

Tips for Traveling with Special Needs Kids

Jeanette Jones, MOT, OTRL
Occupational Therapist
KCC Assistant Director of OT & Sensory Programs

Spring break is right around the corner, which means vacations are on the horizon for many families. Traveling with children is almost always tricky, but traveling with kids who have special needs adds an extra element of planning. Here are some tips to help make getting there easier!



If your family is flying to your destination, sit down with your child ahead of time to watch airplane videos and role play airport procedures such as security checks, handing over tickets, and boarding the plane.



You might even visit an airport to get your child accustomed to and anticipate the protocols. Take pictures to make a simple picture schedule or sequence story narrative. Many children have an easier time if they know what's ahead.



Prior to the getting on the plane or in the car, have your child participate in physical "heavy work" activities to promote a calm state and help them be able to sit for longer periods. These activities can include:



- Push/pull the luggage
- Arm push-ups on chairs or walls
- Frog-jumps or jumping jacks
- Deep-pressure hugs and squeezes



Be sure to pack plenty of sensory supports! These are a must and will help your child feel calm in an overwhelming environment. They can include:

- Calming music, such as familiar kid songs or classical music selections
- Chewing gum, which can also combat nausea
- Weighted blankets or lap pads for calming deep pressure
- Tactile fidgets for input through the hands (stress balls, hair ties, twisty toys, rubber band balls)



Bring simple activities like puzzles and Legos. Hiding small objects inside a ball of putty for the child to find is another low-demand way to pass the time.



Attach small clothespins to your child's seat and all around their travel area as a simple scavenger hunt.



Provide fine-motor tasks while on the plane, such as sticker books, coloring books, and dry erase boards to keep your child engaged.



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We hope these tips will decrease the stress of traveling and allow you to focus on the fantastic memories you'll make on your trip. Have a great time!