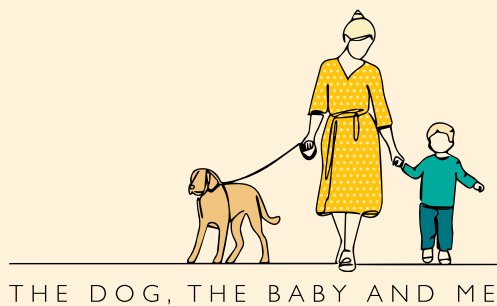




Pocket guide

Travel

- 1) **Choose the right pram.** Where do you typically walk the dog? What shops are nearby? How big is your car? Where will you store it?
- 2) **Get the right car.** Is it big enough? Can you get the pram in and out okay? Is it dog compatible? Will it break down?
- 3) **Sort breakdown cover.** Trust me, you don't want to be stranded on the hard shoulder of the M25 with a dog and a newborn baby for an hour. Yes, I've still got the scars.
- 4) **Purchase a decent travel crate.** These are a god send. More compact than the human ones and allowing you to segregate the dog from all of your other stuff in the boot.
- 5) **Plan what you need to bring for anything longer than a day trip.** The amount of stuff you need for a dog and a baby, let alone yourself too is RIDICULOUS. Think moving house! Save the list on your notepad on your mobile as you'll come back to it again. And when you're sleep deprived and life is sponsored by caffeine and sunnies, you'll be glad you did.

Training

- 1) **Master that heel.** This is critical when you're going to be out and about so much with the baby in the pram
- 2) **What are their toys** and what are baby's toys?
- 3) **Not begging and waiting for food** – super important when you think about the weaning stage and beyond
- 4) **'Sit' and 'Stay'**
- 5) **The hierarchy.** This has fundamentally changed and your dog might feel 'bumped' but it's important to acknowledge and prepare your dog for this. Consider a doll to represent the new baby and role play scenarios around the home.

Pregnancy and labour

- 1) **Keep up the dog walks for as long as you can**, with some variety if you can, too. It's not just for your physical and mental health and wellbeing, but just as important, it keeps a sense of routine for your dog
- 2) **Plan for your dog for when you are in hospital.** You could be in there for a while or equally it could all be incredibly quick/unexpected. What's your plan?
- 3) **If you're overdue, cuddles with your pooch can help maximise oxytocin.** Relaxing and a sense of calm are key.
- 4) **Slowly introduce all the baby paraphernalia to your dog.** Change can be unsettling.
- 5) **During pregnancy try to do as much pram acclimatisation as you can.** It'll pay dividends in the long run. No one wants a dog lead between their legs and a tipping pram when there's a sleeping baby involved.

Building the bond

- 1) **Ask your partner to bring your baby's hat back from the hospital** to get your fur baby used to their smell
- 2) **Closely controlled interactions** – slowly build up in terms of the time and level of their interaction. And, of course, never leave your dog and baby unattended
- 3) **In time, and if you feel comfortable, have your baby/toddler to treat the dog**, but only if the dog is calm enough. Under the full control of Alex, my son has "given" our Labrador dental sticks since he was five months old.
- 4) **In time, and if you feel comfortable, let your dog lick the baby's hand after a meal or clear scraps off the floor.** Of course, you'll need to wash their hands thoroughly afterwards. It often made my son laugh getting a tickle or watching the dog beneath his feet from the high chair
- 5) **Pet the dog in front of the baby as often as you can.** You can do this with the baby sat on your knee, in the bouncer, next to you or in front of you with your partner holding the baby safely so that they have a front row seat to the action.