



## **UP, UP AND AWAY! TRAVELING BY AIR WITH KIDS: CREATIVE TIPS AND ACTIVITIES**

By Donna Erickson

Captain Wentworth, Jay Jay's Sea Captain Friend and Host of TV's [Donna's Day](#) and author of [Fabulous Funstuff for Families](#).

"Are we there yet?," "I'm hungry," or "I'm bored," are a few laments parents often hear when traveling by air with kids. Containing exuberant kids in a plane for any length of time may seem like a big task, but it doesn't have to be. Parents can make their pre-schooler's first flight enjoyable by being prepared for any challenges that may arise before or during the flight. Turn your flight into as much fun as the destination with these simple tips:

### **PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION**

**TIP #1:** Kids will enjoy packing their own small backpacks to keep them busy during the flight. Preschoolers may want to include their security blanket or cuddle toy, and their favorite "messless" art supplies such as crayons and "magic paint" watercolor books to enjoy at their tray tables. Toys that involve travel, such as small trains, buses, cars and airplanes can be especially fun. School-age kids love travel versions of their favorite board games, handheld computer games, finger puppets, riddle and maze books and art tablets with markers for doodling or coloring. For fun arts and crafts ideas, visit the Do-It-Yourself section below.

**TIP #2:** Pack healthy snacks and beverages. If you are already on board the plane but the take-off or arrival at the gate is delayed for any length of time, munchies such as raisins, fruit roll-ups, pretzels and juice will come in handy for a quick energy booster.

**TIP #3:** Dress in layers, include sweaters in your tote bags, and be sure your children wear socks as the airplane cabin can get chilly during flight.

**TIP #4:** Whenever possible, book nonstop flights. If a change of plane is necessary and you have extra time in an airport, ask about designated play areas for energetic kids. Look for KidPort at San Jose, California, Kids Flight Deck in Portland, Oregon with a "play" cockpit and control tower, Logan Airport in Boston even has a "baggage claim" slide.

**TIP #5:** When checking in at the terminal, be sure all your luggage has colorful ribbon or stickers on it to make it easily recognizable on the baggage claim carousel at your destination.

**TIP #6:** Enroll your child in your airline's frequent flyer program and remember to mention your child's number when you obtain your boarding passes.

**TIP #7:** When two adults travel with young kids, teamwork is the key. One adult can board with kiddie paraphernalia and get it stowed. Meanwhile, the children can let their wiggles out in the terminal and board later with the other adult.

**TIP #8:** Unless you are traveling abroad or to Hawaii, meals are not available in coach seating. If a meal is provided, many carriers will serve a special child's meal if you make the request when you book the ticket or at least 24 hours prior to the flight. Choices often include peanut butter sandwiches, pizza, macaroni and cheese or hamburgers with fruit and cookies. When there is no meal service on your flight, it is unlikely milk will be available.

**TIP #9:** Purchase or visit your library and checkout a children's book on tape or CD to play on a small cassette or DVD player with headset. Play a portion at different times during the flight stopping at a "cliffhanger" each time!

**TIP #10:** Remember that as you plan with your children be sure to share their enthusiasm and excitement, anticipate their questions, and once on your way, take many pictures to capture the memories.

TIP #11: Before your child's first trip in the air, watch together and discuss the exciting, adventure packed episodes of Jay Jay The Jet Plane on PBS. Talk about how riding in an airplane is different from riding in a car or bus. Just like Jay Jay, your child will get to "take off" on a runway and embark on a new adventure.

### **FUN ABOVE THE CLOUDS**

TIP #12: Before take-off, ask flight attendants for airline souvenirs such as a wing pin, a postcard or official airline stationery, and a deck of cards. You may also request a visit to the cockpit before or after take-off.

TIP #13: During take-off and landing or unexpected altitude changes during flight, help your child with the possible discomfort of changing cabin pressure. Play a "make funny faces" game as you look at each other with silly expressions. For example, spread your lips wide, pucker your mouth or yawn repeatedly. School-age children might chew gum or suck on hard candy. Small sips of water may provide relief too. If your child has a cold, contact your pediatrician prior to the flight to obtain a decongestant to use, if necessary.

TIP #14: Just as your child wears a seatbelt in your car, expect him to wear one at all times while seated in the plane. Set a good example by keeping your seatbelt fastened too.

TIP #15: If you are taking a long flight, keep meals, special snacks and activities or toys in your travel bag to give to your child at intervals as incentive for good behavior. Call it a "mileage countdown game" to add to the excitement. Here's how to play: At the beginning of your flight, open the in-flight magazine and look for a large U.S. or world map where you can mark your route. Estimate the locations where you will be every hour or so. Follow the map and practice naming cities, mountain ranges and rivers or oceans you pass. Your little one can even pretend he/she's Jay Jay or Tracy soaring over Tippy Top Peak. At designated locations and hours, give your child an appropriate surprise item from your bag. It's also a good time to remember to drink a glass of water or juice to stay hydrated and comfortable.

TIP #16: Exercise on board! Periodically enjoy a mini stretching time with your child while seated without disturbing other passengers. Simple exercises include: shrugging your shoulders and letting them drop, reaching arms upward one at a time to catch the stars, and twisting your neck to spot the far left window and then around to the far right window. When the aisles are clear and the pilot has indicated it is safe to leave your seat, take your child by the hand and walk around the plane. Never let your child wander around alone.

### **NO PLACE LIKE HOME**

TIP #17: On your return flight let your child sit by the window to observe familiar landmarks of your city below as the airplane descends to land. It is exciting for children to locate skyscrapers, sports arenas, lakes, bridges and even your own neighborhood! Tarrytown Airports landmarks include the control tower and the hanger.

### **DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECTS**

PROJECT #1: After the trip, keep travel memories alive with a hanging scrapbook. String a length of clothesline from one wall to another in your child's bedroom. Attach souvenirs such as a t-shirt, posters, brochures, maps, tickets and programs with clothespins or colorful clips.

PROJECT #2: Before you leave, fill a zipper-style plastic bag with crayons, stickers, felt tip markers and pre-stamped blank postcards from the post office. Address them to relatives and your child's friends.

During your flight, your child can turn these postcards into pictures of their experiences onboard. Encourage them to draw scenes that represent their flight experience such as a drawing of the aircraft and flight attendants, scenes they see out the window, etc. When the drawing is complete, your child can write a message on the other side (or dictate one to a parent). Drop the postcard in a

mailbox at your destination.

PROJECT #3: Turn a cardboard chip can into a special Jay Jay The Jet Plane piggy-bank to start saving for your next flight adventure.

Step 1-

Cover a clean cardboard chip container with self adhesive-backed paper or paint with temperas. Decorate with stickers or crayons.

Step 2-

Cut out pieces of cardboard or foam core, 16 inches x 2 1/2 inches for the side wings and 7 inches x 1 1/2 inches for the tail. An adult should cut two slits 2-inches from the can opening on opposite sides of the container for the wings and two more, close to the bottom of the can, for the tail. Insert pieces.

Step 3-

Cut out a figure-eight-shape from the poster board for the propellers. Attach to the center of the plastic can lid with a brass fastener. For wheels: glue a plastic milk bottle or film-canister cap on each end of a 4-inch dowel. Glue dowel to bottom of plane.

Step 4-

Cut a slit large enough for quarters on the top of the Jay Jay.

### TIPS FOR SOLO TRIPS FOR KIDS

Kids everywhere are on the go nowadays. For many young travelers, getting there may mean flying alone. If you're like most parents, it won't be easy sending a school age child on a solo journey for the first time. Here are tips to help ensure them a safe and enjoyable flight:

TIP #1: Request a guide brochure designed for unaccompanied children from your airline. It will outline rules, regulations, and helpful safety tips.

TIP #2: Make sure your child gets on the correct plane. (It is likely that you will be allowed to enter the gate area when your child departs.) During busy travel times, things can be confusing, especially if departure gates change at the last minute. Once the child boards, stay in the gate area until the plane is airborne.

TIP #3: The adult meeting your child's plane should always call ahead to check on the actual arrival time. Many flights are early, leaving kids to wait with the gate agent.

TIP #4: Remind your child that it is OK to ask the flight attendant to review safety demonstrations for them. Airplane seatbelts may unfasten differently than automobile belts. Children may also request to be moved if seated next to someone who makes them uncomfortable. They should never give their address or phone number to another passenger.

TIP #5: Pack an activity bag full of diversions. School backpacks are ideal. Include a cell phone, phone card or change for phone calls and cash for meals and headsets if you feel the on-board film is appropriate for your child.

Adapted from DONNA ERICKSON'S [TRAVEL FUN BOOK](#)



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