

# How To Condition Your Dog To Accept The Car

By Janet Kilburn

As a Lucky Dog volunteer, I've transported many dogs that most likely have never been in a car before. Suddenly shut in a crate, jiggling around from the car motion, they are helpless and afraid, they vomit and worse. They don't want to go in a car again because it makes them feel terrible. Fortunately, it's not difficult for you to condition the dog to accept the car and make it enjoyable. I'm not a dog trainer or an expert. Anyone can do this. Besides, it's fun for you and the dog and so worth it to have taken this extra time.

It's better not to do training after a meal, particularly when it entails going in a car. Have lots of tasty soft, smelly treats. The smaller the dog, the smaller you must cut the treat pieces. Don't use dog biscuits that they have to chew. I make and use liver treats, but chicken is good, or maybe you can buy something that you can cut into tiny soft pieces. Have your car close to the house where you can pass it frequently during the day. It becomes part of the scenery. The following 3 steps, followed consistently, are sure to help!

1. Have the dog on a leash and have a back car door open. As you pass the car, stop, and give a treat. You may find that the dog doesn't want to approach the vehicle too closely. Go as near as the dog is comfortable, always have a loose leash, let the dog have a treat, make it fun, another treat, talk in a high happy voice. What you are doing is conditioning the dog to go up to the car. Don't be tempted to force her by pulling on the leash. With each new step, repeat it, later again, until you're sure the dog is comfortable. Do this multiple times during the day.
2. When the dog is relaxed going up to the opened door, put the treat on the edge of the car floor. Once she retrieves it there multiple times, place the goodie a little further into the car on the floor. Finally, she will need to put her front paws into the vehicle to reach the treat. Now try putting the treats on the edge of the seat. If she will grab those treats while a major part of her body is in the car, repeat this multiple times. Finally, give her hind end a boost into the car, and you

immediately get into the car with her. Give lots of happy praise and treats in the car. It may have taken a day or two to get to this stage, or it may have taken a week. The rest is easier.

3. Now, when she gets into the car, close that back door, and you get into the driver's seat. Give her a treat, then get out of the car, let her out, then do something fun like throw her ball or toy, or take her for a walk, something that she especially likes. Next is to start the engine and move the car a few feet. Continue with the treat and the fun activity. Now, drive the car just 2 or 3 minutes but not enough time for her to feel fearful or nauseated. Again, get out and play ball or take your walk. She knows by this time that going in the car always ends with a favorite reward. If you think she might try to jump into the front seat, have her wear a flat collar and tie her on a loose leash. You'll soon be traveling together in the car. Her best reward will be going places with you. That's what we and our dogs like most of all, just being together!

