

# Holiday Air Travel Family Style

BY SARA KENDALL



Family trips with children are often where wonderful memories are made, but it's rarely an easy task. Add in traffic jams, winter weather, or delayed flights and you have a perfect storm for stress levels to spike. For both children and adults, disrupted schedules, confined spaces, and over stimulation can be anything but jolly and merry. Our suggestions will guide your family in having a smoother and saner flight to your holiday destination.

**Pack Together** - Get your children involved in making their clothing decisions for the trip. Set them up to make good decisions by giving them the weather forecast at your destination, telling them what kind of activities you have planned, and explaining that luggage space is limited. Have them lay out everything they want to take. Review their clothing choices with them and explain why something is an excellent choice to take and why something might need to stay at home. Keep clothing organized in clear zip-lock bags and label with each kid's name. It will make everything easier to find and dirty clothes can be stowed in them on the return trip home.

**Travel Restrictions** - Check out your airline's website to see how many bags are allowed and the cost for the first bag and each additional one. Unless you have achieved an elevated status in your frequent flyer program, you're going to pay for every bag you check, and in some cases the ones you carry on. If you have them, consider shipping gifts several weeks prior to departure.

Postage might be cheaper than what an airline charges for a checked bag.

Visit the Transportation Security Administration at [tsa.gov](http://tsa.gov) to find out limits for carry-on liquids including baby food, formula, and breast milk. You will have to declare any liquids at security checkpoints.

**Carry-ons** - With the cost of checked baggage fees, it's tempting to cram everything possible in a carry-on. Before you do it, check your airline's policy on carry-ons. Most have restrictions on size and the amount of bags a person can bring on board. Luckily, most airlines still let you check a car seat or stroller for free. Make sure you have plenty of room to pack ample supply of snacks and diapers in case of delays. Pack an extra set of clothes for your little ones in the case someone encounters a glass of spilled juice or doesn't make it to the bathroom on time. A pillow and blanket are also good to have for nap time.

**Allow Extra Time** - On departure day, leave early to give your family plenty of time to navigate through crowded roadways, packed parking lots, and long lines at the airport security. Waiting in the long bathroom lines and sitting down for a snack needs to be taken in account in your time equation. To save some precious minutes, pack some

snacks to avoid the hassle of food court lines.

**Find the Family Lane** - Take advantage of the family lanes at the airport. In most airports, your family can get through security quicker via going through the family lanes. Kids 12 and under do not have to remove their shoes.

**Take-off and Landing** - The change in air pressure can cause unexpected ear pain. The action of chewing or sucking will make air pressure change easier on ears. A baby can be given a bottle, a toddler a lollipop, and an older child a piece of chewing gum to ease the discomfort.

**En-route Entertainment** - Load up electronic devices with new games and kid-friendly apps that your children have never tried. Headphones or ear buds are essential to keeping the noise levels down. Also, don't forget to charge the batteries or to have fresh ones with you on the plane. Pack a couple of new magnetic games and puzzles. A new book of stickers is another good choice.

**Realistic Expectations** - Parents do worry about their children's behavior and how other passengers may react. Traveling takes a toll on everyone, but it's harder for children to overcome a total change in their daily routine and handle sitting in a confined space for an extended period of time. Being tired and restless can result in cranky behavior. Hopefully, you can avoid most of your children's unpleasant behavior, but go ahead and expect some attitude from someone nearby. Keep your emotions in check. Thank your fellow passengers for their understanding.

Take our suggestions and add them to your family's flight plan. If you pack your patience and sense of humor, you will be ready for anything. If all else fails, remember at some point, the flight will land.

*Sara Kendall is a freelance writer who has traveled halfway across the globe with her kids and lived to tell about it.*

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