

Puppy School Puppy Advice

Car travel

Being in a car is not a natural experience for a young puppy so it is important to acclimatize them slowly. Begin by taking him on small journeys at first and gradually extending them. Try to take him somewhere every day during the first few months, even though you may not always take him out of the car until you get back at home. In this way, he will soon get used to car travel and accept it as a necessary part of life.

1. When travelling by car to puppy training classes, allow an extra 15 minutes to arrive and allow your puppy to relax and go to the toilet. An anxious puppy that comes straight out of the car into the lesson will not be able to learn and is likely to need to relieve itself before it can concentrate.
2. Place your puppy on soft, non-slip, absorbent bedding for the journey
3. Close doors carefully without slamming and don't start the car until the puppy is closed inside as the exhaust can be frightening and unpleasant
4. Drive considerately. Remember that your puppy cannot see where the car is going, is not supported by a seat, and cannot predict when the next corner will be coming up.
5. Corners and bends cause the car to move unpredictably from your puppy's point of view. Take corners, bumps, and rumble strips at a slow speed and accelerate/decelerate smoothly

Positioning

Place your puppy somewhere in the car where he will be safe and where his movement will be restricted so that he does not learn to jump around and distract the driver. If he is to travel on the seat, use a car harness so that he cannot fall off. Good use can be made of a travel cage to ensure he remains safe, but get him used to being confined in it at home first, and make sure it is big enough for him to stand up, turn around and lie down, changing the size if necessary as he grows.

Travel sickness

If your puppy dribbles, drools, or is car sick, it is likely that he is anxious and worried by the movement. To help him overcome this, take your puppy on many short journeys, never going further than he can cope with at one time without stopping. For some puppies, this may mean taking them repeatedly to the end of the road, and then driving slowly home. Gradually accustoming your puppy to travelling in this way may take a long time at first, but it will be well worth it in the end as you will have a dog that is happy to travel and can be taken anywhere.

For more information on acclimatising puppies to car travel, please see the Puppy School book from which this extract was taken.