

## TRAVEL

# Readers offer their tips on traveling with children

BY BARRY JENSEN  
STAFF WRITER

Because the summer driving season is not that far away, we offered several tips for traveling in a car with children. Readers responded with their own tips — and suggested improvements in some of the tips we gave.

Marjorie Nanan Mugerian of Farmington Hills suggested one we never thought of: Install a nine-inch TV/VCR combination with an adapter cord so it can be plugged into the cigarette lighter.

"I can't tell you what a blessing it was to have children watch video tapes while driving through a snow storm in Ohio!" Mugerian explained.

Judith Williams of Livonia shared a whole raft of tips. She echoed Mugerian in recommending electronic gear, only in Williams' case, she suggested the most important item is a radio/cassette player and head phones for each child.

"From the time our children were 2, we bought them children's books with accompanying tape cassettes. They are a great help in teaching children to read."

Hand-held computer games

## Take these along when you travel

**Drinking water**  
**Pillow for each passenger**  
**Beach towels**  
**9" TV with VCR and cigarette lighter adapter**  
**Magnetic/board games**  
**Children's books with accompanying tapes**  
**Lap board**  
**Colored pencils**  
**Walkman**  
**Hand-held computer games**  
**Play Doh**  
**Action figures/dolls**  
**Ball/Frisbee**  
**Food box: tissue, toilet paper, paper plates, paper towels, utensils, sharp knife, plastic glasses, flexible straws, plastic bags and twist ties, pretzels, goldfish crackers (avoid sweets), breakfast drink, sweet rolls**

are good, "but only the kind where you can control or eliminate the volume," she said. Having sat in the same living room with a child playing a hand-held Donkey Kong game with no volume control, I can imagine how

much more stressful stupid little tunes played on tiny speakers must be.

Williams recommended Play Doh and miniature cooking/baking utensils, especially for air travel. Every airline employee

she has ever dealt with liked this idea for keeping the kids busy and out of the other passengers' hair.

Always get up and go to bed at the driver's normal waking time. (We had recommended at the child's normal waking time.) "Children are very flexible and can sleep easily in the car. It is very important for the driver to be well rested."

Also, we usually traveled with just one child. That obviously left out an important part of car travel with children: keeping the peace.

"If you have a van or station wagon, load the car in such a way that you keep the better part of two seats vacant. Children must sometimes be separated to avoid conflicts." Or at least put the food box, cooler, pillows or towels between the children to create two private spaces.

"Pack the suitcases as you only have to bring one of them into the motel. Remember, you'll have to bring in the food box, cooler and children's toys."

"Remove toys from their commercial packaging and store in

plastic bags. Have a canvas tote bag or shopping bag for each child's toys. These prevent toys from being thrown all over the car when not in use and are very easy to carry."

Children should be treated as people who can make the trip better, not just as passengers who are to be catered to.

"When your children have their driver's licenses, let them take turns driving. Interstate driving is much different than city driving, and while this may slow you up when they are first learning, it's a valuable skill to teach your children."

"Let older children help fill the gas tank, check air pressure in tires, check and add oil and clean windows. Allow older children to read hotel/motel guides and help plan the night's stop, based on driving time and speed limits."

## Recommended take-alongs:

Colored pencils, never crayons. (If an adult or responsible child is in charge of it, a battery-operated pencil sharpener. This can be in the trunk and used to

sharpen pencils at the next rest stop. It can be emptied at the rest stop so that there is little danger of having shaving scattered throughout the car.)

Lap boards. (If you are going to have writing tools, you have to have something to write on.)


Action figures/dolls. Ball, Frisbee. "Items like these encourage the kids to stretch their muscles when you make rest stops."

Magnetic/static games, such as chess, checkers, Scrabble.

"Always bring drinking water."

She suggested replacing our suggested blankets with extra large beach towels. Sounds good to me.

"These tips worked extremely well for many years and thousands of miles. The efforts we put in to accommodating the children were well worth it. We enjoyed traveling and looked forward to it every summer, Christmas break and Easter vacation. Our children are now married adults who love to travel and are teaching their spouses to enjoy it also."



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