



Puppy Raising

Travel and transport

Version 1.2

Updated September 2024

Sections

There are 2 topics within this document. By following each link below you will be directed straight to that area of guidance.

1. Car travel

2. Public transport



1. Car travel

In this section

In this section, you'll introduce your puppy to car travel. By the end of your puppy raising journey, we'd like your puppy to:

- Be comfortable getting into the car.
- Remain clean, calm and relaxed during journeys of up to forty five minutes by car.
- To wait patiently until invited to exit the car.

Quick links

By following each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.



Why



Knowing your puppy



Managing for success



Teaching foundations



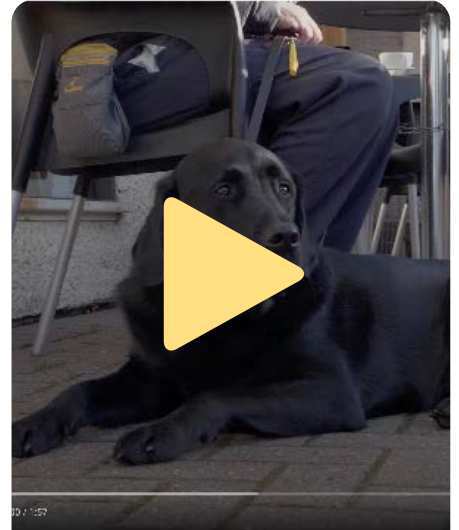
Being a partnership



Why

Why is this important for a guide dog?

When a dog is confident and comfortable travelling on a variety of different forms of transport it will open up more options for a guide dog owner to get to the destinations of their choice independently. Knowing that their guide dog can settle and remain comfortable throughout these options brings great peace of mind. Boarding and alighting different forms of transport in a controlled manner is also essential for the safety of both the dog and their handler.

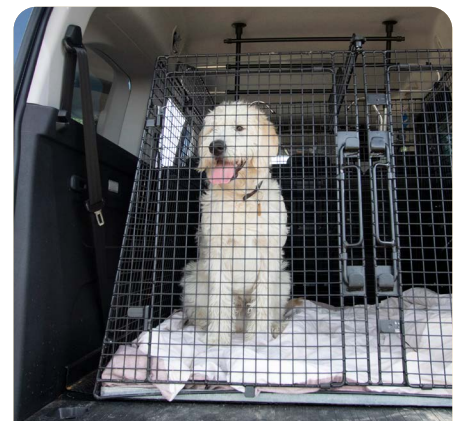
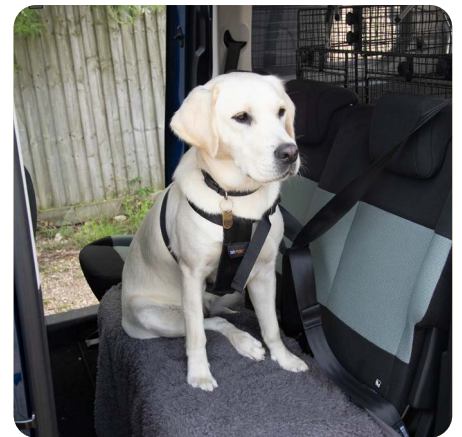


Video: Guide dog owner helps dog into car and out/ public transport.



Knowing your puppy

- When transporting your puppy in a car discuss the most suitable options for the safety of the puppy and other occupants of the vehicle with your Puppy Development Adviser. Depending on the age of your puppy, options may include using a crate or carrier on the back seat (up to 14 weeks of age), an appropriately sized crate in the boot, or securing them on the back seat with a car harness when appropriately introduced.
- Travelling in the footwell is considered a very last resort and should only be used under very specific circumstances and after discussion with a Puppy Development Advisor. This should also only be done when there is someone in the passenger seat with them (either the rear or front passenger seat), and for your passenger's safety, the airbag should be left on.
- Puppies can experience travel sickness due to the development of their ears and sense of balance. While many puppies grow out of this, it's essential to positively and gradually introduce travel to prevent long term negative associations with travel.
- It's worth bearing in mind this will be a very gradual process. Puppies should not be expected to travel for a period of forty five minutes initially.



Photos: Safe spaces to travel in a car.

Managing for success

Before taking your puppy, of any age, travelling it's important to consider the following points:

- Always discuss your specific travel needs with your Puppy Development Advisor.
- Positive association: Each journey affects the puppy's perception of travel, so prioritise their comfort and well-being during the ride. Choose initial routes, where possible, that ensure a positive experience, for example as smooth and straight a journey as possible with positive destination.
- If your puppy is going to be travelling in a car harness, you should introduce this to them first before having them travel in it. Please read the document [Physical checks, grooming and equipment](#).
- Puppy Comfort: Consider relief opportunities before and after a journey, feeding schedules, bedding, and travelling time to ensure the puppy's comfort. Make the area your puppy is going to travel in cosy with familiar types of soft bedding that won't slip or slide.
- Safety: Prioritise the safety of all occupants. Check the vehicle for faults, make sure legal requirements are met for a pup being secured in a crate or car harness or behind a dog guard, ensure sufficient room for the puppy to enter and exit, with the surrounding area safe from traffic and hazards.
- Preparation: Gather necessary equipment, including the puppy's collar, ID discs, securing equipment, water and bowl, lead, bedding, appropriate toys, and cleaning supplies. Always remember to take off a puppy's coat or t-touch harness before car journeys.
- Weather considerations: Consider weather conditions before travelling and plan accordingly.
- If you have an electric boot mechanism, there are additional considerations that need to be taken into account, as the boot takes longer to open and close.



Consider weather conditions before travelling and plan accordingly.

- Always take your time when exiting from a car so your puppy learns that the door opening does not mean something happens straight away, this can start off right from the early days, even when your puppy may be travelling in a crate.
- We don't currently have a set age for when puppies are able to jump in and out of vehicles. Consider your boot size and height of vehicle. If they're able to jump in safely without misjudging the distance in or out of the boot of the vehicle, then let them.
- When the time comes to use your car for travel, the safety of all the vehicle occupants must be a priority. If you're lifting your puppy into or out of the car, you should also familiarise yourself with the document [Manual handling guidelines in Essential information.](#)



Video: Young puppy in the boot of a car.



Teaching foundations

- You'll be aware that your puppy has travelled in cars/ vans prior to arriving at your home, however it's still important to take your time and introduce your puppy in stages to your car. Ideally you want your puppy to choose to get in themselves, but at this stage your puppy will be too small to jump in themselves and you'll need to lift them. By completing the stages below with your puppy, you are building on your puppy's positive bank account with the car.

Stage 1: Making the car a nice place

In short sessions (a few minutes each), let your puppy explore the inside of the car if it's safe to do so, especially the area in which they'll be travelling. Lay strong positive foundations by being generous with high value food rewards and their favourite games whilst they're in the car with you. Don't close the door or boot at this stage and lift them out before they try to jump out.

Stage 2: Building on the positive associations and shutting the boot or door

- Try to have some of the windows open when doing this as it can help relieve air pressure when shutting doors or the boot.
- Feed your puppy one of their daily meals or give them a stuffed KONG® or chew in the car and try gently closing the boot or door very briefly while they eat.
- If they appear comfortable with this (continues to eat, no vocalising or attempts to escape), close and open it several times during each meal, or chew.
- Your puppy may pause briefly when you close the boot or door, but if they go back to eating again with the boot or door closed, that's fine.
- If they stop eating, then it's possible they're worried by the boot or door being closed and you'll need to go back to feeding them with it open.
 - In this case, when you try again the next time instead of fully shutting the boot, gently move it back and forth slightly as they eat.
 - Gradually build up to closing it all the way with them carrying on eating.
 - Repeat this over a few sessions.
- Remember when you open the boot or door again, wait for calmness and ideally a sit position within the car and reward this patience before finishing and lifting your puppy out of the car.

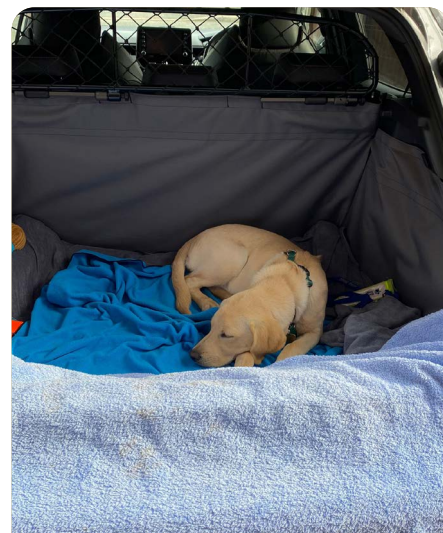


Photo: Comfortable puppy travelling.

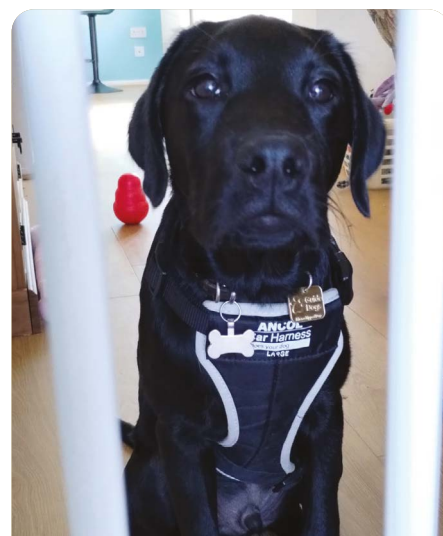


Photo: Puppy in car harness.

Stage 3: Switching the engine on

Once they'll eat their dinner or a chew with the boot or door closed, you can start to switch on the engine.

- Approach the car, let them jump in, or lift them in and give them something to chew or eat. Close the door and move to the front seat. As long as they continue eating, turn the engine on briefly. If you have a helper

available, you can ask them to switch the car on and off for you so you can monitor your puppy's reaction and pair the engine switching on and off with verbal reinforcement.

- If they stop eating, vocalise, or you hear/see any other signs that they aren't comfortable, such as panting or salivating (ask your helper to) turn the engine off and wait for them to eat again. Don't turn the engine back on. Practise for a few more days with you sitting in the front seat as they eat before trying again.

Stage 4: Moving your vehicle

- If your puppy can eat their dinner with the engine running for several minutes, then you can (ask your helper to) try moving the car just off the driveway or a tiny bit down the road.
- If they're relaxed and show no signs of panting, yawning or lip licking, on the next session you can progress to a short journey around the block while they are occupied with a KONG® or a chew (the chew should be big so that they will not be able to gulp or finish the chew on your journey).
- If at any point your puppy shows any signs of discomfort or distress, go back a stage to them eating with the engine running and the car stationary.

Stage 5: Increasing the journey time

- If your puppy is comfortable, you can very gradually start to increase the distance and duration of the car journey.
- Ask a friend, family member, or your PDA to support you with this so you can gain a true picture of your puppy during travel so whoever is driving is focusing fully on their role whilst the other can look at what your puppy is doing.
- For the first few journeys, try to give your puppy a large enough chew to keep them occupied throughout the journey.



Photo: Comfortable puppy travelling.

Progression

- As your puppy grows and develops you can get your puppy to jump in/out of the car.
- Have your boot or car door open.
- Walks towards the car, if your puppy puts their feet up on the boot or back seat, praise them.
- If you think your puppy could jump all the way in, walk them towards the car with a loose lead gesturing for them to jump in. If they do, follow this up with several food rewards, praise and/or a toy inside the car before getting them out again.
- If your puppy does not jump all the way in, you can add in the use of a safe box for them to jump onto and then into the boot, to reduce distance they must jump up. You could also allow a run up to aide with momentum to jump in.
- Repeat several times a day until you can see your puppy is approaching the car and waiting expectantly to be let in. At this stage, you can open the boot or door once you're at the car, as opposed to having it already open.
- Introduce your puppy to different parts of the car using the steps above. They don't need to travel in these parts, but they should be comfortable jumping in and out of them. Once your puppy is comfortable approaching and travelling in your car, look to introduce them to other cars.



Once your puppy is comfortable travelling in your car, introduce them to other cars too.



Video: Puppy getting out of a car.



Being a partnership

- Whenever possible begin with short journey's and use food rewards, toys, and praise to help create positive associations.
- If your puppy is travel sick, salivates, vocalises, pants a lot, pushes themselves into a corner or doesn't eat any food rewards/chews when travelling these are signs, they are uncomfortable, please let us know.
- Be prepared for how your puppy may react when arriving at different destinations. They will detect certain environments quickly and make associations to the experience they may have had previously when exiting the car, e.g. off lead area. Get in touch with us if your puppy vocalises or you find your puppy hard to manage or reluctant to get out when exiting the car.
- Your puppy should be calm and allow you to clip the lead onto their collar before exiting the car.



Video: Puppy uncomfortable travelling.

Getting out of the car

- It is just as important that your puppy is comfortable getting out of the car in a safe and controlled manner.



Knowing your puppy

- Be prepared for how your puppy may behave when reaching different destinations. They will detect different environments quickly and make associations to the experience they may have once they have exited the car. Eg – off-lead area. Speak to your PDA if you are worried about your puppy's behaviour exiting the car.



Managing for success

- Always take your time when exiting from a car so your puppy learns that the door opening does not mean something happens straight away. This can start from the early days when in the process of introducing your puppy to the car.
- Once your puppy is old enough to jump out of the car, always attach your lead to the collar before giving the release cue “okay” and inviting your puppy to jump out of the car.



Teaching foundations

- Always wait for calmness and ideally a sit position within the car and reward as part of your car introduction training sessions before finishing and lifting your puppy out of the car.
- As your puppy grows and gains experience continue to take your time to reward intermittently while your puppy is still in the car but the door is open.
- Your PDA will support you with hints and tips for your particular car as techniques may vary slightly depending where your puppy travels in the car or whether the car has an electric tailgate etc.

2. Public transport

In this section

In this section, you'll introduce your puppy to travel on public transport.

By the end of your puppy raising journey, we would like your puppy to:

- Have had opportunities to get used to travelling on buses and trains.

Quick links

By following each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.



Why



Knowing your puppy



Managing for success



Teaching foundations



Being a partnership



Why

Why is this important for a guide dog?

Bus travel remains one of the most accessible and cost-effective forms of transport for guide dog owners, with one person telling us: “Without that confidence to hop on and off buses and trains, our world is limited to the distance we can walk.”

However, public transport also presents challenges. From a dog’s perspective, buses can appear noisy, uncomfortable, dirty, smelly, and overcrowded.



Read your puppy’s body language and assess how comfortable they are.



Knowing your puppy

- Remember that your puppy’s nose is much more sensitive than yours, and fumes from engines may be unpleasant to them. Think about how your puppy has responded to other large sounds and objects before you begin. This will help you decide how much space they need and how far away from the transport method you need to be when you start to work through this exercise.
- You can assess how comfortable your puppy is by reading their body language, if there’s a change in their lead behaviour and/or if they’re snatching for food rewards when this isn’t a normal behaviour.
- All puppies are able to travel a short distance (a few stops) on trains to aid their socialisation for free. There is a national letter that explains this to providers in the puppy raising information pack. As most bus companies are local, we unfortunately don’t have a national agreement in place, however there may be some local agreements in place. If we haven’t spoken with you about this, then please ask.
- Depending on where you live your puppy may also be required to experience travelling on a tube. Your PDA will advise if this is required.



Managing for success

- We recommend you work with buses first as they're more open. It's also important to make sure your puppy is completely relaxed about waiting at a bus stop or train platform before attempting to board.
- Your puppy should not wear their jacket on initial sessions and when they first start travelling as we only want to give them one thing at a time to think about.
- For early public transport training, take a small bed, mat, or towel for your puppy to lie on. This will smell familiar so will help them relax and will also help them learn exactly where you would like them to be.
- Take a supply of chews so that they have an appropriate behaviour to engage in and use food rewards to reinforce them for settling calmly on the transport. These management tools can be reduced as they age and develop.
- Pick a suitable time of day for introductions, avoid times that are known to be very busy.
- Where possible, it's best to start the introduction to public transport using a stationary vehicle that's not scheduled to move. The first or last stop are often ideal.
- Ensure you've taken your puppy to the environment, such as the train station, and that they're comfortable with the sounds, sights and smells, before introducing boarding the train. Please read the document [Out and about](#) for more information on how to do this.
- It can be helpful to complete early journeys with an older puppy or dog that is comfortable travelling.
- When choosing a seat on your first few journeys try to avoid any noisy or blowy heaters.
- Avoid attempting to get on trains with a large gap between the train and the platform edge until your puppy is older and physically able to step over the gap.



Pick a suitable time of day for introductions, avoid times that are known to be very busy.



Teaching foundations

Your Puppy Development Advisor will take you through this guidance practically for your puppy's first time on transport. However, it's good to read this information to prepare for this visit.

Our aim of the exercise is for your puppy to be comfortable getting on and off public transport and to be able to travel confidently for a few stops.

Stage 1: Alighting and getting off

- Always ensure that both you and your puppy are well away from the platform or road edge as the bus or train approaches.
- Support your puppy with any sudden loud noises such as trains going through a station, brakes being applied/released, or a horn being sounded by pairing the noise with a reward.
- When the transport doors open, move towards the opening, and watch what your puppy does. If they approach themselves, then follow them. If not, step onto the bus or train yourself and watch your puppy.
 - If your puppy immediately follows you on a loose lead, reinforce them with a few food rewards and then step back off the bus or train so that they follow.
 - If your puppy doesn't follow you, avoid luring them with a food reward, and instead step back towards your puppy. Approach the bus or train again.
- If your puppy is not gaining confidence with stepping on the bus or train, still doesn't approach or show signs they may be uncomfortable then stop the session and take a break. If this continues speak to your PDA before continuing with the introduction.
- On the next visit, go back a step to standing at the bus stop or train platform and giving them a food reward when the doors open. If you can practice stepping over gaps or stepping onto things separately that might help your puppy, feel more confident next time.

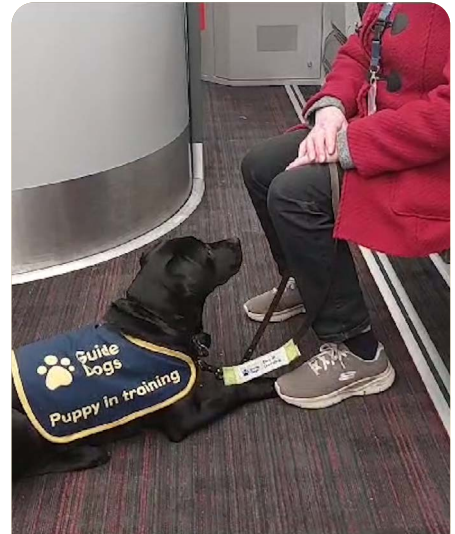


Every puppy is different, allow your puppy the time they need to build confidence.

- When your puppy is ready (this could take multiple visits) invite them to step onto the bus or train and reinforce them, then step off again.
- Repeat a few times until your puppy is happily stepping on-off. This may mean letting the bus or train go and waiting for the next one if appropriate and necessary.

Stage 2: Travelling

- Once you have practiced this over a few sessions and your puppy is relaxed and comfortable enough to step on-off, then consider going for a short journey.
- Don't expect your puppy to settle on these early journeys. Simply focus on making it positive and let them position themselves as they choose. Some puppies find it more comfortable to lie down, while others prefer to sit or stand up.



Video: Public transport information.



Being a partnership

- You'll only really know if your puppy is relaxed getting on public transport and travelling the next time you come to repeat it. Many puppies appear to consolidate their experiences between outings.
- It's important that your puppy is comfortable travelling on a variety of types of public transport. Follow the same approach as above when introducing any new form of transport such as trams, tubes, or ferries. As your puppy becomes more experienced with different forms of transport, you should find that you don't need to do this over as many sessions. The best way to determine how quickly you should progress is monitoring and following your puppy's body language.