**PRACTING TRAVEL SAFETY:**

The purpose of this badge and training is to increase awareness of safety practices, increase responsible parenting practices and aid in accident/emergency prevention and preparedness. By taking a few simple steps prior to leaving home, the handler can greatly decrease the likelihood of having to deal with an emergency situation and will be able to significantly increase the dog’s safety. The Travel Safety badge is not intended as a way for the handler to show how he/she SHOULD travel with the dog, but how he/she CONSISTENTLY DOES travel with the dog.

**RESPONSIBLE PARENTING:**

Responsible parenting is so important whenever a Dog Scout parent is out of his/her home with his/her dog. Family, friends and total strangers watch how we interact with and care for our dogs whenever we are in the eye of the public. Acting responsible and treating our dogs with kindness leads people think and say good things about our dogs. In this way we become role models for others. Conversely, each of us has seen people who fail to clean up after their dogs, allow them to bark incessantly or run loose where not permitted and/or otherwise fail to supervise their dog’s activities. These actions are irresponsible, and we don’t think highly of people or their dogs when we see these things. These types of irresponsible behaviors are often the cause of banning dogs from parks and public places, and of hotels closing their doors to travelers with dogs.

Your positive and responsible actions can help reverse the bans and negative attitudes of some members of the general public, allowing dogs to be welcome in more places. You should always set a good example of a responsible parent with a well-behaved dog. This will help other dog parents see the possibilities and help lead by example.

When traveling, there are many ways to demonstrate responsible parenting. Examples include:

* Cleaning up after your dog and that of irresponsible pet parents when necessary. This includes cleaning up dog waste, vomit, loose hair, dirt and debris. Abandoned piles of dog waste as well as anything else unpleasant are blamed on the dog that is visible, even if that dog didn’t cause the mess. That pile is an unpleasant message to everyone who passes it. Taking a moment to clean up improves the image others have of dogs in public places, so it’s to everyone’s advantage.
* Always be prepared for any mess by carrying clean up supplies with you for all types of accidents and messes.
* Always dispose of your dog’s waste properly. Don’t put it into indoor trash containers or where the odor may offend someone.
* Carry sheets or blankets to put over hotel beds or floors to keep dirt and dog hair contained.
* Never allow your dog to be alone in a hotel room or allow him to bark repeatedly. You can have meals delivered to your room or take the dog with you to a quick serve restaurant or drive thru.
* Don’t allow your dog to make excess noise in hotel rooms, hallways and other public areas. Use tag silencers to limit noise from jangling tags.
* Obey all leash laws or other rules as they apply to everyone, including your well-mannered Dog Scout.
* Make sure your dog makes a good impression by teaching him manners and proper greeting behaviors. Additionally, make sure your dog is always clean, brushed and odor free.
* Always manage your dog and his environment so that he is able to be safe and happy when traveling with you. Be sure to control all interactions between your dog and any people or other animals he meets.
* Think of yourself and your dog as ambassadors for all other handlers and dogs to aspire to. Try to always view your actions through the eyes of someone else, perhaps someone who doesn’t like dogs. Always make a good impression.

**IDENTIFICATION:**

The best way to recover a lost dog is having a means of identifying your dog and letting the person that finds him know how to get in touch with you. Your dog should always have some form of identification on him at all times, such as tags, a microchip or tattoo. Multiple means of identification can be helpful in the event that a collar or tags come off the dog. Having more than one tag attached to your dog’s collar give people multiple ways to find you in the event that your dog becomes lost. A county license tag, rabies tag, dog insurance tag, microchip tag, etc. all provide information that someone may find helpful in trying to locate you.

Microchipping your dog is relatively inexpensive and help your dog be more identifiable since most veterinary offices and shelters have scanners that allow them to read microchips. A microchip is a small implant that carries information and is usually injected between the dog’s shoulder blades or at the base of his neck. Scanning the dog with a special receiver retrieves the information that is stored with the microchip registry and contains your contact information.

**EMERGENCY INFORMATION:**



Another consideration is informing others about the care of your dog in the event of an accident where you become unconscious or so severely incapacitated that you cannot communicate with others. Having emergency information for you and your dog in your vehicle at all times is critical to aiding and caring for your dog even when you can’t.



Information should be placed in an envelope and marked with, “FOR EMERGENCY PERSONEL” or “IN CASE OF EMERGENCY”. A brightly colored envelope works well for this purpose and you should have a sticker clearly visible on the inside of the driver’s side door letting others know where to find your emergency information.



For the Emergency Info pages, put the most important facts first. You can include more detailed info that can be given to whomever will be caring for your dog until the person you designate arrives but keep the critical info as easy to read and locate as possible. There are templates for both [people](http://dogscouts.org/base/tonto-site/uploads/2014/10/Travel-safety-Driver-Info.doc) and [dogs](http://dogscouts.org/base/tonto-site/uploads/2014/10/TravelDogEmergInfoPet.doc) on the [Travel Safety](http://dogscouts.org/base/travel-safety/) page on our web site that you can use to record your emergency information, or you can create a format that works better for your specific situation. The format you use is not as important as making sure the information is there and can easily be located in the vehicle.

You should include color photos of your dog taken from the front and side with your emergency information. Emergency personnel can use the photos in the event that your dog escapes from the vehicle in an accident. You don’t want to wait until you are out of the hospital or until your contact person arrives before a search for your dog is started. Pictures taped to the top of the dog’s crate or laminated and clipped to the location where he is belted in the vehicle are good ideas as well.



Special considerations –

If your dog has any type of behavioral or medical issue you may want to display them on his crate or near where he rides in the vehicle. Things like “Shy Dog” or “Dog Will Bite” or “Special Diet” or “Dog Needs Meds” or “Deaf Dog” can help people that may need to help your dog. You can explain any issues in more detail on the emergency information page so that if your dog has to be in the care of a stranger, they will better understand his needs.

**FIRST AID:**

Even with plenty of precautions, accidents still happen. Being prepared will help you cope with an emergency and handle it, instead of falling apart or not being able to help at all. You should always carry a well-stocked first aid kit in your vehicle. You can build a first aid kit by using the [Suggested First Aid Kit Items](http://dogscouts.org/base/tonto-site/uploads/2014/10/Suggested-first-aid-kit-items.docx) list on our web site. The [First Aid badge](http://dogscouts.org/base/canine-first-aid/), which is a prerequisite for the Travel Safety badge helps to prepare you and your dog for emergencies. The Red Cross and other organizations offer helpful courses in Canine First Aid as well.

Make sure your dog is comfortable wearing a muzzle. In an emergency situation most veterinarians will muzzle an injured dog for everyone’s safety. Because of the situation the dog is likely already stressed and muzzling a dog that is not used to wearing one only adds to his stress level.

**ASSISTANCE FROM STRANGERS:**

If your dog were to get lost or escape from an accident, would he come to a stranger? If not, his chances of being recovered diminish significantly. Teach your dog that it is OK to approach a stranger and let them detain him.

Practice with your dog so that he knows that it’s okay to go to a stranger. At every opportunity, ask people who your dog doesn’t know well to call him without using his name, since in emergency situations strangers won’t know his name or the cue you typically use for a recall. Instead, have people use something like “Here doggie, doggie, doggie!” called in a sweet tone of voice. When the dog goes to the stranger have him/her treat the dog and then allow him to come back to you. You can use a long line to practice if you are working outdoors in an unsecured area.

Gradually increase the criteria for the game by having the stranger take hold of the dog’s collar and then reward him before releasing him back to you. Next, have the stranger hold the collar for longer periods of time before rewarding. Then have the stranger bring the dog back to you while holding his collar before rewarding. Keep working until the dog is comfortable playing the game with you out of sight.

The badge requires you to leave the dog in the car and go out of sight where your dog cannot get to you. A helper or the evaluator will get the dog out of the car and once the dog is loose, a ‘stranger’ will try to capture the dog without using treats, the dog’s name or obedience cues. Using “come here” is allowed, as it is likely to be used by someone not familiar with dogs. The dog should come to the stranger and allow him or her to take the collar. Alternatively, the dog can remain in place and let the stranger approach and capture him. Standing still looking at the door that you went through to get out of sight will not count.

It’s also a good idea to teach your dog an emergency recall with a whistle. This skill can come in handy if your dog accidentally gets loose. It can prevent you from having to chase a dog around the highway or yell for your dog in an unfamiliar neighborhood or hotel parking lot. It also allows more people to help you call your dog because the whistle sounds the same regardless of who is blowing it.

**SECURING THE DOG FOR TRAVEL:**

More and more states are making it the LAW to secure your dog during travel to prevent accidents caused by dog distractions. Anyone that has been in a car with a dog that is barking or jumping around knows how distracting and annoying it can be, and not just for the driver. If the dog is barking, lunging or jumping inside the vehicle, passengers may start to yell at the dog, causing further distraction to the driver. Dogs should be always be secured in the vehicle when they travel to prevent distraction and protect them in the event of a crash.

Using a **crate** to secure your dog is one way to keep him safe in a vehicle. Recent studies have shown that hard-sided airline approved crates perform better than wire ones in a crash. Heavy duty crates made from a single piece of plastic or metal perform better than airline crates. Though these types of crates provide excellent piece of mind, the downside is that they can be expensive. Soft-sided crates should be avoided if at all possible since they provide no protection from crushing and are nearly impossible to secure to the vehicle. If you plan to use a crate, purchase the best crate you can afford.

If possible, avoid putting crates in the back of the vehicle since this area of the vehicle is vulnerable in a rear-end accident. Crates should be secured to the vehicle for maximum safety. In the event of a rollover or hard impact crash, the crate itself with the dog inside can become a deadly flying object. When it lands the crate can be crushed and cause injury to the dog, or it may pop open and eject the dog.

Using a **seatbelt harness** to secure the dog in the vehicle is a good alternative to a crate providing the seatbelt you choose is crash rated. There are many different types of seatbelts on the market but not all of them are rated for impact. Most are only to secure the dog and keep him from jumping around in the vehicle. In the event of a crash the buckles or stitching on these types of seatbelts can break leaving your dog unsecured and possibly causing severe injury. The straps on the seatbelt should be wide enough to offer support without cutting into the dog during an impact.

Any plastic snaps on a seatbelt harness should be only to keep the harness on the dog, and not to take any force from an impact. Heavy-duty D rings and double or triple stitched nylon webbing should take all the force, along with whatever is used to attach the dog's seatbelt to the vehicle. This could be a heavy-duty quick release snap or large carabiner made for rock climbing. In some cases, the harness comes with a buckle that snaps into the regular seatbelt closure, just as you buckle yourself in when you get in a vehicle.

The Roadie harness is an example of a crash-rated seatbelt. Some of their models have fleece on the straps that could get hot in warm weather, but it can be wet down to help keep the dog cool if necessary. You can go to the [Ruff Rider web site](https://ruffrider.com/) for more information about the products they have available.

Recent crash tests show that a 35-pound dog strapped in with a seatbelt generates 1,135 lbs. of force in a vehicle traveling at just 30 miles per hour. That’s a lot of force! And the bigger the dog the more force is generated and that increases exponentially as the speed of the vehicle increases. Whether you choose a seatbelt harness or a crate for a restraint system, you’ll want to make sure that it can withstand a tremendous amount of force in case of an accident.

Never seatbelt or crate your dog in the front seat (or any seat) that has an airbag in front of it unless the airbag can be turned off. Just as with a small child, an airbag can seriously hurt or kill a dog.

**TEACHING THE DOG TO RIDE QUIETLY:**

Your dog should learn to ride quietly. Sudden or incessant barking is a distraction and annoyance. If you are aggravated by your dog’s actions or barking, you are more likely to exhibit road rage that can be deadly. Covering your dog’s crate can keep him from barking at everything you pass.

With the help of a friend to drive, you can work on teaching your dog that riding quietly is more rewarding that barking his fool head off. Start out of the car by teaching your dog the “speak” cue, then of course the “quiet” cue. Teach “speak” by saying it just before any action that will cause the dog to bark, like a knock at the door and reward him for barking. Then as the dog settles, say quiet, show him a treat and reward the quiet. Once the dog understands the “quiet” cue learned, you can get in the car. When the dog barks at something, say “quiet” and put a treat right in front of his nose. This will get the dog’s attention and get him to look away from whatever triggered his barking. When the dog is quiet, give him the treat. If you can’t get the dog’s attention back, you may need to move farther away from the trigger.

This same exercise can be practiced solo if you don’t have a helper by parking the car near an area where things passing by the window which might trigger barking. If the dog barks at people going by, park near a sidewalk where people frequently walk. If it is other dogs that set him off, try to park on a street where people walk their dogs. The key is giving the quiet cue, then distracting the dog from the trigger, getting a few moments of quiet and attention from the dog and then rewarding. You may have to start with the trigger far away and barely visible before you can progress to keeping the dog’s attention when the trigger is passing right by the window. Don’t skimp on the rewards during this training. Use something that your dog really loves, and you should soon see improvement.

Do not let your dog ride in a car with its head out the window. Debris thrown up from the tires of the vehicle in front of you can cause serious injury. If a rock thrown up from the roadway can break a windshield, imagine what it can do to a dog's eye or the skin on his head.

 **TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Travel to some types of destinations has special requirements and considerations. Being prepared and avoiding surprises will make your stay much more enjoyable.

**The beach –**

If you plan to take your dog to the beachbe sure that you check in advance to see if dogs are allowed on the beach. Also keep in mind that saltwater in large amounts can cause vomiting and explosive diarrhea. Be sure to wash your dog off with fresh water so that the salt does not cause skin irritations. Burned paw pads from hot sand is another hazard as are washed up jellyfish and fishing hooks. Be sure to bring shade for your dog if you plan to be at the beach for a while and fresh water should always be available. Swimming is a very exhausting activity and the force of the water movement makes it even harder. Don’t let your dog overexert himself. Using a life jacket designed to fit your dog is a good idea and it will allow him to play in the water longer before tiring. If no one is swimming in the area, find out why as there could be a rip tide or other hazardous condition. Supervise your swimming dog closely so he doesn’t try to “fetch” a jellyfish or become shark food.

**Arid destinations or warm weather travel –**

The southwest U.S. is beautiful but poses some unique hazards. Because of the high temperatures, heat stroke is more likely and can happen faster. Be sure your dog stays cool and drinks plenty of fluid (keep lots of water in your car in case you break down and have to wait by the side of the road.) Scorpions and snakes are more commonly encountered too. Decide if a snakebite kit should be included in your first aid kit. Grass burrs thrive in warmer climates, so tweezers are a good idea. If you are in any desert region, keep in mind that the nights can get very cold with as much as a 70-degree difference in temperatures between night and midday. If you need to leave your dog in the car for brief periods of time (such as during your potty break), getting a “Remote Starter” on your vehicle can save you a lot of worry. It allows you to start the engine (including the A/C or Heater) without a key in the ignition. The engine will run for 12-15 minutes before automatically turning off. If the brake pedal is pressed while the remote start is activated, the engine shuts off (to prevent theft of the vehicle.) In most states, it is illegal to leave your car engine running with a key in the ignition because of the high theft potential, and a remote start lets you do this legally. Any time you leave your windows down or car running; you run the risk of theft of the dog, the car or both.

Be aware of hot pavement in parking lots and on paved walking trails, especially black top. If you can’t hold your hand on the pavement for 15 seconds, it’s too hot for your dog. Do not allow your dog to do sustained activities (running, swimming, etc.) if the temperature is over 75 degrees or the humidity is high. Do not let your dog swim or drink from any water source that has a lot of algae or where the water looks cloudy or like pea soup. These conditions could indicate a deadly algae outbreak and there is no cure once the dog or human is exposed.

Be prepared. Know the signs of heat stroke before you go and know how to treat it If the dog could get hot or over heated either traveling, or exercising at your destination, keep damp absorbers in your cooler with ice Absorber towels are good for this purpose and are available in the [DSA Camp Store](http://store.dogscouts.org/). Putting one of these towels under the dog as well as one over his back can cool him down quickly. A freezer pack wrapped in a towel can also be put under the dog to cool him. If the dog is close to heat stroke, do not cool him off too fast. Use cool water, not cold, on his legs where the blood vessels are closest to the surface to bring him back to a regular temperature without causing shock. When the temp starts to come back down, stop the cooling and let the body continue what you started, otherwise, you might drop the temp too much.

If alligators are a possibility, do not let your dog swim in or drink from ponds. Keep in mind that in areas where alligators thrive, like in Florida, EVERY natural body of water should be treated as if alligators are always present. Never go kayaking, canoeing or paddle boarding with your dog in these areas.



**Cold destinations or cold weather travel –**

If you will be traveling to an area where freezing temperatures are possible be sure to put extra blankets in the car. This is a good practice if you live where winters are cold as well. You don’t want to freeze if you have car trouble and don’t get assistance right away. “Hot Pockets” type hand warmers can prevent frostbite. Dogs not used to the cold or more active than normal may require a higher calorie diet when traveling. Boots are a good idea to protect the pads of your dog’s feet if he will be walking or hiking on snow and/or ice. Check them often for cuts or snowpack if boots are not worn. Your dog might appreciate a warm coat too. Consider keeping one in the vehicle if you live where winters are harsh.

**Travel out of the country –**

Many European destinations welcome dogs and have much more open policies about dogs in public places. If you plan to travel abroad with your dog, be sure to research the laws, regulations and customs of the areas you will be visiting. An Internet search for “overseas dog travel” may be able to provide you with contact information for your specific questions. Be sure to plan well in advance, so that you can get the required documents, shots and in some cases micro chipping. If you plan to go on any guided tours or out to meals, consider where you dog will stay since leaving him behind in a hotel room is not an option.

**Travel by airplane –**

Dogs can travel by air, but rules and regulations vary by airline. Well in advance of airline travel with your dog, be sure to contact the airlines to get a copy of their rules, policies and procedures for dogs. Some dogs are small enough to travel in the cabin, but most airlines limit the number of dogs in the cabin per flight.

If your dog is traveling as cargo, be sure you get a non-stop flight during a time of day when it won’t be excessively hot or cold while the plane is on the ground. Be sure your dog’s crate is well marked with emergency contact info and that your dog is wearing plenty of identification. Painting the crate a bright color or using colored duct tape on the outside will allow you to easily identify your crate as its being loaded onto the plane. Filling the crate with shredded paper and letting the dog create a “nest” can help comfort the dog. An “anti-vibration” mat for the bottom of the crate can help as well. Drugs used to calm the dog are not recommended because they can interfere with the dog’s ability to regulate his body temperature. Homeopathic solutions like Rescue Remedy may provide a sense of calm and do not have side effects as drugs do.

Whether the dog is traveling in the cabin or as cargo take care to ensure that the dog is well identified in his crate. Mark the crate clearly with identification and consider putting a photo of the dog on the outside of the crate. You can use clear adhesive shipping pockets for this or attach a laminated “badge” securely to the crate. Also, consider attaching a slip lead to the crate marked with the words “for emergency use only”.

**Staying in hotels or rentals –**

Many hotel chains now welcome guests with dogs. Be prepared before you leave home by identifying suitable hotels along your route so that you know where they are should you need them. A quick internet search to locate hotels may save you some headaches if you need to stop unexpectedly. Be aware that some hotels that do allow dogs have weight restrictions or a restriction on the number of dogs allowed in the room.

When you check in be sure to ask what areas should be used to walk your dog. Never allow your dog to use landscaped areas as a bathroom. Ask if the grass has been sprayed recently so that you don’t walk your dog in areas where chemicals have been applied as these chemicals can be dangerous to your dog should he lick them from his feet.

Your dog’s water bowl should be kept in the bathroom where spills won’t get the carpet wet. It’s recommended that you never bathe your dog in a hotel but sometimes it’s absolutely necessary. Be prepared and bring your own towels in case you have to rinse the dog off. Never leave ANY dog hair in the hotel tub/bathroom. If it’s warm enough, the hotel might have an outside hose you could use instead of the tub. Bringing a little bottle of doggie shampoo can help.

This should go without saying, but only take reliably housetrained dogs to hotels and watch all dogs closely at first in case they try to "mark" the room. Always take clean up supplies with you regardless of how good your dog has been in the past. The supplies can come in handy if your dog gets sick too.

Be sure to tip the housekeeper at the hotel. It’s likely that they have a bit of extra work even if you clean the room very well. Remember that how you treat hotel staff, guests and property reflects on all of the guests with dogs that come after you. If all dog owners are conscientious it’s likely that more hotels will welcome dogs in the future.

**Visiting friends and family –**

If you are visiting others with your dog, be sure to verify in advance that your dog is welcome. Let your hosts know anything about your dog that they might not realize. Sometimes people without dogs don’t realize what it means to have a dog in the house. Ask your hosts to determine ahead of time what areas of the house or yard are off limits to the dog and get them orient you to the house and property before getting the dog out of the car. Before turning your dog loose in an unfamiliar fenced yard, take a walk around to check for fence openings or gaps, poisons and other dangers or escape possibilities. This is especially true if your hosts don’t have dogs as they might not be aware of the dangers.

Teaching your dog the “magic line” can work wonders. Teach your dog not to cross over a leash or rope laid on the floor the same way you can teach him to “wait” at a doorway. This allows you to restrict areas easily while the dog is supervised without having to bring baby gates. Teaching your dog to “go to his mat” or lay quietly in a crate can make mealtimes pleasant. Communicating openly with your hosts and addressing any concerns in advance will save you a lot of headaches and being prepared helps to make your visit much more pleasant.

**GENEERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION:**

The information included below can help when traveling, regardless of your destination.

Be sure to provide everything needed to care of any dogs you are leaving behind including information on how to care for the dogs, how much and when to feed, and your veterinarian’s phone number and location. Contact your vet to let them know you authorize any emergency treatment that is needed. This pre-planning can eliminate delays in trying to reach you for approval if necessary. Be sure to give your dog sitter your itinerary and your phone number.

Always travel with lots of towels. Your host doesn’t want you using his/her towels to wipe down your dog, and you shouldn’t use hotel towels for this either. Towels have many other uses for towels when traveling too. Beach towels make handy places to sit and bright colored hand towels work well as flags. Large towels can provide shade when draped over a crate or x-pen. Beach towels can be used to lift an injured dog. Towels are also great for when you don't want to sit on a wet car seat or if you or your dogs are wet.

Make sure to pack a couple extra days of the dog’s food and daily meds, just in case you are delayed, or your trip is unexpectedly extended.

Prior to leaving, find a veterinarian at your destination and keep the phone number handy. It’s much easier to be prepared in the event of an emergency rather than try to locate this information when you may be stressed or panicked. Keep the 1-888-426-4435 number for animal poison control handy. If you need it, you’ll likely need it QUICK and won’t have time to locate it in an emergency.