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Comfort Play
& Teach:

A Positive Approach to Parenting™

Every Day

Tips for Traveling with Your Infant, Toddler or Preschooler

Q: What are some things I can do to prepare for traveling with my infant, toddler or preschooler?

A: Whenever you travel with your family – whether you are enjoying a day trip, a weekend getaway or an adventure abroad – there are many things you can do to reduce stress and make things go smoothly. Simple **Comfort, Play & Teach™** strategies such as packing spare clothes, picture books and a snack, or knowing a few songs and games can help parents make the most out of this time with their child. Use the checklists below to help plan your trip, remember necessary items and keep your child safe and content.

Planning your trip:

Traveling with your child takes a lot of extra preparation time. Packing for a trip includes fitting diapers, bottles, food and clothing into your already stuffed suitcases. Here are some ways to make planning a bit easier.

Set aside time! Build a lot of extra time into your schedules—the more time you add, the less stressed and rushed you'll feel while traveling.

- Avoid scheduling trips during peak travel periods. This will help you stay away from long lines and crowds of passengers.
- Try to coordinate travel with nap times. This works well if you have a fussy child on your hands. However, keep in mind that if your baby naps while you travel, you may have to deal with a wide-awake child when you reach your destination.
- Build in an extra day at the end of your trip for after you arrive back home. This allows everyone some time to catch up on things like sleep and laundry. It also helps you and your baby fall back into your family's natural rhythm.





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Visit the doctor before you go. Check that all your child's immunizations are up to date. Don't forget to find out if you need any extra immunizations, (e.g., a Hepatitis shot if you're visiting the Caribbean). If you're planning an extended trip, book a full check up with your doctor for you and your child, or at least have a telephone consultation.

Making reservations:

Getting the right room or the best seat on the flight can make a family trip go much smoother. Try these suggestions when booking your travel:

To book a hotel/resort room, ask:

- Is there a babysitting service? (What are the hours? Extra cost?)
- Is there a crib available that you can reserve?

To book a restaurant reservation, ask:

- Are there any Early Bird specials (since you'll be eating when baby eats, not when you prefer to eat)?
- Are there high chairs or booster seats available?
- Is there a quiet table or booth in the restaurant? This way, you'll be less likely to disturb others and you'll have more privacy for nursing your baby.

Listen to how your requests are received over the phone. You'll be able to quickly figure out if the restaurant is child-friendly.

To book an airline reservation, ask:

- Is there a child's meal available? Is there an additional fee? What type of food is available? If you have a fussy eater on your hands, you may want to bring extra food.
- Is there a SkyCot or bassinet available for reservation? This is a miniature crib that attaches securely in the airplane. Ask if there are any weight requirements. Some can only accommodate babies up to 20 pounds.
- Does your airline hand out children's entertainment packs? Some airlines keep small toys, child-sized earphones and treats on hand.
- Does your airport have a nursery or fold-down change tables in the washrooms?
- Can you take a fold-down stroller right to your gate?





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What to pack:

- Travel documents (passports, letter of permission from spouse, visas)
- An emergency contact sheet—names, numbers and health information, including medications—and leave a copy with someone at home
- Health care card
- Medications, sunscreen
- Paper towels
- Plastic spoons in a plastic bag
- First aid kit
- A diaper bag with all the necessary items (e.g., extra diapers, ointments, wipes, changing pad, hand sanitizer)

Things for your child:

- Change of clothes
- Toys that interest your child (e.g., squeeze toys, stuffed animal)
- Books that interest your child (e.g., board book for baby, picture book for preschooler)
- CDs or cassettes (with favourite music or stories)
- Plastic bags for dirty diapers and garbage
- Baby food or a snack for your toddler or preschooler
- Child's comfort object (a blanket, pacifier or soft toy)
- Light blanket
- Bibs
- Hat (for sun or winter)





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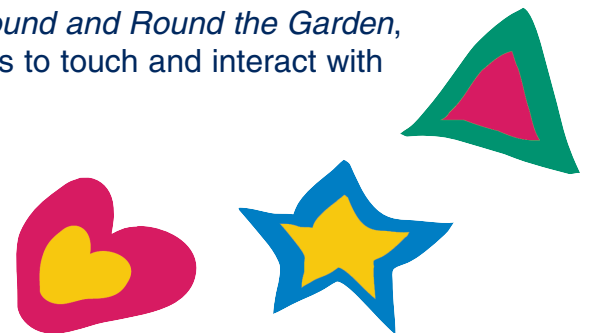
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Travel Activities:

Here are some ideas for interactive play for you and your child during the trip:

- Play guessing games – these games encourage young children to observe and think about things in their environment as well as talk about these. Some examples include:
 - “I Spy with My Little Eye – something that is blue”
 - “I’m thinking of something that starts with the letter ‘A’ ”
 - “I’m a spoon – what am I used for?”
- Tell stories – create your own story together by starting off with “Once upon a time there was a girl who...” Take turns adding a sentence to the story and keep this pattern going until it is finished or your child tires of the activity.
- Create silly rhymes or recite familiar nursery rhymes together.
- Count things – ask your child what she would like to count as she is looking out the window (e.g., cars, trees, signs).
- Read signs – point out common signs that your preschooler may be aware of and beginning to recognize such as “Stop” or “Exit”.
- Sing songs – encourage your child to pick her favourite tunes and sing together. Songs that encourage your child to make sounds or add ideas, like *Old MacDonald*, are always fun!
- Talk together – have a conversation about things that are meaningful to your child, (e.g. what is her favourite thing to do?). Such topics allow you to make wonderful discoveries about her life.
- Games like *peek-a-boo*, simple fingerplays like *Round and Round the Garden*, and clapping games like *Patty Cake* are easy ways to touch and interact with your infant or toddler.





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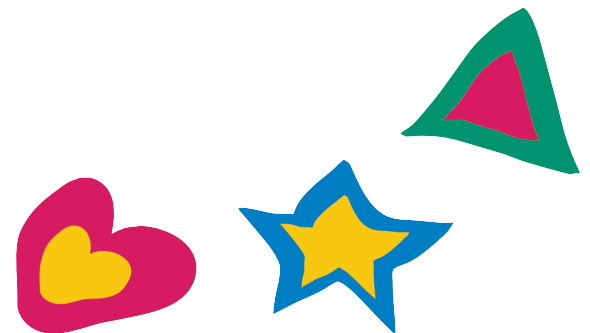
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Q: How do I prepare my child for an exciting special event during vacation or any other time?

A: Young children can bubble with excitement when they are looking forward to a special event - they may be restless and even bouncing off the walls! Whether it is a party, a concert, an excursion, a visitor or a holiday celebration, you can help your child to express his or her feelings in appropriate ways and to understand any parental expectations you might have. Here are some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** suggestions to help you and your child get ready for “the big day”!

Comfort

- Prepare your child for participating in a special event by talking about it ahead of time. Help her to understand what to expect. Will it be crowded and noisy? Will there be concerts and craft activities? What will happen when the event is over? Knowing about the schedule will help your child know what choices will be available to her and let her communicate her own interests and needs.
- Teach your child some simple techniques for relaxing, like breathing deeply or stretching his hands up to the sky to push away the clouds. When he becomes overexcited, say, “You seem very excited right now. Do you want to calm yourself by taking deep breaths or by stretching?” This will help him to be aware of his emotions and give him choices about how to wind down.





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Play

- Give your child sufficient opportunities for physical activity beforehand. Going to a park and climbing, swinging and running will enable her to burn off her built-up energy. Ask your child if she needs to move around for a while before the special event starts. This will help her to recognize her own needs and develop self control.
- Provide your child with drawing materials to express his ideas and excitement about an upcoming event. Encourage him to talk about each picture and offer to write down his words for him. Post his pictures and words. This will help him to know that you share his excitement about the event. Making pictures together will also create an opportunity to give him further information, and to review rules for play and safety.

Teach

- Use a calendar to show your child which day the event is taking place. She can draw an X or put a sticker in each square as she counts the number of days until the event. A visual reminder will help your child to understand that waiting and being patient are part of looking forward to special occasions.
- Explain any expectations and rules you might have. Involve your child in creating a short list of the most important things he needs to remember to have a safe and fun time. If excitement about the event should cause him to forget, you can gently remind him of the safety rules he helped to make up.





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Q: What should I know when travelling with my child?

A: Whenever you are travelling with your child—whether it's around town or out of town for March Break or any other occasion—you can use **Comfort, Play & Teach™** to make the most of your time with your little ones.

If you are going on a trip:

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- If your child has a favourite stuffed toy, blanket, pacifier, etc, don't forget to take it with you on your trip. Children who need a special object to feel safe and secure at home will need it just as much, if not more, while they are away. Make sure to bring extras in case some of these precious objects get lost in transit. This, along with some favourite games and books, will help to maintain a sense of routine and familiarity that will be very comforting to your child in the midst of all the new things he will see and do.

Play

- You may not be able to take a vacation from being a parent, but you can take advantage of your break to explore the more fun aspects of parenting. Take your child to a local festival, ask the hotel staff to help you find children's activities in the area, or simply take the time to play in the water with your child at the pool or beach. By spending time with her and playing with her, you are making her feel important and giving her opportunities to use and develop a wide range of skills.

Teach

- Take advantage of being in a new environment to teach your child about different things. You and your child may be seeing trees, flowers, animals and other things that you never see at home. Outings in your new surroundings are adventures that will stimulate your child's curiosity. Encourage him by showing an interest in his discoveries, pointing out new things, answering his questions and letting him share his impressions with you.





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If you are staying close to home:

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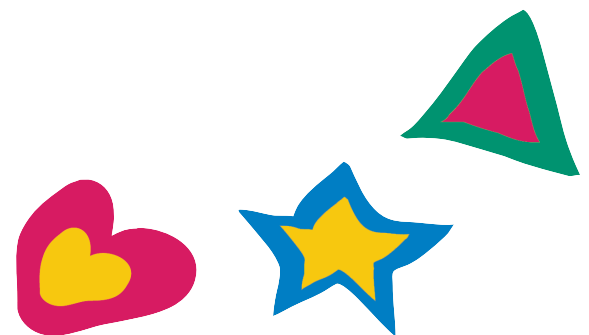
- When you plan special outings, take along what you need to prevent little problems from becoming crises: pack some favourite snacks in case there is no food available when your child gets hungry. Carry a lightweight change of clothing in case of falls, spills, etc. It is also a good idea to bring the stroller in case you end up walking more than you planned. Responding to your child's basic needs in this way will comfort him and help ensure that everyone has a good time.

Play

- While it's tempting to squeeze in lots of activities in the little free time you have with your children, remember that less is often more for young children because they tire quickly. Choose one activity per day and take the time to really enjoy it together. You may also want to invite a friend and her children along. This will allow the activity to be a social one for both you and your child.

Teach

- Plan to arrive at the activity, event or place early in the day when your child is still fresh and has the energy to appreciate what is happening. This way he will be in the best disposition to participate fully and learn new things. Later, discuss with your child what she saw and did and encourage her to share this experience with others who were not there. Doing this will exercise her memory and help her practice her story-telling skills.





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Q: How can I make a long journey more enjoyable for my child?

A: A long car ride to visit a family member can be stressful but it is also a wonderful opportunity for parents and children to enjoy each other's company. **Capitalize on this time to laugh and play games.** This will not only make a tedious journey more entertaining but you will also get a better understanding of how your child is thinking and what is important to her.

When you let your child take the lead in suggesting or inventing her own play activities you are sending an important message. Following rather than always directing tells her that you like and respect her ideas. This will **encourage her to continue thinking and making more decisions.** Here are some ideas for interactive play for you and your child during the drive:

- **Guessing games** – these games encourage young children to observe and think about how objects function in their environment as well as give practice in language. You start off the game but then let your child take the lead so that you have to guess what's in her mind. Some examples include:
 - “I Spy with My Little Eye – something that is blue”
 - “I’m thinking of something that starts with the letter ‘A’ ”
 - “I’m a spoon – what am I used for?”
- **Storytelling** – listening to a story without a picture book takes a lot of concentration and imagination. Create your own story together by starting off with “Once upon a time there was a girl who...” Invite your child to add a sentence to the story. Respond with a new sentence and keep this pattern going until your child has had enough of story creating.





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- **Creating silly rhymes** – use the “phonic families” to devise funny sentences, e.g. the cat sat on a hat looking for a bat; the goat put on his coat and swam to the boat which wouldn’t float.
- **Counting** – understanding the concepts of numbers takes a lot of concrete practice. Ask how many cars of a particular colour can she count? Let her choose the colour and help her when she gets lost with the sequence of numbers; ask your child what else she would like to count as she is looking out the window.
- **Reading signs** – point out common signs that your preschooler may be aware of and beginning to recognize such as “Stop” or “Exit”
- **Singing songs** – encourage your child to pick her favourite tunes and sing together. Also, bring favourite tapes to listen to in the car.
- **Talking** – seize this opportunity to have a conversation about things that you don’t always have time for, e.g. who she likes to play with at school/child care; what is her favourite thing to do during the day at school/child care; what was something funny that happened this week? The topics are endless and allow your child to give you a glimpse into her life.

For more information visit www.investinkids.ca

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