



# Bringing Up Babies:

## Life with Dogs and Children



By Joan Orr and Teresa Letwin

**A** playful pounce, an errant paw, a gentle tug—puppy behaviour that seems cute around adults can be of concern when a family grows and there is a baby in the picture. It is best to acquaint the young dog with appropriate behaviour and routines before the new baby arrives, so it will not be punished, isolated and confused later.

The following are some tips that can help lay the foundation for a safe and loving bond between your dog and your child:

- Create a cozy 'den.' Get a crate and teach your puppy to use and enjoy it.
- Brush up on obedience skills, using lots of food rewards.
- Vary feeding and walking schedules and accustom the pet to longer periods of solitude and the less predictable lifestyle that the baby may cause.
- Carry a baby doll and work on the "down" command, to get the dog used to the positions you will prefer when holding your baby. Use a dab of baby lotion on the doll for scent. Act out scenarios of changing the baby, walking back and forth with it, etc.
- Accustom your dog to walking beside the stroller and behaving calmly around other baby-related objects, such as swings and seats.
- Obtain a recording of baby sounds and reward your dog for coming to you when it hears these sounds.



Children can help teach dogs tricks, like "wave."

### DOG BODY LANGUAGE

Parents, children, relatives and babysitters all need to understand dog body language.

#### A SAFE DOG IS:

- sitting calmly.
- wagging its tail.
- panting.
- happy to see you.

#### A DANGEROUS DOG IS:

- growling.
- showing teeth.
- raising the fur on its back.
- worried, with mouth closed and a 'half-moon' of white showing in its eye.
- raising its tail high over its back.
- holding or wagging its tail between its legs.
- wagging its tail slowly and way up in the air.

### The homecoming

When the big day comes and your baby arrives home for the first time, your dog will probably be anxious and will know something is afoot.

To ease the transition, first bring home a blanket with the baby's scent and put it on the doll. Allow the dog to investigate and reward it for calm behaviour.

It can also be a good idea to tire the dog out before the homecoming with a strenuous exercise session earlier in the day, reducing the capacity for anxiety.

Then, one adult should enter the home first and greet the dog, while the other stays outside with the baby. When the dog is calm, bring in the baby and allow your pet—on a leash—to sniff the baby's blanket. Reward calm behaviour. Do not allow the puppy access to the child's head.

If the dog is still too excited, do not punish it. Instead, move away and work on obedience with a food reward or lead it into the crate with a treat or stuffed toy.

The key is to ensure all of the puppy's experiences around the baby are positive. Punishment, on the other hand, could result in aggression toward the baby. And pushing your dog to accept the baby's presence could cause anxiety.

An excitable dog may simply have to observe the baby from the crate for a few days. Be patient. There is no rush for them to become acquainted.

### After the arrival

It could take several months for your dog to realize the baby is part of the family. Supervision is key. Never leave a baby alone for a minute with even the most trusted dog. Keep the baby's room door closed and use a baby monitor. And never place the baby on the floor with the dog, even if you are present.

Make 'baby time' a happy time for your puppy by providing chew treats while the baby is being fed. Keep up obedience training and make sure your dog continues to get enough exercise and attention. Ask other people for help if you need it.

### Baby on the move

The 'helpless infant' stage is fleeting and suddenly your baby is on the move, first

crawling and eventually walking. As your puppy notice these changes, its relationship with the baby may also change. The baby will discover the dog and may want to interact with touching, chasing, hugging or other actions.

In short, both the dog and the baby will learn about each other. Neither can be expected to know how to behave around the other, so they will need your help.

Whenever your toddler or crawling baby is interacting with a dog, you must also have your hands on the dog. You may be able to use food rewards to desensitize the animal to the baby's actions.

Be sure to recognize the dog's 'warning signs.' Take it to its safe spot before it reaches the point of growling or snapping.

Do not allow your baby or toddler to hug, kiss, follow or chase the dog or pull on its fur, ears or tail. Always give the dog a safe place to retreat from the baby.

### Growing up

A child who is old enough to follow instructions reliably can become involved in the care and training of your puppy, under parental supervision. Even some three-year-olds can learn to help with clicker training.

Children under supervision can let the puppy into and out of the crate and offer its food and water (after the parents have taught the animal to sit and wait). They can also play with the puppy, as long as they know to:

- scratch its neck instead of giving hugs and kisses.
- play safe games, like fetch (as long as the dog is already trained to release the item), hide-and-seek and tricks.
- avoid tug-of-war, chasing and other games that pit their strength and speed against the animal's.
- stand still ("be a tree") if the dog ever becomes too frisky.
- respect the puppy's resting place, toys, food and bones.
- ask an adult to play, too.

Learn to read your dog's body language and, similarly, teach your child how to tell if it does not want to be bothered. Again, supervise at all times.



## Tabled Scraps

By Peter Saunders

Scrapbook-keeping has become a very popular contemporary hobby, with enthusiasts using the medium to record the process of moving into and customizing a home, the growth of a baby, research of their own genealogy—or even choosing and raising a new pet.

With 'memory-making' now reportedly a billion-dollar industry in North America, the pastime has spread to animal lovers. In a broad sense, pets are increasingly being treated like their owners' children—but given their generally much shorter lifespan, there is all the more reason to record precious moments for posterity, as a pet's legacy can easily outlast its own mortality.

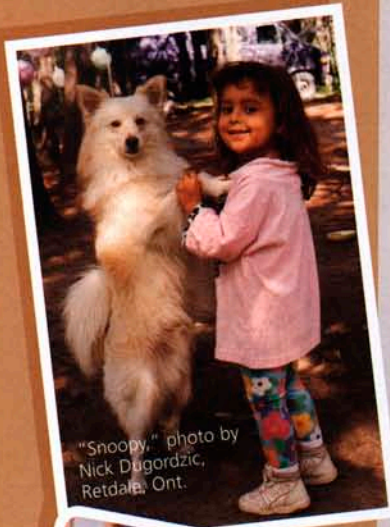
'Storybook' albums can be a fun, active way for owners to preserve their adventures with their pets and tales of both happy and sad times. Photos and sketches can accompany notes and recollections of long walks, vacations, playtime and visits to the veterinarian.

Visually, scrapbooks can be as ambitious as their authors want them to be. They can incorporate die cuts, torn paper, special fibres, frames and other novelties for visual effects. Photos can be cropped, adjusted and/or enhanced with various computer programs that have become increasingly common among household personal computers (PCs). Scrapbook-keeping can be not only a pastime, but also a craft and even an art. Given that one scrapbook's content will cover many years, much time can be put into preparing it during that period.

One interesting cultural trend has been the rise of scrapbook meetings along the lines of Tupperware parties, where hobbyists can share tips and tricks and pick up new products. Within these circles, fellow pet owners can find each other and discuss their experiences.

Another option for people who want a scrapbook but are not taking up the hobby is to use a scrapbook-publishing service. A team of professional graphic designers, art directors and storybook writers can create slick and polished albums. This is an investment more and more people seem willing to make for their loved ones, including their pets. 🐾

For more information, visit [www.scrapbooking.com](http://www.scrapbooking.com) and [www.thescrappingbug.com](http://www.thescrappingbug.com).



"Snoopy," photo by Nick Digordzic, Retford, Ont.



"Cloudy," photo by Lori Stephens, North Vancouver, BC



"Mindy," photo by Judy Graszuk, Edmonton, AB



"Daffy," photo by B. Ardelli, Penitcton, BC

### Babysitting

When it is time for a night out, you will need to choose a qualified babysitter. House rules concerning the dog should be established and explained, along with the basics of understanding the dog's body language.

Here are some suggested rules:

- Do not let the child interact with the dog when you are not home. Never leave the child alone with the dog, even for a second.
- To get the puppy to obey a command, use treats rather than force.
- Do not bother the animal while it is eating, sleeping, chewing or in its crate.

### Family gatherings

At a family gathering, it is less likely for a puppy to enjoy the event than the rest of the family. Noise, confusion and changes in routine are stressful for dogs. Even a normally calm and docile pet may become agitated enough to bite under the extreme circumstances of a boisterous celebration. Supervision can become lax if each adult thinks another is watching the child or children. In these situations, children are the most likely victims of dog bites.

Put the dog in its crate with a bone or favourite chew toy, at least during the most hectic periods, *i.e.* when guests are arriving and leaving and during dinner preparation and serving.

Assign one adult to be in charge of the dog. He/she will watch for signs of stress and protect the animal from unwanted attention from children. Also assign one adult to supervise each baby or toddler. 🐾

*Joan Orr and Teresa Lewin are co-founders of Doggone Safe, a non-profit organization dedicated to dog bite prevention through education. For more information about the organization, visit [www.doggonesafe.com](http://www.doggonesafe.com). For more information about preparing your family dog for life with a new baby, an educational CD, Dogs & Storks, is available at [www.familypaws.com](http://www.familypaws.com).*