



All Dawgs

*ALL Dogs' Favorite Spot
Play • Learn • Stay*

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Time to Go for a Ride!

How to Re-Introduce Your Dog to Riding in a Vehicle

By Diane Blackman, IACP-CDTA, CTDI

Dogs have issues riding in vehicles for many reasons. Regardless of the cause, we recommend the following steps.

Step One:

If your dog rides in a seat belt harness, practice putting it on and taking it off without putting him in the vehicle. Otherwise, the harness may become a trigger that the yucky thing is about to happen.

Step Two:

Load your dog in a non-running vehicle. We recommend you load him into the area of your vehicle he will eventually ride in. Give him high value treats (real chicken, real liver and/or real steak). You can either hand feed your dog and/or add these treats to his meals. Each training session should end right after the last treat is given and be no more than about five minutes. Practice once or several times a day depending on your dog's stress level. Practice daily until you see no signs of stress such as drooling, shaking and fast panting (especially in cooler weather). Do something your dog loves after getting out of the vehicle! You want to pair the vehicle with good things happening!

If your dog begins to anticipate your training sessions and becomes anxious try allowing your dog to nibble on your high-value treats as he gets into your vehicle and/or walking him past your vehicle without loading him in it.

Step Three:

Repeat Step Two with the vehicle running. Some dogs do better if the car starts before they get in while others do better with the vehicle starting after they are loaded. Practice once or several times a day based on your dog's stress level. Practice daily until you see no signs of stress.

Step Four:

Load your dog into the vehicle and take a very short trip, such as down your driveway. If you have a helper, have that person feed high value treats beginning when you put the vehicle into

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gear. If you are working alone, give your dog a frozen stuffed Kong with high-value treats such as meat-based baby food. The treats or Kong go away after you arrive back “home.”

Step Five:

Start taking slightly longer trips, such as driving around your block. Keep feeding or having your dog enjoy a frozen stuff Kong! You can start going places for him to have fun at such as a woods walk in the woods, Dawgie Daycare and/or walking around a pet-friendly area.

Vet Visits

You may need to go to the vet, which causes some dogs to dislike the vehicle. Instead of taking your dog just when he needs medical attention, ask your vet if you can come in, weigh your dog and allow your dog to be petted for a few minutes by the staff and go home without your dog getting poked or prodded. This will also help your dog at the vet’s office as well!

Additional Assistance

Some dogs also benefit from an Adaptil-sprayed bandana. Adaptil mimics the smell a new mom produces when her puppies are nursing. Your dog remembers this smell and it is associated with peace and calming. If you use an Adaptil-sprayed bandana, use it all the time, even when your dog will not be in the car. Otherwise, the bandana will predict the vehicle and not be helpful.

You may also want to speak with your vet for medications to help settle their stomach and/or prevent motion sickness.

Remember! Changing any dog’s behavior can take eight to 12 months. However, a little practice now can go a long way later!