

Keys to successful car rides

- Make the car a positive place
- Car confinement
- Think about the destination
- Successful progression

Make the car a positive place

- Food
 - Feed a few of their meals in the car (maybe one every other day).
 - Dogs cannot eat and be anxious at the same time.
- Bones and Chews
 - Save their favorite bone or chew toy for car time.
 - Food or treat stuffed toys work really well (Kong).
- Reward system
 - Teach a command for getting in the car and treat it every time (ex. "load up").
 - Also work on waiting in the car with the door open and being invited out.
 - Make it a game to go in and out of the car so it is fun for you and the dog.
- Spend quality car time
 - Take a book, HW assignment, laptop, etc, into the car and just sit in there with your pup while he enjoys a meal or a bone.

Car confinement

Though not a requirement, for most dogs and owners it is beneficial to have some sort of confinement option for the dog while in the car. Providing a restraint is safer for both the dog and the owner to prevent the dog from distracting the driver, as well as minimizing potential injury in the case of an accident. In the beginning, just work on being confined then being released without the car even running or in motion.

A few options are:

- Crate
 - Safest option and easiest for dog to transition to if already crated at home.
 - Prevents any destructive behaviors in the car, especially if occasionally left unsupervised.
 - Blocks the dog's view
 - May prevent motion sickness or fear, may help avoid barking at passing distractions.
 - May be stressful if dog cannot see where they are going.
- Seat belt/harness
 - Work well to allow dog to be a part of the family and see out the windows.
 - Dogs may chew at equipment.
- Barriers
 - Quality barriers are fairly effective in keeping dogs in or out of certain areas
 - Dog may still chew on seat belts or other inappropriate items.

Think about the destination

- If your dog always goes to the dog park once they get in the car they will be overly excited and anxious.
- If your dog always goes to the vet or groomer once they get in the car they will be nervous and fearful.

Really work on going to as many different places as possible with your dog to avoid associations. Sometimes take the dog out, sometimes leave them in the car, sometimes go somewhere fun, sometimes go somewhere boring, etc. For every one extreme car experience your dog has, replace it with ten mundane ones.

Successful progression

Base your progression on what your dog is ready for. The first time you work on the car if your dog is overly anxious, fearful, or excited, try working on some of the above exercises while the car is off. Then try the exercises with the car running but parked in the driveway. Eventually work on driving up and down the driveway or around the block. Baby steps are key for your dog to build a calm confident mentality while riding the car. If your dog begins to regress, break it down into smaller steps and try again. Always reward your dog for offering calm confidence.