

How To Prepare Pets for Arrival of a New Baby

If you have a dog or a cat who is currently your “baby” but you are now expecting a human baby, it’s important to prepare your furry kids for what is about to happen in their lives. A new baby in the house changes so many things for your pets - from walking schedules to sleeping arrangements. You really do need to prepare them for what’s to come.



By Kelley Bollen

The best thing to do is to start preparing your pets a few months before the little bundle of joy comes into the scene. It might take them that long to get accustomed to all the sights, sounds and smells that will be new in the house.

The first thing to consider are all the smells that come with a baby because for dogs and cats, their sense of smell is their most important and powerful sense. To accustom your pets to baby smells, purchase some of the products that you will need for your baby (lotion, powder, baby oil, baby wipes) and start to use them on yourselves so that your pet becomes familiar with the new scents.

You should also consider all of the sounds that come with a baby – the crying, screaming, gurgling, and laughter of a baby. You can find recordings online. Playing them will accustom your pets to the baby sounds they will experience.

Bring in some of the new items that will be added to the house for the baby. Set up the nursery complete with a crib, changing table, playpen, and rocking chair so they get used to seeing these new pieces of furniture. If you are going to banish your pets from the nursery once the baby is here, let them investigate the items for a few days and then put up a baby gate on the door to the nursery so they learn ahead of time that this is an off-limit area.

The most valuable item you should purchase is a baby doll. Find a life-size baby doll and start to carry it around, sit with it in your lap, change its diaper, give it a bath, and put the lotion and powder on it. Basically, you want to act like this is your new baby so that your pet gets used to seeing you interact with something the way you will interact with your baby. This part might seem a bit creepy to you, but it is probably the most valuable thing you can do to prepare your pets for their new human sister or brother.

The better you prepare your pets for the major change in all of your lives, the better they will accept this new little human. Once you have done all of these things, the only new item in the house will be the actual living, breathing infant. When you bring the baby home from the hospital, have mom go into the house first to greet the pets who will be excited to see her after the few days absence. Dad can carry the new baby inside behind mom. Your pets will be interested in smelling the baby, which you can let them do safely. If your dog tends to get overly excited in greeting or is a jumper, make sure he is on a tether so that he doesn’t jump up on the baby. Be very careful not to punish your pets for being interested in the baby. If your dog jumps up to see the infant and you yell at him for jumping, you will have just formed a negative association – baby on scene means getting yelled at. That’s why it’s so important to control the dog with a leash or tether at first. The pets should be praised and even given a special treat when they first meet the baby so that a positive association is formed.



With all of this great preparation, both you and your pets will be in good shape to welcome the newest member of your family into your home.

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