

Travelling with your dog:

Teaching your dog obedience training can be simple and fun with the correct information and some patience. Dogs love to be with us and love to travel with us, too. Our companionship is important as is the stimulation of new sights, smells and experiences, not to mention meeting new people – and dogs! **Here are a few tips on how to have safe and enjoyable car journeys.**

1. Purchase a car safety harness. Cages were very popular but have been shown to break up on impact and don't offer any stabilisation for the dog. Most dogs find it comforting to be restrained as they don't have to expend physical effort to maintain balance. I've tried most of the harnesses on the market and by far the best is the 'CLIX Car Safe' harness designed by fellow Psychologist Dr Roger Mugford, available from most retailers.
2. Don't allow your dog to travel on the front passenger seat. It's nice to have them close but incredibly dangerous for them in the event of a crash or if the airbag is activated. The optimum place for the dog to travel is on the centre rear seat if possible: it offers the least relative movement of the vehicle and maximum protection in the event of a collision.
3. Introduce the notion of being in the car slowly. Encourage them to climb into the car and reward them with a food treat and fuss once they're in. Repeat this a few times but don't rush. The first few times you make an actual journey in the car it should be short and with a friend to distract the dog. Avoid rewarding or fussing the dog if they are shaking or whining as this will compound the behaviour. Build up the length of the journeys and always reward at the destination with plenty of fuss and play.
4. You need to allow your dog to stretch and move around from time to time so it's important to stop at least every 2 hours. It's recommended advice for humans, too! The 'CLIX Car Safe' harness mentioned is designed to also be worn as a walking harness.
5. Be aware that your dog will need shade from direct sunlight and will be liable to overheat in the car. You can purchase sun shades for your car which are available from most pet shops although are usually cheaper in car accessory specialists like Halfords.
6. Make sure you take a bottle of water for your dog and something for them to drink from: you can buy special travel bowls and drinking units or simply take their bowl. They should be given the opportunity to drink at least every 2 hours.
7. It's really important to provide fresh air during your journey and on a hot day air conditioning can literally be a life saver. In a hot car for a prolonged period it can take only 20 minutes for a dog to die of heat exhaustion - so make sure you're prepared: see our Hot Cars, Hot Dogs Top Tips.
8. Some dogs can become a little overexcited and noisy in the car. Remain calm and try not to over-stimulate them at any stage, particularly just before the journey or as you near your destination. There are various homeopathic and simple training devices that can help anxious dogs to become happy travelling companions.