



10-Step Plan to Get Your Dog to Love the Car

This plan will gradually desensitize your dog to the car while at the same time getting him to associate it with amazing, yummy food, rather than scary things. This plan is for dogs who get anxious on car journeys, rather than dogs who whine with excitement.

- ◆ You're going to **need lots of amazing treats**. Why? Because we're going to change how your dog feels about the car, by **making the car predict amazing things i.e., food!**
- ◆ Your dog is only going to **get a treat after you start each step**. Don't give treats then start the step... Do it the other way around!
- ◆ You're going to **repeat** each step. And you're going to do it **as many times as it takes** for your dog to look like he's loving that step.
- ◆ If your dog looks really scared by a step, stop. Then try an easier step. Never force your dog to do any step that makes him anxious.
- ◆ Follow this exact process on each step:
 - ▶ You start the step
 - ▶ Start happy talk, or "good boy", or "well done" if you don't want to happy talk
 - ▶ You reach into your treat pouch and start a very generous flow of treats.
 - ▶ Keep treating for a few seconds after you've finished the step

You start the step THEN...

...start happy talk and treats.

Stop treats

Step	What's happening	What you need to do	Success tips
1	Enter the garage (if the car is in the garage) and move next to the car.	Do lots of happy, clappy, "who's a good your dog" talk as soon as your dog sees the car. Then make it rain something amazing like cooked chicken, hotdogs, burgers, or anything your dog finds irresistible!	Start to feed 2 seconds after your dog has noticed the car; continue feeding for 2 seconds after turning back on the car. Be VERY generous. You can't be too generous!
2	Open the back passenger door; close	Do the happy talk and food again!	



Step	What's happening	What you need to do	Success tips
3	With the back passenger door open, pick your dog up and place them the back seat, close the door for 30 seconds	Same thing - yup, more chicken!	Feed your dog 2 seconds after you put him on the back seat—dropping treats onto the back seat. Open the door just before your dog finishes.
4	With the back passenger door open, get your dog to go onto the back seat, and close the door for 60 seconds.	Same thing - yup, more chicken!	Feed your dog 2 seconds after you put him on the back seat—dropping treats onto the back seat (you might need to have the window open to do this). Open the door just before your dog finishes.
Step	What's happening	What you need to do	Success tips



5	With your dog on the back seat of the car, close the door, turn the engine on	Don't think I need to tell you!	Feed treats to your dog on the back seat just after you sit down.
6	Turn the engine on, shift to drive, and drive to the end of the driveway or 5 meters.	Use happy talk but obviously don't treat until you stop. (This is where a remote feeder would be very handy)	Feed treats to your dog on the back seat as soon as you stop.
7	Drive a short way to the end of the street	Happy talk plus delicious chew or other edible that will last more than a few seconds	Use something that your dog can chomp on while you drive. As soon as you stop, take it away so that your dog thinks "Oh, so I only get that when the car is moving".
8	Drive to a green space or somewhere with lots to sniff, no more than 3 minutes away	Happy talk, give your dog a chew, then your dog comes out of the car on arrival for a good sniff.	The chew and the sniff are going to both help with your dog's association that cars = good stuff!



Step	What's happening	What you need to do	Success tips
9	Drive to the park	Happy talk, something delicious to chew on, then let the pup out at the park for a huge after-car party! Repeat on the way home.	Same thing. Getting to a fun place will reinforce how totally amazing the car is!
10	Now drive 5 minutes to somewhere less interesting.	Happy talk, something delicious to chew on, then let the pup out at the park for a huge after-car party! Repeat on the way home.	You can now gradually start to build up from 5 minutes. Do different times and go on different types of roads.

If you find you are struggling to help your dog using these tips you can always call our Help Line at 403-723-6019, book a consultation via our website at

<https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/services/pet-training/private-consultations/>

Or, register for one of our behaviour classes on our website at

<https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/services/pet-training/training-classes/#>