

Gradual desensitisation and counter-conditioning for car journeys



Emma Lee

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Many dogs do not like being in the car.

Whether that is because it has been paired with negative emotional experiences like feeling trapped or confined, whether it has been paired with negative physical experiences like feeling sick or being forced into a car, or whether it has been paired up with an event the dog finds unpleasant like going to a vet or groomer, there are many reasons a dog may quickly learn that cars are unpleasant.

Dogs need to have learned from a young age how to find cars pleasurable and have been gradually habituated to long journeys. Sadly for many puppies, their first experience of a journey is traumatic, as they leave their canine family, embark on their first long drive and may experience car sickness. This can set up a pattern for the rest of their life if you don't address it quickly.

If your dog experiences car sickness, please also consult your veterinarian. You will need both medication and to have followed a programme of desensitisation like the one that follows. If your dog has high levels of generalised anxiety, you may also need to work with a veterinarian and/or behaviourist. Be mindful that some issues like stomach problems, arthritis, joint dysplasia or inner ear problems can also make journeys very unpleasant for your dog. A sound bill of health might not be necessary, but it's worthwhile considering how a dog's physical health may impact on their experience of journeys.

The techniques in this programme are based on two processes: desensitisation and counterconditioning. Desensitisation gradually gets a dog used to things by exposing them to very small amounts in very small, short doses. Sometimes we call this exposure therapy. It needs to be very, very gradual and planned systematically. Duration, distance and difficulty are three things you can use to make things easier, shorter or further away. The other process is counterconditioning, which takes a negative emotion like fear and turns it into a positive one through pairing it up with something pleasant. Using both methods together by exposing a dog to manageable doses of car time and pairing it up with something lovely like food can mean you can make lots of progress quickly.

You will see that I deliberately include timing in this plan and you may want to shorten the exposure if your dog is very nervous or over-excited around cars. Even if you feel like the timing is too slow, please do not rush. It is better to build up over twelve weeks than it is to rush it in three and do more damage than good. You may be going for seconds at first, but once dogs 'get it', they really seem to get it and you can make much faster progress on the other side of that moment.

The desensitisation bit is a planned, gentle approach to gradually expose the dog to more and more of the car. The counterconditioning bit is to help them feel positively instead of negatively. That's where the food comes in. Where the two techniques are put together, they are very effective. They are not quick, however, and you need to know there are no magic pills that will secretly turn your dog into a car lover, especially if they have a very bad feeling to start with.

Whilst undertaking this programme, it's really important that you do not put your dog in the car. You must not force your dog in the car or expect them to get in whilst you are carrying out the programme. Plan to do it at a time you won't need to take the dog in the car. Suspend all journeys until your dog says they are ready. If you absolutely have to as an emergency for the vet, that is one thing, but know that you will do more damage than good if you force a dog into a car.

Also, don't be cheap with your food and treats. For many dogs, cars are like roller coasters. Some love them, just as some humans do, but many hate it. Overcoming your fears is easier if you're not doing it with cheap biscuits. Pick "human" food that is worth lots to your dog. Some dogs will work for biscuits, but imagine how much better they will feel working for small pieces of chicken, ham or cheese. Cheap rewards gain little return on investment.

There are five tasks you will need to undertake. Some are simple and involve you learning some aspects about your dog. Others need you to get a pen and paper. One of the tasks is where the real work lies.

Task 1: understand canine body language

The first thing to do is take a crash course in canine body language. In particular, lip licks, slow motion walking, paw lifts, head turns and shake-offs. Turid Rugaas's book *On Talking Terms with Dogs* is excellent for this. If you see lip licks, yawning, slow walking or your dog turning away then you are probably working too fast for your dog. Panting can also be another sign to look out for.

Here (1) you can see a bow and a lip lick. Trying to run away isn't the only way a dog may show fearfulness, and you may find flirty, fidgety or playful behaviour too. This dog is nervous of me and the camera, so she is fidgeting and behaving playfully because she can't escape from the kennel and she doesn't want to behave aggressively. Although I have food, [a lip lick](#) is not about being hungry but about being unsure. You can also see in this photo that her eyes are not soft or playful.



Here (2) you can see [freezing or stillness](#) and the tip of that little tongue as the dog tries to show me she is unsure. You can also see a [paw lift](#). Notice if your dog slows down as they approach your car, and how they move around it or react to it.



This girl is saying loud and clear that she's not sure and she's ready to dart off.

In the next photo (3), the dog has backed off a bit and she is very still and stiff. You can see how she has [turned her head away](#), how she is [squinting](#) and how she is grimacing. All of these are signs that can indicate stress in a dog. Her ears are back.



In the next (4) she has started [panting](#) though it is not hot. Her eyes are not soft although her 'smile' and open mouth looks friendly. However her stillness and her eyes tell me she is not relaxed even though she seems to be.



The last image is very typical of dogs who are out of their physical comfort zone and ready to bolt. Back legs say they're staying put whereas front legs say they'll consider it. When you start working around cars, you do not want your dog to look like this! Her body weight is low, her fur is on edge and she is quite clearly not relaxed.



These are just some of the behaviours you can look for in your dog to know if you are working too hard. We often call this 'threshold' behaviour where the dog is likely to react by running away or barking, growling or biting if you continue to force them.

Task 2: focus in on your own dog's body language

Make a short video (1 minute) of your dog around your car either on a long lead or, preferably, off-lead. Try to spot how they hold their body around the car or how they approach it. This gives you some indication of how they feel about your own stationary car. Make a list of any signals you see that show how your dog feels around the car. This will hopefully be the last time you'll see a lot of them!

Watch out for turning away, slow blinks, lip licking, low body posture, tucked tails, slowing down, ears back or panting in particular.

Task 3: set a SMART target

A SMART target should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-focused.

If you have a dog who is an absolute beginner, that might look like this:

In 3 months, my dog will be able to take a 5-minute car journey with minimal stress signals on straight roads.

If your dog is okay, but you're working up to a longer journey:

In 3 months, my dog will be able to take a 30-minute car journey with minimal stress signals on a mixture of roads.

If your dog is very unsure around cars, scale it back:

In 3 months, my dog will be able to sit in the car for 30 seconds with the engine on with minimal stress signals.

I like to use 3 months as a realistic time-frame to see change in behaviour, but you may be working to a longer goal. A shorter goal is not fine unless you are just brushing up.

Please don't try to work faster: rushing or expecting your dog to just 'get over it' will make it much harder in the long run. To change an emotional response takes time. Whilst you can use quick fixes, these rely on punishment. They may temporarily suppress the behaviour but they do not change it. Plus, they may also lead to a nasty bite as your dog is quite literally cornered and you have ignored their feelings. Since we tend to go in with hands and faces when pushing dogs into cars, these tend to be the targets dogs will go for if you push or force your dog into the car, even if you do it gently. When dogs feel like they have a choice, they don't feel the need to rely on aggression to get them out of the corner you have pushed them into. Imagine if you were scared of ghost trains and someone pushed you into it and forced you through. Your response the next time they tried would no doubt show them precisely why it's unacceptable to do that.

Working faster can also flood your dog. This just means they shut down and 'cope' for the moment, but they will not trust you and you may have problems if you try to do it again. A dog who is shut down may look like they are coping, but in reality, they are learning they have no other option. This can add greatly to phobias and fears.

The tasks here should not take much time: 15 minutes a day will be more than enough, and most will only take a few minutes to complete.

Task 4: plan your goal backwards

Break it into half, to quarters, to eighths and work it backwards, using time and difficulty to help you plan it into weeks.

Week 1 Get into the car with all doors open	Week 2 Practise getting into the car to with doors open and shut Sit in the car and turn the ignition	Week 3 Practise getting in and out of the car Sit in the car for 15 seconds with the engine on
Week 4: Sit in the car for 30 seconds with the engine on	Week 5: Sit in the car for 1 minute with the engine on	Week 6: Sit in the car for 3 minutes with the engine on and occasionally with the handbrake off to roll slightly (less than 2m)
Week 7: Take a 5-second journey by car moving at a rolling pace	Week 8: Take a 15-second journey by car moving at a rolling pace	Week 9: Take a 30-second journey by car moving at 10mph
Week 10: Take a 1-minute journey by car moving at 20mph	Week 11: Take a 2-minute journey by car on straight roads at 30mph	Week 12: Take a 5-minute journey by car on straight roads including some stop/starts

When you've worked out your weekly target, plan your daily target. For week 1, I want the dog to get into the car by themselves when all doors are open. I may even start building up the time they spend in there with doors open, but it really depends on how they are coping. Remember, you don't HAVE to meet the goals each week: your dog will tell you how fast they are comfortable at going, but sometimes that will be slow and other times they will make lots of progress.

Think about how you want your dog to get in. Will that be a ramp? Being lifted? Jumping in? You'll need to allow time for your dog to find this bit pleasant too!

Also think about where you want them to be. I always start by practising on the back seat rather than the boot, simply because it's usually easier to use food rewards if someone can sit in the back with them. However, you may want to plan differently if you want them in a crate or in the boot.

Finally, think about where you will want to be at the end of the block. It's no good preparing a dog with you in the back if they then get agitated by you getting in the front. Also, you will need a partner for the initial driving practice. You could probably do this bit over a week or so but you WILL need to reward your dog and you can't drive at the same time. Choose a time when you can call on a friend or family member for that bit.

None of this means you will have to always follow the same rules, but it does help. At the beginning, however, being in the car and alongside each other is the most important bit, and you won't be moving, so don't worry too much.

When you've got your overall plan work backwards through each week as you come to it. If the target in week 1 is for the dog to get into a car unassisted, there may be a number of steps to practise. Some might even take a few weeks' preparation in themselves and you might have to put your car plan on hold. That might involve teaching them to walk up dog ramps or learn to jump up onto couches first. Remember that for large dogs, even though they may seem capable, they may have joint problems (especially dogs under the age of 2 who weigh more than 25kg). Small dogs may dislike being picked up.

You can see guidance on picking up small dogs here and helping them do it themselves. This is vital if you're going to have to lift your dog.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uasHnMzJC4k>

We may under-estimate how dogs may dislike being 'helped' into the car or how painful it may be for them to do. That is especially true if you have a high tailgate and the dog has to make a lot of effort.

Also, even if you have a low tailgate or a dog who doesn't have size or mobility issues, they may not always be this way, so it's really important to get them used to ramps, being picked up or being helped into the car. The last thing you need is for your dog to become immobile as they age and become aggressive when you try to manoeuvre them.

If this is the case for you, make sure you adjust your training programme accordingly and the 'Week 1' in the example may become 'Week 5'. Don't worry if that's the case.

If our dogs are pretty happy to jump on couches but reluctant to jump into the car, or they are happy being picked up normally but giving lots of stress signals when being picked up to go into a car, then you may feel happy to start with the example Week 1.

Once you have weekly targets, make a day-by-day plan working backwards.

Day 7: get into the car with all doors open.

This doesn't mean *staying in* the car.. The doors open mean that the dog is not confined and won't feel as if they're being asked too much.

Day 6: get front paw into the car with all doors open

Day 5: get head into the car with all doors open

Day 4: approach car with all doors open

Day 3: approach car and spend a minute around it

Day 2: approach car to within 5 metres and spend 30 seconds around it

Day 1: approach car to within 10 metres and spend 15 seconds around it

Each day, 'make sure that you're checking if the dog feels comfortable doing the behaviour. You can make videos and check out any stress signals the dog is giving. If they feel nervous, go back and spend a bit of time on the previous stages. You may not have the ideal set up to do this, so you can also use a long, flat lead (not extendable) of 10m or more. The important thing is that it should be the dog's choice.

How I'm going to do Day 1 is just through setting up the environment with lots of goodies around 10-15m from the car. If the dog is on lead, the lead should be loose at all times. I'm going to use food toys and scatter feeding around the car and watch the dog's body language as they get closer to the vehicle they'll eventually be getting in. Take 20 or so small, high value treats and use a snuffle mat or distributor they're familiar with like a Kong.

Sometimes the logistics of this first step can be a challenge if you don't have off-road parking, so you might need to park your car further from your house in a quiet spot where you can do this, and walk your dog to the space you've parked.

It's a good idea to do each step 2 or 3 times over the day.

So on Day 1, I'll use a small handful of chicken pieces scattered around the car at some distance, and I'll let my dog explore around, noticing any changes or resistance to the pieces closest to the car. I may also keep a handful in my hand and play 'Get it!' or 'Ping Pong' throwing a treat one way and then the other to keep the dog moving. Notice that I am using the verbal release first, then tossing the treat low (more like bowling than throwing)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLcpvYfEfaw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aehZzFgYhrA>

How to play 'Get it!' or 'Ping Pong':

- Start with 10 treats that will roll well and are easy to see against the floor/ground.
- Show your dog one treat and toss it about 50cm to one side encouraging him to "get it!"

- Turn and toss another piece of food in the other direction a foot or so, encouraging him verbally as well.
- Continue to toss food back and forth first in one direction, then the other, until they are gone.
- Then give your dog a release cue (“finished” or “well done!”) and end the session.

As your dog starts to understand this exercise you can toss the treats further and further and in this case, within the proximity of the car.

These are all things you can do with your dog to help them cope in a new environment, taking a treat and moving the dog side to side as we work in circles around the car, occasionally throwing a treat into the 10m space and watching their body language.

Day 2 and 3 are the same, just closer and for longer.

Day 4 requires you to have the doors open. If your dog gets in, that’s great. Really reward it with lots of treats, but don’t worry if not. You may find they’re more nervous with the door open, so you may need to spend another day or so here, or increase the distance again that you’re working from the car. Keep working on the “Get it!” at a distance your dog feels comfortable, and use some other things like puzzle feeders, snuffle mats or scatter feeding too.

Day 5 will need you to gently throw a really good treat in the footwell as part of the “Get it!” game. Don’t worry if it’s the place you want your dog to jump into later, just you want them to get to the place where they’ll put their head in the car. The front passenger side might be ideal. When they do so, you can also mark (say a word or click) and reward (give another treat out of the car).

You can then play “Get it!” using the footwell. Yes, food will go in your car. If you’ve got a pristine car and you don’t like this, or your aim is not very good, you can always pick up some of the paper guards from a valet service or garage.

Throw a treat into the footwell, mark the dog when they approach the car and then give them another treat in a different direction.

Just be careful not to block the dog and make sure they have escape routes. It’s fine for them to get used to you behind them, but at the beginning just be mindful they’re more than conscious you may have manhandled them into this death machine on many an occasion and they are rightfully suspicious of the perfidious owner they have.

Playing “Get it!” is ideal as you’re getting them into the habit of going to the car themselves and whilst half is a lured behaviour (the treat is already in the car) you can also shape the behaviour if you want. For this, you might want to work with a trainer to demonstrate free shaping. You can see a video explanation here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Va8yq1hAlxU>

You can do a similar process with the car instead of a bowl, though. You don't have to use clickers. You can always use a marker word instead.

Day 6, you will be playing "Get it!" just a little bit more into the car. You might want to cover the seats for this, as you want to aim the treat onto the seat so they can get used to it. If your dog is happy enough to continue, you can always put a small snuffle mat or food-filled toy inside the car. Don't worry if they take it out of the car but it's ideal if they'll spend a little longer near the car. At the moment, lots of this is lured behaviour, so be mindful that your dog isn't acting as freely as they seem.

Day 7, you can ask the dog to "hup!" or "get in!" and then give them a treat. You want the behaviour first, without a lure ideally. Once they're in, don't block them from getting out, but give them treats fairly rapidly for staying in. Whilst you may be blocking one side, they should be free to leave through the other doors.

Task 5: consider your dog's level of stress and resilience

Consider supplements for the length of the programme. If your dog's behaviour is driven by general nervousness, there are many things you can use. One is an Adaptil collar. Zylkene may help some dogs. Both of these are related to separation anxiety, and may not work with cars specifically. Rescue Remedy, Anxitane, valerian, Pet Remedy or other holistic remedies may help. Whilst a pressure wrap may help, be mindful that these can sometimes suppress behaviours rather than allowing the dog to truly cope. If your dog has muscular or skeletal pain, be mindful that the motion could be related to this. If you don't have to gear yourselves up for 5 hour drives, don't.

Also be mindful of the fact that once your dog is happy in the car, you'll be able to throw in the odd journey that's a little longer - or even much longer. A one-off won't spoil a good relationship.

However remember too that one bad journey might remind us that we're not all that fond of the deathly dodgem cars and roller coasters after all, so you may need to do some remedial work from time to time.

A sample step-by-step guide

You'll continue to block out the training like this week by week. This may break down into a number of steps.

Step 1

Approach the car to a distance of 10m and stay within proximity for 15 seconds.

Step 2

Approach the car to a distance of 5m and stay within proximity for 30 seconds.

Step 3

Approach the car to a distance of 1m and stay within proximity for 1 minute.

Step 4

Approach a car with open doors to a distance of 5m and for a duration of 15 seconds.

Step 5

Approach a car with open doors to a distance of 1m and for a duration of 30 seconds.

Step 6

Approach a car with open doors to a distance of 15cm and for a duration of 15 seconds.

Step 7

Approach a car with open doors and put head inside for 1 second.

Step 8

Approach a car with open doors and put head inside for 5 seconds.

Step 9

Approach a car with half the doors open and put head inside for 5 seconds.

Step 10

Approach a car with open doors and put front paws in for 1 second.

Step 11

Approach a car with open doors and put front paws in for 5 seconds.

Step 12

Approach a car with half the doors open and put front paws in for 1 second.

Step 13

Approach a car with only one door open and put front paws in for 1 second.

Step 14

Approach a car with only one door open and put front paws in for 5 seconds.

Step 15

Approach a car with only one door open and put front paws in for 10 seconds.

Step 16

Approach a car with all doors open and get in completely for 1 second.

Step 17

Approach a car with half the doors open and get in completely for 5 seconds.

Step 18

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 5 seconds.

Step 19

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 10 seconds.

Step 20

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 20 seconds.

Step 21

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 5 seconds as owner touches door as if to close it.

Step 22

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 5 seconds as owner pushes door closed.

Step 23

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 10 seconds as owner pushes door closed and rewards through open window.

Step 24

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 20 seconds as owner pushes door closed and rewards through open window.

Step 25

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 10 seconds as owner pushes door closed, steps back one pace, returns and rewards through open window.

Step 26

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 20 seconds as owner pushes door closed, steps back one pace, returns (x2) and rewards through open window.

Step 27

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 10 seconds as owner pushes door closed, steps back one pace, returns and rewards when the door is opened.

Step 28

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 20 seconds as owner pushes door closed, steps back one pace, returns (x2) and rewards when the door is opened.

Step 29

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 30 seconds as owner pushes door closed, steps back one pace, returns, opens door, rewards, closes door, steps back one pace, returns, opens door and rewards.

Step 30

Approach a car with one door open and get in completely for 1 minute as owner pushes door closed, steps back one pace, returns, opens door, rewards, closes door, steps back one pace, returns, opens door and rewards (x2).

Step 31

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 10 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, steps back, returns, opens door and rewards.

Step 32

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 20 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, steps back, returns, opens door and rewards x 2.

Step 33

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 10 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner feeds treats through an open window.

Step 34

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 10 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner steps back, returns, opens door and rewards.

Step 35

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 20 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner steps back, returns, opens door and rewards x2

Step 36

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 30 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner steps back two paces, returns, opens door and rewards x2

Step 37

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 40 seconds as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side and rewards x1

Step 38

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 1 minute as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side and rewards x2

Step 39

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 1 minute as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in and rewards x1

Step 40

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 1 minute as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 10 seconds and rewards x1

Step 41

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 2 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 20 seconds and rewards x1

Step 42

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 2 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 30 seconds and rewards x1

Step 43

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 2 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards frequently x1

Step 44

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, partner turns key in ignition (without starting the car), and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 2 minutes and rewards sporadically x1

Step 45

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 2 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 10 seconds and rewards frequently as the car is started then turned off x1

Step 46

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 2 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 20 seconds and rewards frequently as the car is started then turned off x1. If you notice the dog panicking as the car is started, go really slowly at this point and repeat Step 45 a number of times.

Step 47

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 30 seconds and rewards frequently as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds x1

Step 48

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 40 seconds and rewards frequently as the car is started and allowed to idle for 20 seconds x1

Step 49

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards frequently as the car is started and allowed to idle for 40 seconds x1

Step 50

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 40 seconds x1

Step 51

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the

other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 40 seconds, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards x1

Step 52

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 40 seconds, allowed to roll 5m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards x1.

Step 53

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely for 3 minutes as the owner pushes door closed, and owner moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 40 seconds, allowed to roll 10m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards x1.

Step 54

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely as the owner pushes door closed, moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven in 1st gear for 20m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards x1.

Step 55

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely as the owner pushes door closed, moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven in 1st gear for 50m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards x1.

Step 56

Use a partner in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely as the owner pushes door closed, moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven in 1st & 2nd gear for 100m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards x1.

Go back a few steps and switch partners if you are going to need to drive your dog on your own. Make sure you are also starting to clip the dog's harness into a seat belt at this point. Don't worry if eventually you will want them to travel in the boot. That will happen later.

Step 57

Use one person in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely as the other person pushes door closed, moves around car, opens the other

side, gets in for 1 minute and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven in 1st, 2nd and 3rd gear for 250m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Step 58

Use one person in the front seat. Dog approaches a car with one door open, gets in completely as the other person pushes door closed, moves around car, opens the other side, gets in for 3 minutes and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven for 500m, then switched off. Owner gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

If the distance is too long, make it shorter then practise more at a comfortable level.

Step 59

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around the car, open the other side, gets in for 5 minutes and rewards sporadically as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven for 1km on a straight slow road at a steady pace, then switched off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Repeat Step 59 slowing down, speeding up, putting on indicators, putting on windscreen wipers etc. Practise all these separately.

Step 60

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around the car, open the other side, gets in for 5 minutes and is given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds, driven for 1km on a straight slow road at a steady pace, then switched off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

You'll step back on the duration as you move both humans into the front. At this point, if you were going to secure the dog in the boot, you can do so, going back down to earlier steps and rewarding over the seat with the owner/passenger in the back. As you move towards the dog being on their own, you will want to use longer food chews.

Step 61

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around to the front passenger seat, open the door, gets in for 1 minute. The dog should be given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds then switched off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Step 62

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around to the front passenger seat, open the door, gets in for 2 minutes. The dog should be given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is

started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds then allowed to roll for 10m in 1st gear before being turned off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Step 63

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around to the front passenger seat, open the door, gets in for 3 minutes. The dog should be given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds then driven 50m in 1st gear before being turned off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Step 64

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around to the front passenger seat, open the door, gets in for 4 minutes. The dog should be given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds then driven 200m on a straight road before being turned off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Step 65

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around to the front passenger seat, open the door, gets in for 5 minutes. The dog should be given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds then driven 500m on a straight road before being turned off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Step 66

Use one person in the front seat. Dog gets in car, is clipped in by the other person, door closed before they move around to the front passenger seat, open the door, gets in for 5 minutes. The dog should be given a food toy like a Kong, snuffle mat or chew as the car is started and allowed to idle for 10 seconds then driven 1km on a straight road before being turned off. Passenger gets out, comes round, opens the dog's door, releases and rewards.

Again, practise slowing down and speeding up, putting on indicators and windscreen wipers. Add in bends and gradients gradually, then add in left and right hand turns. Add faster roads and stop-start roads. Don't start adding towns and distractions like cyclists or pedestrians until you are happy that the dog can cope.

What you can also do at this point is then start to add in a walk after each trip. Once dogs get in the habit of knowing cars mean walks, it's never a bad thing. You can then start to phase out food rewards and use the walk as a reward.

At Step 66, it's really up to you to start increasing the complexity of the journey - up to 10 minutes or so. To increase duration, start on a stretch of straight, fast road for 15 minutes. Just like car-sick passengers, it can be heat, bends and turns, frequent gear changes or braking/accelerating, smells of petrol or diesel or changes in gradient that provoke sickness, and fresh air can help. Air con on and windows a little open can help. If your dog is car sick,

frequent and long breaks can help, as can chewing. You can also speak to your vet. Smooth journeys, fresh air and frequent breaks will help.

