




## Don't Get Rid of the **DOG** Because a Baby is on the Way!

 By Mike Wombacher

**CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'RE PREGNANT AND YOUR "PACK"** will soon be growing. Right now you're probably asking yourself: "is there any chance that my dog might bite my child?" If not, you should be, otherwise you may end up unexpectedly re-homing your dog.

It is important to identify the changes that need to be made in the life of your dog once the baby arrives and implement them NOW! You don't want your dog to associate those changes with the arrival of your child, thus setting up a jealous dynamic.

Is your dog sleeping in bed with you, is it pushy and demanding or does it engage in a host of annoying behaviors? You might tolerate such antics now but they may seriously compromise the quality of your life with a baby on the scene.

Key to addressing any such concerns is building a relationship with your dog in which he is in the habit of consistently taking direction from you. In other words, you're the boss. Simple things like always giving your dog a command before you have an interaction with him, not letting him run out the door ahead of you, and being a little aloof with him can do a world of good, inspiring him to cheerfully accept your leadership.

Additionally, you want to develop positive associations for your dog with the presence of your child. To do this, start by teaching your dog to tolerate a few hours of alone time every day. Then create areas in your house that your dog is initially forbidden in and use them to build buffer zones into your dog's relationship with your child. That is, start by making the baby's room off limits. Once that's handled, allow your dog to enter only with your permission and accompaniment. Once inside always ask for obedience exercises, especially down-stays. Soon he'll learn that when he enters he's to do a down-stay in the corner.

Pulling all this together, once your baby arrives, allow your dog to come into the baby's room only with you and then assume his down-stay. If he has been left alone for a few hours prior to that he will welcome the contact with you and your child as well as behave himself appropriately. In other words, the presence of your child means a positive social engagement for him, as well as trigger-safe behavior. Exercises like these can teach your dog to accept your child as a beloved pack member and ultimately best friend.

Other things that you can do to help ensure a seamless transition to siblinghood for your dog include teaching him the difference between doggie toys and children's toys, hiring a dog walker to take over exercise responsibilities during the period immediately prior and after birth and teaching solid obedience. Practicing these and related exercises early and often is the most important thing you can do to develop a mutually rewarding relationship between your child and your dog.

*Mike Wombacher has written and lectured extensively on this subject. For more information, visit [www.gooddoghappybaby.com](http://www.gooddoghappybaby.com), for the e-book and audio seminar version of his best-selling *There's a Baby in the House: Preparing your Dog for the Arrival of Your Child* or [www.doggonegood.org](http://www.doggonegood.org).* 