

## Top Travel Tips

B. Dr. Lin Day ([www.babysensory.com](http://www.babysensory.com))

Keeping small children seated, quiet and entertained on a car or plane trip is a frightening prospect for most parents. But, with a little planning, travelling can be a fun experience for children and a relaxing one for parents. Here are some ideas on how to prepare for the journey and how to keep your child busy and happy on the way.



### Planning your trip

Have everything from the entertainment to nappies, wet wipes, medicine, spare clothes and the first aid kit prepared in advance and stored within easy reach. Rubbish bags are essential to keep the car clean and they may be useful if your child suffers from motion sickness. Take enough finger food and bottled water to last the journey, and any unexpected delays, but avoid sugary snacks since these will increase energy levels. High protein foods such as slices of fruit, cucumber, and cheese will fill your child up and make her drowsy.

Start your trip an hour or so before your child's normal nap time. Allow him to run about and let off steam before getting in the car. The chances are that he will amuse himself for the first part of the journey and then fall asleep for the rest of it. An extra rear-view mirror will allow you to keep an eye on your child without having to turn around.

If you are on the road, frequent stops will make the journey more bearable. Your child will enjoy stretching his legs, getting some fresh air and having a change of scenery.

Being comfortable is all-important on a long trip. Clothes made from natural fibres are more comfortable than synthetic ones. Snuggle your child up in a soft blanket or use it as a pillow. If your child is potty-training, put a training pad or small towel on the car seat so any accidents will be contained. You may be unable to stop for a toilet break on demand.

If you are catching a plane, get to the airport early. There is nothing worse than struggling through check-in when you are late. If your stress levels are high, your child will pick up on your mood, which will only make matters worse.

A pull-along suitcase will keep your child entertained and serve as a resting place when he gets tired. If you are travelling with a baby put him in a metal-free sling, so that he can sleep without being disturbed during the security check-in.

Airport regulations permit up to 100ml in the way of milk and drinks, although exceptions may be made for the under-twos. If your baby is bottle-fed, take powdered formula milk and buy bottled water in the secure area. Ask the cabin crew to top it up with boiled water during the flight.

Changes in air pressure can make little ears pop. Sucking and swallowing helps to relieve air pressure in the middle ear, so keep drinks or pacifiers available for takeoffs and landings.

Strap children in on long-haul flights. If you fall asleep, they may wander off. Seat straps will also keep them safe during air turbulence or in the event of an emergency.

### **Best travel toys**

The best travel toys are quiet and compact and don't break easily. Toys with small, moving parts are bound to end up under the seat. Favourite soft toys and books are essential, but have some new toys to provide interest and excitement. Wrap these up in paper to keep little hands busy. Offer one thing at a time, such as a plastic food container. When the novelty wears off, give your child the lid to play with to maintain interest.

### **Babies**

Containers that fit together are fun to play with. They can be stacked, nested or used as hiding places for toys. A fabric scarf offers endless play and learning opportunities from hand-eye coordination to peek-a-boo, tickling and texture exploration. A rattle is a must, but keep it in reserve for a difficult moment. It could save the day!

Sophie the Giraffe, a phthalate-free rubber toy that can be gripped, squeezed or mouthed is a popular baby toy. A familiar book can be comforting and your baby will enjoy turning the pages to find her favourite characters. Texture books that contain hidden surprises also provide entertainment and amusement. If you are on the road, put on a nursery rhyme CD or sing a song. A Baby Sensory baby will be instantly calmed by 'Say Hello to the Sun'.

### **Toddlers**

A reusable sticker book will keep little hands busy. Stickers can be stuck on the window or the seat without any harm being done. A toy catalogue is great fun to look at and toddlers can colour in the things they would like to have. Activity books, which include dot-to-dot, mazes and patterns, will provide entertainment and distraction. If crayons are a problem, try an 'Etch A Sketch'. Simply draw on the wipe off mat with the magic pencil and start again without having to change the paper.

Chunky pipe cleaners that can be transformed into fascinating shapes will provide amusement. Attach them together to make animals, bracelets and necklaces. Small strips of masking tape stuck to your toddler's legs and arms will provide endless fun. It can be removed easily (unlike a plaster) and gives a pleasant sensation. An interesting way to entertain your toddler is to provide a straw and a drinking cup filled with ice cubes. The straw can be flicked, bent and twisted in a number of different ways and the melting ice will promote the development of many science concepts.

### **Older children**

Older children may sit quietly listening to their favourite music on an MP3 player with headphones. A favourite book will keep them entranced for some time, but avoid books with small print in the car or you could end up with a sick child. Books about the geography, history, customs, animals and plant life of your destination will also

keep them busy. A map and compass is great fun for children who want to help navigate the route.

Classic travel games such as connect the dots, hangman, tic-tac-toe and magnetic games such as checkers, chess and snakes and ladders can make the journey zoom by. Scrabble is an ideal game for two players, but children can invent their own crossword puzzles too. Electronic games are very popular, but make sure that they are turned off during take-off and landing or they may interfere with the aircraft's navigational system.

Try some of these tips on your next trip and you and your family may get to your destination in a more relaxed and happy frame of mind!