

Your dog and your new baby

If you've a baby on the way, now's the time to start preparing your dog. Gradually introduce changes in your home and routines, using rewards your dog enjoys, to help them cope well with the new arrival.

Things to start early

- Think about how your walking times or routes might differ and start to introduce changes
- Get your dog used to being by themselves in another room, either with the door closed or with a safety gate
- You could make them their own quiet space away from the main living room.

When you have baby things

- If you've been given or bought any baby things, set them up as soon as you have them so your dog can sniff and get used to them
- If you have a pram, you could practice with your dog walking alongside it
- Try using a doll as a pretend baby. Praise your dog or give treats when they keep their paws on the ground around the doll
- If you have a phone to play baby sounds on, this can help your dog get used to new noises

Baby's arrival

- Ask a family member to walk the dog before you bring the baby home, so they're relaxed
- Say hello to your dog first. Then introduce the baby in a quiet room
- Give your dog lots of treats for good behaviour.

At home with your baby

- Always stay with your baby when your dog is there
- Avoid putting your baby down on the floor or in a Moses basket on the floor
- If you have a crib downstairs, use a safety gate or keep it where your dog won't be able to knock it over.

Still worried?

- If you're worried by the way your dog is with your child, talk to your vet. They'll check your dog's health and can refer you to a qualified animal behaviourist.
- Visit the [Animal Behaviour and Training Council](#) website to find a qualified behaviourist near you.



Safety around dogs

The bond between your child and dog can bring fun and happiness to family life. We don't expect our own dog to bite, but any dog can bite if they feel they have no other option.


Children are most likely to be bitten at home, by a familiar dog. Luckily most bites are preventable and close supervision is key.

 **A calm, happy dog** is less likely to react unsafely to children's natural exuberance.

- Give your dog a safe space of their own where they can go if they need time out. Have a rule to leave them alone when they're there.
- Keep them occupied – physical exercise and mental activity help keep your dog happy.
- Teach your child to be calm and kind with your dog. Avoid shouting, teasing or restrictive cuddles.

 **Close supervision** is the most important thing to keep children safe.

- Watch, listen and remain close when your child and dog are together.
- If either your dog or child seems unhappy, positively and calmly separate them. You can throw your dog a treat or toy, or lead your child away.
- **Understand your dog's body language** so you can spot signs they feel uncomfortable or stressed.
- When you know you'll be distracted during busier times, use safety gates to keep children and dogs separate. Or, take your child or dog with you.

 **Trigger times** – teach your child to leave your dog alone when they are:

- Sleeping – no-one likes to be woken up suddenly.
- Eating or having a treat – they might think you're going to take their food.
- Have a toy or something else they really like – they might not want to share!



 **Your growing child** – as your child changes, the risks can change too.

- Teach the rules to your child from an early age and keep explaining them as your child understands more.
- As your child becomes more mobile, review changes needed, like adding safety gates.
- Think ahead about your changing family life and new risks that can emerge. Read our fact sheet on bringing baby home.

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