

AIR TRAVEL TIPS:

STRATEGIES FOR A MORE ENJOYABLE JOURNEY



Air travel can be stressful for everyone, from navigating airports to going through security, waiting in long lines, sitting still for long periods, and flying itself. For children with autism, these challenges can be even harder to manage. The good news? There are things you can do to make this stressful experience a bit easier to handle.

Before the travel day:

- ✖ **Contact the airport and airline** - Both airports and airlines provide a variety of services to offer assistance. Some airports offer pre-visit opportunities to help prepare your child for the security process.
- ✖ **Contact the TSA** - TSA Cares is a program that helps people with disabilities during the security process. You can contact TSA Cares for more information prior to your travel day.
- ✖ **Prepare identification for your child** - This is especially important if your child has wandered off in the past and is required for travelers over the age of 18. Consider identification bracelets and necklaces, ID cards, or air tags.
- ✖ **Talk about it** - Let your child know you're traveling and when. Put it on a calendar or write it on the refrigerator. Prepare your child for the travel day by showing them pictures and reading social stories.



On the travel day:

- ✖ **Bring special snacks or activities** - Pack extra special or new activities and snacks for the travel day. These can help keep your child occupied during wait times.
- ✖ **Wait to watch favorite videos** - Saving favorite videos or games for the difficult times, like waiting to get on the plane or on the flight itself, can help ease your child's stress.
- ✖ **Consider headphones** - Airports are noisy. If your child will wear them, headphones (both noise-canceling and regular) can bring a little quiet to an overwhelming environment.
- ✖ **Accept imperfection** - It may not go the way you planned, and that's OK.

During your trip:

- ✖ **Keep a routine** - When possible, stick to a predictable routine. It might not be perfect, but having consistency wherever possible can support your child during your trip.
- ✖ **Talk about returning home** - As your departure day gets closer, make sure to remind your child of the upcoming travel to return home. This can help your child accept that you will be leaving the destination and prepare them for returning to the airport.
- ✖ **Have fun!** - It can be easy to forget to enjoy yourself when another trip to the airport is close.