

Travel & Transport Prep — Handler Checklist

How dogs that travel for a living are prepared.

Airline cabins, hotels, and cross-country drives are skills. They're built deliberately, weeks before the first real trip — not improvised at the gate.

Use cases & applications

EP dogs traveling with principals

For: EP teams, family offices

Hotel manners, restaurant down-stays, vehicle transitions, and TSA / customs prep.

Service-dog public access

For: Service-dog handlers

Airline cabin etiquette, equipment desensitization, and access-challenge handling.

Show & sport circuit dogs

For: Conformation handlers, sport teams

Crate-in-vehicle conditioning, hotel kennel manners, and recovery routines on the road.

Handler how-tos

Pre-trip checklist for an airline cabin dog

- 1 30 days out: dog must settle for 90 minutes in the carrier at home without vocalization.
- 2 14 days out: full dress rehearsal — carrier, leash, ID, vest — in a high-traffic public space.
- 3 7 days out: vet visit, updated health certificate, copy of vaccinations in two places (printed + phone).
- 4 Day of: short morning walk, light meal 4 hours before, water restricted 2 hours before boarding.
- 5 Onboard: settle the dog under the seat in front, ignore the dog for the first 10 minutes. Calm sets the tone.

Field checklist (check as completed):

- ☐ 30 days out: dog must settle for 90 minutes in the carrier at home without vocalization.
- ☐ 14 days out: full dress rehearsal — carrier, leash, ID, vest — in a high-traffic public space.
- ☐ 7 days out: vet visit, updated health certificate, copy of vaccinations in two places (printed + phone).
- ☐ Day of: short morning walk, light meal 4 hours before, water restricted 2 hours before boarding.
- ☐ Onboard: settle the dog under the seat in front, ignore the dog for the first 10 minutes. Calm sets the tone.

Road-trip conditioning for non-car dogs

- 1 Week 1: feed every meal in the parked car. Engine off. Door open.
- 2 Week 2: meals in the car, engine on, no movement.
- 3 Week 3: 5-minute drives to nowhere, ending at home. No vet, no park, no destination.
- 4 Week 4: progressively longer drives, always ending with something neutral or positive.
- 5 Never combine the first car trips with the vet, the groomer, or boarding drop-off.

Field checklist (check as completed):

- ☐ Week 1: feed every meal in the parked car. Engine off. Door open.
- ☐ Week 2: meals in the car, engine on, no movement.
- ☐ Week 3: 5-minute drives to nowhere, ending at home. No vet, no park, no destination.
- ☐ Week 4: progressively longer drives, always ending with something neutral or positive.
- ☐ Never combine the first car trips with the vet, the groomer, or boarding drop-off.

Safety notes

Read before every session. These are non-negotiable.

- ! Verify health certificate (USDA APHIS) requirements at least 30 days out for international travel.
- ! Do not feed within 4 hours of boarding to reduce GI upset.
- ! Confirm the airline's specific carrier dimensions — they vary by aircraft.
- ! Never combine a dog's first car trips with the vet, groomer, or boarding drop-off.

For agencies & operators

- EP detail prep — dog conditioned to your principal's specific travel patterns and venues.
- Pre-tour conditioning for show / sport handlers with packed season schedules.

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This checklist is a working reference. It does not replace hands-on coaching from a qualified trainer.