

Traveling With Young Children: Use More Than Electronics!

Early Childhood
Education

Information
Brief

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Over the hills and through the woods to Grandma's house we go. Yes, travel with children can mean challenges and stress for both adults and children. With a little preparation and advanced planning, the trip can be relaxing, rewarding and even fun, without using electronics the whole trip.

Travel strategies on the trip away:

1. Map out your trip with your child. You can purchase or download a simple map. Mark your route and wherever possible use landmarks for the child to look for. Glue the map to a colored manila folder and secure a marker of some kind to the folder. This will make the map readily available. When you get close to one of the landmarks alert your child so they can get ready to mark it off.



2. As you plan your drive keep in mind you will need to make more stops to allow for children to get out and move. During one of our trips our daughter was learning to skip and so we practiced at each stop.
3. Pack plenty of snacks and drinks. Allow the child to have input into what they would like for snacks. This gives the child



a sense of participation and some sense of control.

4. Put together a variety of folder activities for the child to have when the "are we there yet" moment pop up. Folder activities can be a fun and easy way to help the child develop some skills in a fun way. Plan the folder activities based on your child's interests and developmental abilities. Some ideas include:

- Sorting: Attach six small plastic bags to a manila folder. In each folder place one color M&M or Skittles. Give the child an unopened bag of candy and have them sort according to color. Not only do they have a fun activity but they can have a sweet snack as well. To extend this activity they can count how many are in each bag.



- Obtain pictures of the people the child will be exposed to during their visit. Put all the pictures into a plastic bag and attach to a manila folder. Have a plastic bag for each family attached to the manila folder. Grandma and Grandpa, Aunt Mary, Uncle Dave, Ginger, Max, and Carrie. The child can then pull out the pictures and put them with the correct family. This will help with the arrival and time there.
- Attach a bag of colored PomPoms to a manila folder. Attach several bags with numbers on them to the manila folder. The child can then put the

number of pompoms into the correct bag. Variety would be to write the number on the folder and attach a glue stick and the child can glue the pompoms next to the number.



5. Books! Books! Books! You can't have enough of these. These can be a child's favorite or a few new ones as well.
6. Meal times can be stressful when traveling. Try to stop at a variety of places and keep as close to the child's normal food as possible. Too much processed food will make the child uncomfortable and raise behavioral issues.

While at your destination

1. Keep to a routine. We all know that long car trips, staying in strange houses or hotels, being around unfamiliar people can take a toll on any child (and adult). Everyone seems to do better when they stick as close as possible to familiar routines. Try to keep bed time and wake up time the same. If a child has a bath before bed, continue to keep this routine.
2. Be sure you have one-on-one time with your child each day. Unfamiliar crowds can be overwhelming for young children so be sure to give time for child to ask questions, talk, and snuggle.
3. Try to prepare your child for an event that will be taking place so they can mentally prepare. Give them the known details and why this event is taking place.

4. Give your child verbal clues before events take place. For example, in 5 minutes we will be leaving to go cut down the Christmas tree. In two minutes we will be leaving do you have your coat and boots ready?
5. Take lots of pictures during your time with family and friends. Try to have some printed prior to the trip home.

On the trip home

1. Many of the activities from the trip there can be used on the trip home. You can also talk about favorite times and activities with your child.
2. If you were able to print pictures the child can use them to just look at or talk about what event the picture showed.
3. Perhaps you could start a scrapbook of the holiday experience with your child.
4. Just remember that everyone will be a little more tired and so keep that in mind.

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