children. Knowing that children can easily forget instructions, arrange your home in the most successful way – for example, setting up baby gates to allow for a "kid-free" zone for your dog. Teach your child how to best greet a dog (ask your Adoption Counselor what that looks like!), and help them practice by tossing treats to your dog (from a safe distance).

How can I teach my dog to like children?

1. Ask kids to toss your dog treats. Be sure that the treats are tossed from a distance where both dog and child are comfortable and safe.
2. Hire a professional. A Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (certifiedanimalbehaviorist.com) or qualified Certified Professional Dog Trainer (ccpdt.org) can help you improve or eliminate your dog's fear of children through desensitization and counter conditioning protocol.

How do I teach my child to interact with my pet as he/she grows up?

(Information from DCHS)

The truth is that dogs and children require adult supervision for the safety and comfort of both the dog and the child. To your dog, children are completely different than adults – children move faster, talk louder, giggle uncontrollably, touch them without asking and are more likely to raise their arms above their heads and jump around. All of these actions can be scary and intimidating to a dog OR they can excite or overstimulate your dog. You want your child and your dog to form a loving bond and with proper guidance you can make that happen.

Teaching your kid how to interact with your dog

1. Handling a dog: It is important to teach your child to handle a dog gently. Many children (especially young children) don't realize or understand that their actions may hurt a dog or at the very least startle them or make them uncomfortable. A child can easily surprise a sleeping

dog, yank a dog's tail or ears, poke at their face, put their face right in the dog's face, hug the dog, or try to climb on the dog.

2. Leaving the dog's 'stuff' alone: Many dogs don't like to share their toys or food and they may become possessive if someone comes too close while they are eating, chewing on a bone, or playing with a toy. It is best to teach a child to never approach or bother a dog while it is occupied with these activities. Sometimes a dog could see the kid's toy or food as their own – in that case it is best to instruct the child to ignore the dog and get an adult.
3. Discouraging Inappropriate Play: Some people (adults and kids alike) find it fun when a dog becomes jumpy and mouthy – or play bites. This is never something to encourage as it tells the dog it is OK to do. These actions can be painful and dangerous to children and can escalate. Similarly, some kids might think it is funny or entertaining when a dog growls, barks, or snaps and they may continue to provoke the dog until it feels the need to defend itself by potentially biting. On the opposite spectrum, some children are terrified of the above behaviors and respond to them by shrieking and running- these are actions that could trigger further excitement or aggression in the dog.
4. Be an advocate for your dog: While your dog may be patient with your children, they may also still be very uncomfortable. You should always supervise your dog and child when they are together and keep an eye out for signs that indicate they may be uncomfortable.
 - a. These signs vary but may include: tenseness or freezing, a hard stare (where you can often see the white of the eyes) a closed mouth, tongue flicking, lip curling, growling, avoidance, the tail tucked or erect, and cowering. If you notice any of these behaviors, you need to step in and give your dog a break.

Training your dog to behave appropriately around children:

It is crucial to teach and reinforce behaviors that you want to see from your dog. It is important to take your dog to a positive reinforcement obedience training class. You should teach your dog not to jump, mouth, and mount. You can also work on impulse control and use 'time outs' when necessary. If your dog is scared or nervous around children, have the children toss them treats from a distance where both the dog and the child are comfortable and safe. If you still have issues between your child and dog you may need to hire a professional: A Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (certifiedanimalbehaviorist.com) or qualified Certified Professional Dog Trainer (ccpdt.org/) can help.

For more information on how to prevent your dog from biting your child, please visit <https://www.bestfriends.org/resources/dogs/dog-bites-child-how-prevent-scenario>

How can I protect my baby from my dog's nails?

The best way to protect your child is to keep your dog's nails trimmed. This can be done at your vet or at home. Another solution is to try soft paws, which are nail caps that go on the dog's nails. For more information, check out www.softpaws.com.

What can I do to help desensitize my dog to being touched?

If you've ruled out a medical reason why your pet may be uncomfortable being handled or touched, then you can work on desensitizing them through positive association. Simply put, you can work with your pet by rewarding them with a tasty treat when you touch different parts of their body. To learn how to do this, please visit <https://bestfriends.org/resources/dog-sensitive-touch-tips-help-dog-learn-enjoy-being-touched>.

How can I keep my dog quiet when the baby sleeps?

There are several reasons behind why your dog likes to bark. The good news is that you can train them to bark on command and how to stop when you tell them to be quiet. For more information, and to learn how to start this training, please visit <https://www.bestfriends.org/resources/dogs/stop-dog-barking>.

How can I keep my puppy from nipping the baby?

Like babies, puppies are also growing and learning. By working with them early, you can teach them good manners so they can interact and be around your baby. If you would like help with your puppy's nipping, please visit <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/common-dog-behavior-issues/mouthing-nipping-and-biting-puppies>.

What should I look for to tell me if my dog is happy or stressed?

(Information adapted from bestfriends.org)

Dogs communicate with their whole body. To learn what your dog is communicating, you must learn how to read them in any situation. Every dog is different though, so you must learn your dog and what the whole body is saying to predict what your dog is thinking and feeling.

Play bow: The rear end of the dog is up, while the front end is down. The play bow generally means: "I want to play."

Tail wagging: Tail wagging (and the position of the tail) can mean many things:

1. A low-hung wagging tail could mean: "I am scared or unsure."
2. A high, stiff wag can mean: "I am agitated, unsure or scared, but not submissive. I might bite you or your dog." If the dog's body is stiff, they are staring, and their ears are up, use caution. Keep the dog out of trouble because they may be about to make a bad decision.
3. A loose wag – not really high or really low – normally means: "I am comfortable and friendly." But you should keep watching the dog's entire body. Some dogs need a lot of personal space. They will tell you if you get too close.

Freeze: A dog freezes if they are scared or guarding something, such as food or a toy, or feels cornered. they may bite, so please slow down and pay attention to what they are trying to convey.

Rolling over: A dog rolling over onto their back can have multiple meanings. Rolling over generally means “I am not a threat.” If the tail is gently wagging and the mouth is slightly open, the dog is probably comfortable and asking for a belly rub. If the tail is tucked and the lips are stiff, however, the dog may be scared. Some dogs will solicit attention by rolling over, but then become fearful or defensive, feeling that this position is not safe. The dog may even panic and start snapping. Again, observe the whole dog, looking for comfortable, loose body language. To be safe, don’t hover over a dog or crowd them when they are upside down. Dogs do best when they have the space and ability to change from one position to another quickly and comfortably.

Ears perked up: When a dog’s ears are forward, they are alert, interested in something.

Tail between the legs: If the dog’s tail is tucked between their legs and their ears are back against their head, they are afraid and uncomfortable about something.

Signs of stress

When a dog is stressed, they often show displacement behavior, any of a variety of activities that seem inappropriate in the situation. These behaviors occur most often during times of emotional conflict.

Some typical displacement behaviors:

1. Yawning in new or emotional situations
2. Panting when it’s not hot
3. Lifting a front paw as someone walks toward the dog
4. Licking their lips, even though the dog hasn’t been eating or drinking
5. Scratching themselves when they are not itchy
6. Looking away as a person or another animal walks toward them
7. Shaking off after someone handles them or another dog plays too roughly
8. Stretching out as though doing a play bow, but not asking for play
9. Making a puff (exhale) of breath, sometimes whining at the same time, and looking away or turning away
10. Lying down and trying to make whatever is happening stop by not taking part in it

Signs of fear: Be aware that your dog is likely feeling stress along with fear when they:

1. Starts to drool when they normally don’t
2. Paces or circles
3. Tucks their tail and moves away from something
4. Starts to whine
5. Sweats through their feet
6. Puts their hackles up, their tail is low or high, and their body is still
7. Starts to growl, and may start to move away

8. Starts to curl their lips or show their teeth (which may be the only warning they give before biting)

Defusing the stressful situation

If your dog is showing signs of being uncomfortable or stressed, it is your duty to defuse the situation. Do not discipline your dog for growling or displaying one of the signs as they may then not give you an early warning sign next time that they are uncomfortable. Instead, figure out what your dog is reacting to so you can work with them so there is no fear next time. If your dog is becoming overwhelmed, sometimes a break in a safe space is needed. Afterwards, slowly reintroduce your dog to the situation that was overwhelming them. Often, if we slow down whatever situation caused the fear and start exposing the dog in small amounts at a distance, we can help them to completely overcome their fear.

What can I do if my dog starts resource guarding?

(Information from DCHS)

What does resource guarding mean?

It means that your dog may exhibit aggressive behavior when they are in possession of an item that they feel is valuable. Although it is an undesirable behavior in a household setting, in the wild, protecting resources is beneficial for survival and therefore, is a natural behavior for dogs. Dogs that are aggressive when guarding a high value item may not be aggressive in any other context. Common items to guard include dog food bowls, bones and rawhides, food wrappers, toys, paper products and stolen items (e.g. dirty laundry).

How can I prevent resource guarding?

1. Control access: The easiest way to prevent resource guarding is to avoid giving your dog high value items that they guard.
2. Management: Sometimes it's impossible (or undesirable) to completely limit access to a high value resource (like food). In those instances, avoid approaching your dog while they are eating, or put them in another room or a crate when you give them a high value resource.

What should I do when my dog starts resource guarding?

1. Use caution: Do not approach your dog or try to take the item away. Do not yell or cause a big fuss.
2. Distract him: Ask if they want to go for a walk (be sure to follow through!). Or, go to the location of their treats and call them over for an impromptu training session on an easy command that they already know, like sit. The goal is to get them to leave the item, put them on leash, and then secure the leash on a doorknob while you go and retrieve the stolen item.

3. Remove your attention. When you see they are guarding something, immediately leave the room and shut the door behind you, leaving the dog alone with the resource. If/when they want to leave the room (barking, whining or scratching at the door), open the door a crack but only allow them to join you when they have abandoned the resource. You may have to open/close the door multiple times before they are ready to abandon the resource. Once they have left the resource to join you, praise and pet them, then go and get the resource (be sure to keep them out of the room while you retrieve the item).
4. Emergency situations - To get dangerous or stolen items away from your dog in an emergency, toss a large amount of treats away from your dog (so they leave the item) and use caution to retrieve it.

How do I train my dog to stop resource guarding?

Hire a professional. A Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (certifiedanimalbehaviorist.com) or qualified Certified Professional Dog Trainer (www.ccpdt.org) can help you systematically treat your dog's guarding behavior through desensitization and counter conditioning protocol. This procedure should only be done by, or under the guidance of, a professional because a strong grasp of dog body language, learning theory and timing is necessary to safely and effectively work through the protocol.

For more information on babies, children, and dogs, please check out

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=19+1278&aid=628>.