

TOP TWELVE TIPS

for Air Travel with Kids

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1 Try to plan a flight during nap or sleep time hours.If this timeframe is not possible, give your children a chance to run around and release some extra energy before boarding the plane.

2 Request an aisle and window seat if you are reserving two seats.This will increase the possibility of gaining extra room from an unoccupied middle seat and provide easy access to the bathroom from the aisle seat. Infants and toddlers with their own ticket are now required to sit on their car seat by the window. If you are unable to arrange seating in advance of travel,plan to arrive at the airport at least an hour before your flight.

3 If your little one is older than two, ask for a special child's meal while making reservations.You can request specific foods or dietary restrictions as well.Make sure to bring a bottle or sippy cup of milk, since the kind your child drinks may not be available on that flight.

4 Prepare fun snacks for the plane. Give your children goodies that they might not normally get at home, which will brighten their spirits and keep them occupied.

5 Pack things for kids to do on the plane. Crayons,stickers, drawing pads, Play Doh,story books or figurines can be wrapped up and opened throughout the trip, another way to keep kids actively engaged,especially during longer flights.

6 Let each child choose a few favorite things to bring along. Keep selections minimal in size and quantity, just enough to provide ample entertainment on the plane.

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7 Pack a small pillow or blanket from home to help your child rest on the plane. Its familiar scent and texture will be more comforting than those provided by the airline.

8 Check as many bags as you can to minimize the stress of carrying both kids and baggage on and off the plane. Airlines do not insure unchecked bags, and it's easy to forget things on the plane after a long trip. Strollers can be dropped off at the door of the plane and picked up at the same place upon landing.

9 Talk to your kids in advance about plane travel rules—no kicking seats, jumping on chairs, yelling or running through the aisles. Explain what it means to be considerate while sitting in close quarters, and that it's hard for adults, too.

10 Pre-Board. Some airlines no longer announce pre-boarding for families with small children. If you want to pre-board, be ready when the flight is called (bags in-hand, tickets out, standing near the jet way door), and politely request pre-board privileges. Most gate agents will allow you to proceed.

11 As soon as you sit down, turn off the overhead air vents. The re-circulated air is not purified and may contain germs that can lead to illness.

12 Don't be afraid to ask flight attendants for help. Most are happy to find a blanket, fill a sippy cup or help mop up a spill. Ask politely, and be clear. You might even be pleasantly surprised by the willingness of nearby passengers to come to your aid, too.

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Remember that all children behave as well as they are treated.

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Adapted from Jan Hunt's *Top Ten Tips for Shopping with Children*, a feature of The Natural Child Project.

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