

Travelling in the Car

Whether driving to the corner shop, dropping the kids at school or heading out of the city on a holiday, you need to keep your dog safe while riding in the car. Car safety for your dog is easy. By following a few simple steps, car safety for dogs is easy—your dog’s life depends upon it.

Buy a good quality **car harness** and/or **seat belt attachment** for your dog and buckle up for every single trip in the car—even if you are just driving around the block. Although not the law in all Australian states and territories, it should be. While your dog’s life is seriously at risk if you fail to strap them in, he is not the only one that depends on car safety—an unrestrained dog can cause a fatal injury to any other passenger in the car.

Train your dog to jump in the car on cue but also to “wait” when you open the car or wagon door. This prevents them from jumping out until you have clipped on the lead and removed the seat belt attachment—in that order!

If you own a sedan, position and secure your dog on the back seat using the seat belt attachment. Follow the instructions that accompany the car harness to ensure that the harness is fitted correctly and that your dog is properly secured in the car.

Water proof car seat covers specifically designed for dogs will offer protection for your upholstery. Alternatively, create your own using a good quality table protector to provide a thick, waterproof layer. Cover with a single bed flat sheet to provide a layer that prevents dirt or hair from going through.

If you own a wagon, position your dog in the cargo area. Even with a cargo barrier, your dog should still travel in a car harness and be secured with a short lead or seat belt attachment to one of the “tie down” points in the wagon. This ensures that your dog is not thrown around the wagon area and does not jump out of the car when the wagon door is opened.

Install a “dog safe” **cargo barrier** or “dog guard” in your wagon to prevent your dog (or luggage) from being thrown into the passenger cabin. Keep in mind that in an accident where the wagon door is damaged and unable to be opened, some cargo barriers do not have access panels for you to get your dog out through the passenger cabin. Carry a glass hammer or specifically buy a barrier that gives you access to your dog from the passenger area.

Airbags are dangerous for dogs. While airbags save human lives they are not safe for dogs. In fact, no testing has been done to determine what would happen if a curtain airbag deployed while a dog had his head out the window. If you have a car with curtain airbags do not allow your dog to put their head out the window. Curtain airbags deploy at a speed of up to 300km an hour. The impact is likely to severely injure or kill your dog. Front airbags will also cause severe or fatal injury to dogs. Never allow dogs to ride in the front seat or on your lap (this is illegal in some states), as the distance between the dogs face and front airbag is too short.

Transport your dog in a **crate** that is securely tied down to prevent it from shifting in the event of an accident. Crates provide an alternative to having your dog on the seat.

Use **window vents** so you can provide your dog with good airflow yet prevent any temptations to jump out of the car. Window vents are available at most large pet stores.

Open your windows. Dogs love to put their head out the window—but it is dangerous for their eyes, ears or in the event of an accident. Compromise and open your windows just enough so your dog can smell the air outside but not squeeze his head out. Dogs love to smell the air, as it is one of the ways they navigate or work out where they are.



Always take spare leads, harness, towel, poo bags, water, water bowl, treats and first aid kit with bandages. You never know when you may need them.

If your dog experiences **car sickness**, a ride in the car can be a nightmare for you both. Try opening the window so your dog can put his nose out as this can help the brain, eyes and ears to be in balance. Try one of the Bach flower remedies or ginger (a small portion of a ginger flavoured biscuit) to calm your dog before you travel. Canine calming music such as “Through a Dogs Ear” may also help. Your vet can prescribe medications to reduce motion sickness and associated nausea.