

Sounds Soothing



**Prepare your dog
for the arrival of
your new baby**

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Introduction

There is nothing more wonderful than having a family that includes children and a dog. Most dogs grow to love the children that they live with but there can be a few minor hitches that can spoil the development of a good relationship. The aim of this pack is to show you how to get off to the right start and to take away some of the uncertainty that parents feel when mixing dogs and children.

A dog's hearing is many times more sensitive than that of a human being, especially in the higher pitch range which is typical of a baby crying or the sound that children make when they are playing. Lots of dogs initially find the sound of babies crying to be worrying or distressing. They can also get upset when they see us rushing about and tensing up every time we hear the sound of a baby crying.

By playing the sounds in this pack to your dog repeatedly you can help your dog to get used to the noises that children make before your baby arrives.

A new baby takes up a lot of the parents' time and energy and our dogs, who are often very attached to us, can feel a bit put out when we are busy doing things with

the baby. They may fuss around us, get in the way, and try to demand attention at times when we are feeding, cuddling or changing the baby.

This can become a real nuisance, especially if the dog keeps jumping up or barking to get attention. If you follow the instructions in this handbook you can train your dog to sit quietly and wait while you are attending to your baby.

When toddlers start to move around they become more unpredictable and difficult for dogs to cope with. To help overcome this we have included some sounds of children playing.

If you already know that your dog is frightened of, or aggressive towards, small children then you should seek additional help.

What about cats?

Cats can also be worried by baby noises so you can use the sounds in this pack to get your cats used to baby noises in the same way as with dogs.

Using the sounds

Before playing the sounds to your dog, take a moment to answer a few questions:

- Is your dog afraid of any noises like fireworks, thunder, gunshots, or traffic noises?
- Is your dog easily startled by sudden, unexpected noises?
- Is your dog very sensitive and nervous of new things and new noises?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions then your dog may have a problem of heightened sound sensitivity and you should discuss this with your veterinary surgeon before using the Sounds Soothing product.

If you have more than one pet, you should work through the exercises and do the training using the sounds which each of them separately. Some dogs or cats are much more sensitive to the noises than others are, so you will need to set volume levels differently for each pet in the household when you do the training.

When you do start to use the sounds take care to begin by playing them very quietly and build up the sound level gradually over a number of training sessions. At the

beginning the sounds may need to be so quiet that you are barely able to identify the noises.

Instructions for the sounds

There are two sound tracks with this product. Choose to play one sound at a time when your dog is relaxed and calm.

The first is the sound of baby noises, and the second is children having fun at a playgroup. You need to play both tracks to your dog on separate training sessions.

On each track the sound slowly fades in after about five seconds of silence.

This gives you time to stop playing the sound if it is too loud and also enables you to be a long way away from the player when the noises begin.

Managing babies and dogs

We often feel guilty that we cannot give our pets as much attention as we would like once we have a baby in the house. Dogs can get upset and frustrated because we have suddenly stopped reacting to them in the way that we used to. This can set up a degree of stress and conflict, making the dog's behaviour more difficult to cope with.

For example, it may be amusing, if a little irritating, for a dog to bark, pull at our sleeves or jump on us to get attention and play. While there is no baby around to disturb we put up with, and perhaps even encourage, this sort of playful messing around.

Suddenly, when the baby arrives, the situation changes. We cannot allow the dog to jump up on our laps while we are holding the baby, and we must stop the dog from barking when the baby is asleep.

So, instead of getting attention, the dog gets told off or put in another room when the baby is around. This is likely to make the dog feel isolated and rejected and behave even more mischievously in order to regain our attention. It also makes us feel guilty and sorry for the dog so we try to make up for it by giving the dog lots of attention when the baby is not around. This cycle of repeatedly damaging and repairing the relationship with the dog is stressful for everybody.

The solution is simply to go through a short list of all the kinds of situations that might become problematic, and to train the dog to cope with them *before* the baby arrives.

In this way you can be much more confident that your dog will behave properly. This confidence means that your dog will get to stay with you when the baby is around, and this helps to create a better relationship. Everyone is happy!

What sorts of situations do we need to work on?

Dogs are attracted by smells and food, so they often want to be around when babies are being fed or changed. Dogs also like to join in cuddles and attention, so they often want to be close to you when you are holding a baby.

This is particularly true for small dogs who may be used to being carried around a lot. Dogs also like to be able to greet people and children, and they like to greet babies too.

However, we are often reluctant to allow them to do so, for fear of frightening the baby or risking hygiene problems through the dog licking at the baby's face or hands.

Using a baby doll

Most parents get everything they are going to need for their baby a few weeks before the birth. This includes a high chair, cot, pram, changing mat, etc.

You also need one additional thing, which is a realistic baby doll. To have to do training using a doll sounds horribly embarrassing, but it really helps. Once you have a baby doll you can use it to test your dog's reaction to different situations involving a baby and then carry out important training knowing that you have absolute confidence that you are in control.

Even if you are the most relaxed parent in the world with the softest, loveliest dog, there will be some tension when you are trying to simultaneously look after your baby and keep control of your dog. If you do some preparatory training using a baby doll you will know precisely how to keep everything in order without upsetting the dog or baby.

Once you have finished with using the doll for training your dog you can give it to your child to keep as a toy, with lovely memories of their first canine friend!

The importance of basic training

To follow this programme your dog should already know how to come, sit and lie down on command. If your dog understands these commands but will not do these things reliably, or you often have to raise your voice to get your dog to obey you then you need to do a little extra practice before moving on to more complicated things.

If your dog does not understand these commands at all then you need to contact a local trainer to get some help.

Make sure that the trainer uses reward based training techniques so that your dog finds the training process enjoyable.

Initial training

Most dogs will respond to training in exchange for food treats, even if this means using some imagination to find out what really motivates your dog . Try experimenting with a wide range of different treats and human food to find out what your dog likes.

Avoid giving grapes, raisins or chocolate because these are potentially poisonous to dogs. If you are in doubt about whether a particular food is suitable for your dog then contact your veterinary surgeon for help.

A good way to train dogs to perform recall, sit and lie down on command is for two people to sit a few metres apart and take turns calling the dog and giving these commands.

A typical training situation is as follows:

- Each person has a supply of food treats. Decide who is going to go first.
- The first person calls the dog and asks the dog to sit or lie down.
- When the dog obeys, that person says 'good dog' and gives a food treat.
- While the dog stays sat for 10-20 seconds that person gives several more food treats.
- After the first person has finished their turn they should turn away from the dog, hold their hand up to show their palm and say 'no' quietly.
- Then the other person calls the dog and goes through the same process.
- Take turns calling the dog back and forth between you in this way, with each person looking away from the dog and saying 'no' at the end of their turn.

This means that within just a few minutes you can repeatedly practice getting your dog to obey these commands.

There are some additional rules that are very important:

- Try not to fiddle with the food before giving a treat: reach for the treat only after your dog has done what you asked and you have said 'good dog'.
- Always begin a command by using your dog's name. For example say 'Freddy, sit' instead of just saying 'sit. This makes it easier for your dog to understand what you are saying.

- Always use the same quiet and calm voice to deliver commands.
- If your dog does not obey the first time you give a command don't get cross or use a harsher tone of voice.

Once your dog is obeying really well you can start to phase out the rewards:

- Sometimes just give praise without a reward, and at other times give a bigger reward than normal.
- Practice training in different places (different parts of the house and garden for example).

After doing this training your dog will not only obey commands more easily, but he will also understand what 'good dog' and 'no' mean. You should then use these words, and the action of looking away from your dog, to consistently reward and correct your dog.

Stick to using the same words to communicate with your dog. In this way it is much easier for your dog to understand when to leave you alone and when to stop doing something he is not allowed to, without hearing a raised voice that might become frightening.

The next step is to teach your dog to sit on a particular spot. This may be on his own bed or on a special mat. Practice the same routine as above but when you get your dog to sit, ask him to sit on the mat or bed by pointing at it and telling him 'on your bed'.

If you are practicing this with two or more people you will need to have a couple of rugs or beds for your dog to move between when going from one person to the other.

If you have difficulty with this training then you should consult your veterinary surgeon for additional help or the contact details of a good local trainer.

General routine

It is good for your dog to see you carrying and handling the baby doll a lot. Vary the clothes the doll is dressed in so that your dog sees the doll wearing the same kinds of clothes that your real baby will wear, including nappies.

Put the baby doll into the cot, high chair and pram several times each day and pretend to change it and feed it as you would a real baby.

The more you do this the easier it will be for your dog to accept what is going on, and to learn how to react.

If you do the training with the baby doll you will see how well your dog is behaving, which will remove one source of stress. Follow the guidelines in the exercises later in this booklet, to teach your dog not to interfere or get in the way.

When the real baby arrives your dog should hardly notice because he has already accepted all the new things that go on in the house, and he knows what he should do.

Your emotional behaviour is important too. When your baby comes home you will probably be overwhelmed by this event as well as deprived of a lot of sleep. This may initially make you stressed, tired and irritable, so this is not a good time to be training a dog. Let someone else take over training for a while.

Doggy greetings

Many dogs like to lick you when they say “hello”, and sometimes we even encourage this unwittingly by laughing and playing with the dog. Dogs also want to greet a baby in the same way, but we get upset and tell them off because we don't want the baby covered in germs from a grubby dog.

If you have a 'licky' dog who wants to say hello to your baby you may find it very difficult to stop the dog from trying to lick the baby's face.

Shouting at or getting cross with the dog is not a solution because the dog will get upset and anxious. We don't want the dog to resent the presence of the new baby.

With most dogs it is perfectly adequate to teach them to sit and accept praise from us instead of jumping up to lick the baby. However, some dogs are so keen to lick that it is very difficult to quickly train them not to do this, and it is better to train the dog to lick in a more acceptable way.

For example, it is easy to teach a dog to lick the baby's foot in order to say hello. This avoids frightening the baby and keeps germs away from the baby's face and hands. Most babies will also chuckle when their feet are tickled so the dog gets a positive reaction from the baby and us as well.

Training your dog to lick the baby's foot is simple to achieve with a friendly and inquisitive dog, but don't try it with a dog who is afraid of children or doesn't like them.

When the dog goes to lick the baby, encourage him to sniff and lick the baby's foot. Praise him by saying 'good dog' when he does so. Say 'no' very calmly and quietly if he tries to lick the baby's face or hands. Don't shout or get cross. The easiest way to train this form of greeting is to use your baby doll toy.

Sitting with baby

Lots of dogs like to sit next to their owners on the sofa, which is fine until someone else is sitting there. When you have a baby on your lap it can be very difficult to cope if your dog then wants to get up too.

Unfortunately this often means that after the baby comes home the dog must stay on the floor for more of the time, and may get told off for asking to come up. Dogs can therefore associate this sudden 'loss of privilege' with the arrival of the baby, which can create resentment and jealousy directed towards your new arrival.

This can be prevented in two steps.

The first step is to stop the dog from being allowed free access onto your beds and furniture, starting well before the baby comes home (at least 3-4 weeks if possible). Many dog owners will feel uncomfortable about this, but it *really* is important.

If you stop allowing the dog onto the couch before the baby comes home this removes the possibility that the dog will associate the baby with not being able to sit next to you. It also gives your dog plenty of time to adjust to the new rules.

The rules are simple:

- If your dog asks to get up you must not let him. Gently tell him to sit or lie down or go to his bed.
- If you find your dog on the furniture you must ask him to get off using a consistent and recognisable command such as "Freddie, off". Do not grab at his collar and pull him off the furniture as this may be misinterpreted as you being aggressive and threatening.
- If your dog does what he is told then reward him with praise, attention and/or a food treat.

Above all:

- Be totally consistent: don't let your dog on the furniture at any time.
- Be kind: don't get angry or cross if your dog does not want to obey at first.

Remember that this change in privilege may be a considerable shock to your dog at first.

Be prepared for your dog to object to this new rule, but do not get cross, and don't use physical punishment to get your dog off furniture.

If your dog already aggressively refuses to get off furniture and beds then you need to seek additional help through your veterinary surgeon. Likewise, seek extra help if your dog reacts badly to this training.

One advantage of starting to keep your dog off the furniture before the baby arrives is that much later on you may be able to let your dog sit on the sofa when the baby is with you. This means that your dog will associate the presence of the baby with getting more rather than fewer privileges.

The second step is really a duplication of the first: don't let your dog on the couch straight after the baby arrives! Your dog needs to see that in amongst all the mayhem of having a new person in the house, the rules stay the same. Having consistent rules is essential for dogs to feel happy and secure.

If, after a few months, you can see that there are no problems between dog and baby then you may begin to invite your dog to sit with you and the baby together on the

couch for short periods, as long as this does not encourage the dog to leap all over you and upset the baby.

The most important thing to ensure is that you are the one to decide whether or not your dog is allowed on the sofa and you are always able to get your dog to get off by giving a simple and consistent verbal command to do so.

Changing baby

When you are changing your baby you really don't want your dog involved.

Unfortunately real babies smell and nappies are an interesting, but revolting, thing for a dog to investigate.

Once you have a baby doll toy it is sensible to practice changing a nappy in front of your dog several times each day. This training takes advantage of the basic training you have carried out.

Just as you have a changing pad for your baby it is sensible to have a towel, rug or bed for your dog to sit on while you are doing the training.

This makes it really easy for your dog to understand where to stay. Practice this training with your toy doll until you can see that your dog understands what to do.

Here is the routine:

- Lay out the changing pad, nappy, wipes and other things you need for a change.
- Tell your dog to sit or lie down a few feet away from you, preferably on a dog bed or rug so that it is clear precisely where you want your dog to stay.
- Say 'good dog' and give him a food treat several times, one after the other.
- Lay the baby doll out on the changing mat and begin to change the baby.
- Keep saying 'good dog' and giving your dog small food treats if he stays where he is.
- If he gets up or attempts to interfere with what you are doing in any way then say 'no', in a soft and gentle voice, and tell him to sit or lie down on his mat again and then start giving food treats again.

At the beginning your dog's concentration may not be very good, which is why practising with a toy baby is such a good idea. You don't have to go through a full nappy change and can keep the training going for as long as you want.

Feeding and the high chair

The routine for doing this training is very similar to that for changing. When doing the preparatory training you should set up a towel, mat or bed for your dog to sit or lie down on so that it is really obvious where you want him to stay.

- Go through the same procedure as you would when feeding your baby.
- Give your dog repeated food treats and praise while he stays on his mat.
- If your dog moves, gets up or tries to jump up at the high chair then say 'no' calmly and ask him to sit or lie down again.

Babies often throw things down on the floor. Most of the time it is not a problem that your dog eats these. In fact there may be times when you may be glad that your dog does this!

However, you need to be in control of what is happening because you don't want your dog to steal and eat your child's utensils or dummies.

In order to deal with this scenario you will need to do some training by dropping some bits of food on the floor to simulate what will happen when you are feeding your baby.

Drop the food close to your feet so that you know that your dog will not be able to rush and grab it without being told to do so. If your dog goes to take the dropped food then calmly say 'no', and get your dog to sit.

Only when your dog has sat and waited should you give permission for your dog to take the dropped food. As a bonus for waiting you can give your dog an extra food reward.

Prams and pushchairs

It can be difficult to control a dog whilst also using a pram or pushchair.

If your dog is inclined to pull while on a leash this can be dangerous when you are also pushing a pram.

If there is plenty of time before your baby arrives then it is sensible to find a local training class where you can get help in training your dog not to pull on the lead and to walk calmly to heel. Make sure that the trainer does not use punitive or confrontational methods.

However, for most people there simply is not enough time to go through extensive training of this kind.

A simple way to reduce pulling is to use a head collar in addition to a plain collar (for example, a Gentle Leader® or Halti®).

These devices have the advantage that they prevent the dog from pulling hard or lunging forward. You need to get your dog used to wearing this kind of harness very gradually, because some dogs find them uncomfortable or strange to wear.

Before putting the head collar on your dog to go for a walk, follow these steps:

1. Each time you feed your dog get the head collar out before you start preparing the food and put it on the floor next to his bowl when you feed him. After a few days you will find that your dog looks excited when you get the head collar out. *Then go on to step 2.*
2. Get some small food treats and the head collar. Put the loop of the head collar loosely over your dog's nose without securing the clip. Then feed your dog several treats while the loop remains over his nose. If your dog pulls away then quietly say 'no' and withhold the reward. Wait for a few seconds before putting the head collar over your dog's nose again. After a few sessions of this training your dog will be happy to have the head collar put over his nose. *Then go on to step 3.*

3. At feeding times put the head collar on your dog before he starts to eat. Take it off again immediately after he has finished eating. When you can see that your dog will happily wear the head collar while eating you can go on to step 4.
4. Several times each day take your dog for a short walk around the garden on the leash wearing the head collar. Give him food treats and praise when he walks around without trying to get the head collar off.

Now you are ready to use the head collar when you are on a walk.

The next important thing is to get your dog used to walking alongside a pram or pushchair. You may start by doing this in the garden if there is enough room. Alternatively go for short walks on quiet streets where your dog will find it easier to concentrate.

Take your dog out with the pram as often as possible so that you can see that he is not frightened by the movement of the wheels and squeaks of the suspension and brakes.

It is also very important to have control of your dog in situations where you have to concentrate on other things around you. For example, practice getting your dog to sit

at the curb next to the pram each time you cross the road:

Take some food treats with you.

- At every curb ask your dog to sit, and give him a treat when he obeys.
- Give several more treats while you wait for the traffic to clear.
- When you are ready to cross the road tell your dog to start moving again, using a simple signal such as 'walk on'.
- If your dog stands up before being given a signal to start moving again then tell him to sit and make him wait again, while you give some more food rewards.

It is also good to teach your dog to sit and wait in this way throughout walks, because there will often be times when you will need him to move over or wait, such as to let other people get past the pram.

Follow the same routine of giving a command, providing several food rewards and then a signal to move on again.

There are some other basic tips when walking with a pram and a dog:

- Always keep the dog on the side away from the traffic.
- Use walking equipment for your dog which maximises your physical control. A fixed collar or harness, a head collar and double ended lead system is recommended.
- If your dog starts to get over-excited as you are walking with the pram then get him to stop and make him sit for a few seconds before telling him to move on again.

Conclusions

Children and dogs can make excellent companions but both parties need to learn how to relate to each other in order to enable the relationship to be as beneficial as possible for all concerned.

Preparing puppies and adult dogs for arrival of a new baby is an important part of this process and the Sounds Soothing package is designed to help you.

However, problems can still arise and if you are worried about any aspect of your dogs behaviour it is important to seek professional help as soon as possible.

One of the main functions of this training programme is to highlight problems before they become serious, so that you can seek additional advice. Most problems can be resolved with the right help.

Your veterinary practice will be able to give you advice and will also be able to refer you to a local reputable behaviour counsellor if that is necessary.

We hope that you find this pack useful and that it helps you to maintain an excellent relationship between your new family and your existing pets.

Before we finish, here are some basic rules:

- Give your dog a place to go to where he can rest undisturbed by children. Let him go there regularly to avoid becoming stressed.
- If your dog behaves in a way that you don't like then ask him to do something else instead. For example, ask him to sit or lie down. Try to avoid getting angry if your dog misbehaves.
- Keep children supervised whenever they are with a dog, because even the nicest and most relaxed dogs can snap if they are frightened, anxious or stressed.

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