

Enjoy Your Trip

Planning a Family Vacation this summer? Few things can be more stressful than attempting to organize several family members of varying ages and interests into a positive family experience. The days leading up to a vacation can also make you wonder if it's even worth it! Here are a few suggestions to help lessen the stress and get the most out of the experience:

Plan Ahead: The earlier you can start your planning and the more details you can plan in advance, the less stressful those last minute preparations will be. It may be worth your time to research interests on the internet and create a list of potential activities for the family to discuss.

Delegate: Every plan goes more smoothly when every member of the team understands his or her responsibilities. Begin early by assigning tasks to all family members and following up on their progress. This teaches responsibility to children, as well as takes some of the burden off of parents to coordinate everything. Can your children pack, make arrangements for pet care, make sure all the trash is out of the house before you leave, pack a first aid kit to take with you, or simply gather everything they want to take and put it in one convenient place? Any of these, as well as asking other adults or older children to help supervise these endeavors, will help broaden the burden of planning.

Create an Itinerary: As much as possible plan a general itinerary of when you will leave, how you will get there and what you expect to do while you are on vacation. This should not be written in stone, but having an itinerary gives everyone a chance to adjust mentally to what to expect and helps ensure that everyone is on the same page. Not everyone will want to participate in every activity. But knowing that they may have to endure some events in order to get to their favorite will help minimize objections and encourage them to be more tolerant.

Anticipate Travel Problems: If you will be traveling through congested areas, allow time for traffic delays. If flying, anticipate plane delays. If you are taking a long trip, bring along games for children and reading material for adults. You may even want to enjoy some travel games that will be fun for the whole family, like trying to find vehicle tags from the most states. Good planning can help turn a stressful, anxious travel experience into an opportunity for family bonding.

Relax: Try to remember –YOU'RE ON VACATION. Don't let little things steal your enjoyment or increase stress. Try to maintain a positive attitude and, whatever happens, just be willing to go with the flow.

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