



Cheapflights'™ Guide to Flying with Children

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We know how exciting it can be to go on a family holiday with your children, but we also know how hectic it can be if you aren't as prepared as you could be. We've created this eBook so you've got the best advice on how to get your kids ready for a flight, how to pack, and what to do to keep them happy and entertained whilst you're flying.

We've broken the advice down into sections on pre-flight preparations, what to do at the airport, and further by the age, looking at children under two years old, those from three to six years, and the over sevens. You'll also find sections on preparing for the flight, how to simplify your life at the airport, and a section on useful tips and inspiration from famous mums and dads.



Preparing for a Trip in an Airplane

Most kids love the idea of a new adventure, especially the thought of a family holiday. A lot of the time, this involves flying, particularly in Australia, but it can be hard for them to understand what that means and what it will be like when you actually get to the airport and on the plane. Even if your children have been on a flight before, they might not remember, or you might have tested them on a shorter flight and you've now decided to try a longer one.

Build the Excitement

A great way to prepare them for a flight, if your children are old enough, is to explain to them a few weeks before your holiday that you're going on a flight and there might be a few different rules that they'll have to follow. You can also help to prepare them for the stress of being at the airport by letting them know that there will be a lot of other people around, and that even though they have to pay extra special attention to you, it will all be worth it when you get to your destination.

Choosing Flight Times

If you're catching an early flight, or a late one after their bedtime, they'll likely be tired so make sure that you're prepared for them to be a wee bit crankier than normal. Try to get them to have a little sleep so they aren't too tired when you need them to be awake. For overnight flights, aircraft typically keep the lights dimmed for most of the journey; the lights will come on around two hours before landing, so calculate that into the length of time your kids will have to sleep on the plane.

Keeping Calm

When travelling, a good rule of thumb is to stay calm and try to make as many friends as possible. This includes the people who work at the check-in desks, the flight attendants and the other people seated near you on the plane. The calmer you are, and the friendlier, the less anxious your little ones will be, and that's going to have a positive impact on everyone.

Leave Time

Make sure you leave lots of time. We all know that airlines require us to be at the airport a few hours before the flight, but do you know how long it will take to get to the airport, and how long it will take you to get ready before you leave? Make sure you factor these things in, and then add a little bit of extra time too, in a bid to avoid added stress.

Carry-On Bags

When you're packing your carry-on bags, don't forget that planes are a closed space and the temperature will very likely be different to what you or your children are used to. Dress in layers (all of you!) and perhaps bring a blanket or two.



At the Airport

Most airports have maps published on their websites. If you haven't been before, take a few minutes to look at the airport map so you know exactly where you'll need to go when you arrive. You'll also be able to see where the baby changing facilities are, which will come in handy later.

Airport Lounges

Many airports have private lounges, which can be cheaper than you think. Some of them do allow children under 12. You'll be able to keep your kids out of the hustle and bustle of the waiting area, which hopefully keeps them a bit calmer and easier to manage! You'll be able to have a few peaceful pre-flight moments too.

Play Areas

Larger airports have some play areas that will keep your children entertained as you wait for your flight. Sometimes, these are also available at the gate. You can call the airport in advance to find out if there will be one available.

Team Work

If you're travelling with a partner, we've had it on good authority that it's a clever idea to decide which parent is responsible for which children. Decide in advance who will be taking care of nappy changes, feeding duties, and holding on to the passports, tickets and boarding passes. Mapping this out in advance will help you feel less stressed out, and more like your family holiday has begun.

Food and Drink

One of the simplest ways to keep your kids happy and quiet at the airport, and during a flight, is to keep them well fed.

Bringing Snacks

We've got two big pieces of advice about this: avoid sugary foods, and keep your children well hydrated. If you decide to bring snacks along with you, bring ones that aren't perishable. It's also a good idea to find out whether your destination country allows you to bring in some kinds of foods. For instance, many countries do not allow fresh foods like fruit, vegetables and cheese to be brought in so you might have to dispose of the snacks you packed when you arrive. You won't be able to bring any gels or liquid snacks (like yoghurt) with you to the airport, as these won't make it through security, unless they're in clearly marked containers of 100ml or less.

Liquid Restrictions

Speaking of restrictions, if you're travelling with a baby you are allowed to bring a reasonable amount of baby food with you to last the duration of the flight. If you choose not to include this in your liquid allowance, you will be asked to taste some of it yourself, although the exact quantity you'll have to consume isn't published for security reasons. If you aren't travelling with a baby, you won't be able to carry any soft baby food or formula on top of your standard liquids allowance.

Quick Tips for Little Flyers

If you're nursing a baby, bring a small pillow. You'll find it doing double duty on the plane: as a support for your baby and a headrest.

Bring at least a third more nappies than you think you'll need. If there are any delays, you'll be thankful for them.

Buggies don't count towards your baggage allowance on most airlines. You can either check it in once you arrive at the airport, or use it until the moment you're ready to board. Wrap it up well so it doesn't get damaged!

Using a baby carrier is a great idea. Therefore, you can have your baby on your front or back, and you'll have both hands free to make it through security and beyond, without worrying about them being fidgety.

Bring hand sanitiser and lots of wipes, so if you put your baby down somewhere at the airport or on the plane itself, you'll feel a bit better about being nice and clean.

Consolidate your nappy bag: pack most of your supplies in your checked baggage. The flight is just a little part of your holiday, so bring as little as you can on the flight, as this means you can put more toys, books and snacks in your carry-on luggage.

Short Flights

For short and medium length flights, since you won't need to pack as much as you would for a longer one, the few things that you do pack must be captivating for the duration of the flight. You know what your children like best, and you'll be able to identify which things keep their attention for long periods of time. What should you definitely bring along?

Snacks

On shorter flights, you typically won't get any snacks or drinks. Plan to bring some food from home, and stop at the shops after security to pick up some juice or water for your children. Make sure they have lots to drink as airplanes are dehydrating, and this can make adjusting to new surroundings more difficult.

Change of Clothes

You never know what's going to happen on a flight. Your child might suddenly feel unwell, or they might spill something during a period of turbulence. If you're travelling to a different climate, bring a spare set of clothes for your little ones to change into. While an airplane bathroom isn't as spacious as some of us might like, it can be a fine place to change your children's clothes. You can also wait until after you disembark the plane, as there are always toilets located in the terminal, and these tend to be larger.

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Toys

Any toys you bring on a short flight should be your children's favourite ones. The fewer toys you can bring along the better. Don't forget that you'll be able to bring a wider variety of toys and games in your checked baggage.

Books

Most children have a favourite book that they'd be happy to have read to them 100 times in a row. That's the book you want to bring with you on the airplane, particularly if you're trying to slim down your carry-on luggage.

You're likely to have a fair bit of time on the take-off and landing, where your little ones will have to sit without any battery operated toys, and will have to keep tray tables upright. A book is perfect for this occasion.

Guidebooks

Why not bring guidebooks for older children, so you can go through them together and decide what you'd like to do during the holiday. They can make a list and learn more about your destination in the process. Plus, this should keep them occupied for a little while.

Under 2s

Booking Flights

When you're booking your flight or when you check in, ask if there are any bulkheads or emergency rows available. Many airlines will place families here anyway, but it doesn't hurt to ask so you can enjoy just that little bit more space. Parents with infants should nearly always be seated in these areas, so that the bassinet can be fixed to the wall.

Children under two years do not always need a seat; in fact you are required to hold them on your lap during take-off and landing. This generally means that you can choose to purchase a seat for them so you've got extra space, but depending on the cost of flights, this isn't always possible. When booking, speak to your airline about how old your children are as sometimes children get a discount on the cost of their tickets, especially if you are required to purchase their seat. For example, Qantas have a specific fare for children up to the age of 11, and a reduced fare for infants who are held on an adult's lap for the duration of the flight.



Take-off and Landing

One of the most stressful parts of any flight with a small child is the take-off and landing, which are uncomfortable enough for adults who know what's going on. It must be quite scary for children to feel their ears pop and not know why, so definitely bring something along for them to suck on or drink to encourage swallowing. If you've got a little baby, make sure you wait until ascent or descent to feed them. For older children, pack some lollies or chewing gum.

Extra Seats

When you've boarded, ask the flight attendant if there are extra seats. Sometimes there are a few rows close to the back which are empty and you'll be able to move to take up some extra space.

Thin Blankets

Bringing thin blankets on the flight will only take up a little space, plus they're good to use when sleeping. They'll also provide some familiarity so your little ones might feel more comfortable.

Flight Times

Try to book your flight times around when your children will need a nap as they'll be more likely to sleep on the flight. This might not always be possible, but with so many flight comparison websites, you'll easily be able to find a lot of different flight times in one place, making it easy to check.

Treat Bags

We've also heard of families giving out little packs to the people around them. These include earplugs and some sweets, alongside a card letting people know that it is their baby's first flight. We think this is a brilliant idea!

3-6 Years

Packing Carry-ons

Children under six will have their own seat and baggage allowance, so let them help you pack the bags they'll bring on the flight. Qantas and Virgin Australia, for example, allow children to bring the standard baggage allowance even if you've only paid part of the cost for the seat. That way they'll be able to feel like they've chosen exactly what they want. Including story CDs is a clever and space saving tip. Little ones can listen to new or favourite stories on an iPod or MP3 player. If you think they might need something to do with their hands, bring along a few sheets of paper, colouring books and pencils.

Snacks and Drinks

Make sure to pack lots of snacks, as this is a great way to keep them calm and quiet, at least for a little while. Most airlines offer a special meal for children, so order one of these when booking your flights.

Give them lots to drink. Planes are very drying so don't be afraid to ask the flight attendants for juice or water if you're running low.

Toys and Entertainment

We've heard of parents quietly taking a well-used toy away from their child a few weeks before the flight to give it back to them on the flight. This way, they'll be really excited to have it back and it should keep them occupied longer than a toy they've played with the day before. Some other clever parents we know either buy their children new toys, or wrap existing ones in paper, giving kids the opportunity to unwrap them, which of course, kids love. Wrap them tightly in a few layers to prolong the opening experience!

In-Flight Entertainment

Many long-haul flights have an entertainment system in place, so don't be afraid to use it, even if you're normally strict on the amount of TV your children watch. That being said, there might not be too much available, so don't rely on it. However, in our experience, anything that keeps little ones sitting calmly in their seats is a great resource!



7 And Above

Carry-on Preparation

We're pretty fond of the "you pack it, you carry it" rule, which works well for older children. It will help them decide what they want to bring, and they'll know what will hold their interest for the longest time. It also avoids you packing things they aren't going to play with, and you won't have to haul around cumbersome bags full of extra toys.

Snacks

Again, this age group will need lots of snacks, but they can be more involved in choosing what goes in their packs. Maybe before you leave, you can make a trail mix together, which will add to the excitement when they dive into it during the flight.

Games

Classic games like *Twenty Questions* or *Would You Rather* are great ways to keep your kids in their seats, but also entertained.

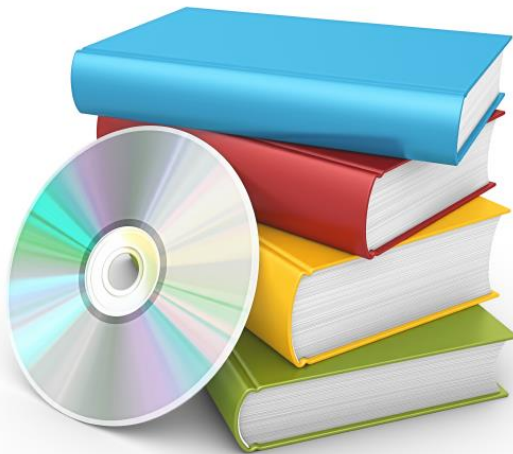
You can also make an activity folder that fits neatly into any carry-on luggage, and includes any number of activity sheets, blank paper, stickers, or even origami paper to fold. This age group can easily pull together their own folders, including all of their favourite bits.

Perhaps you can bring a pack of playing cards – not only useful for the plane, but also for when you've reached your destination and are keen for a bit of quiet time.

Books

This age group is able to do some reading on their own. Get them to start a book before they leave so they'll be hooked and want to keep reading it on the flight. For avid readers, a new book might be a nice surprise to be opened after take-off.

We also enjoy writing books with our children, about the adventures they'd like to go on. Someone can write the words, and someone else can do the illustrations.



Celebrity Mums Travel Advice

With the paparazzi regularly stationing themselves at airports, there are countless images of celebrity mums and tots walking on and off planes, looking fabulous and not at all travel weary. While they have nannies and fly in the executive class section of the airplane, it doesn't mean that we can't learn from them. Here's some inspiration from celebrity parents:

Hugh Jackman

When Hugh Jackman travels with his children, it's often between the US and Australia, which means it is a long flight. When this family is leaving the airport, they all look rested and it seems to us that the key for the Jackmans is to make sure that the kids are wearing comfortable clothes that don't pull or restrict movement. That way, the little ones are able to fall asleep easily, regardless of the time zone, making walking off the plane on the other side an easier time for everyone involved!

Isla Fisher

Camera shy mum Isla Fisher has been seen at the airport with one of her daughters in a baby carrier, making it much easier for her to navigate check-in and security, not to mention the duty-free shops at the airport. She always looks as stylish when she reaches her destination as she did when she departed; not having to worry about carrying her baby in her arms clearly makes an impact!

Nicole Kidman

Nicole Kidman and her husband Keith Urban are frequently spotted travelling together with their little girls. A good travel tip is to work together by each looking out for one child. If you're travelling without a partner, but with older children, get them to buddy up!

Naomi Watts

Another frequent commuter from Australia to America, Naomi Watts is frequently seen with her little ones at the airport, wearing loose clothing, preventing her from feeling too restricted while on the flight. She's also been seen cleverly carrying a small handbag, which is easily accessible and could contain all necessary travel documents like passports and tickets. She also carries a larger tote bag full of things for entertaining the kids.

Dannii Minogue

Yet another celebrity mum who makes travelling look easy, Dannii Minogue uses one of our favourite tricks and makes sure to use her buggy all the way to the gate. This way, she can easily manoeuvre through the airport, without having to prevent her son from squirming around in her arms. She's also able to use space in the buggy to hold anything she might pick up at the duty free shops!

Toni Collette

One more Australian actress who travels back and forth to America quite often, Toni Collette is often seen at the airport with her two young children in really comfortable clothes and carrying an oversized, stylish handbag. For quick trips, using a large handbag or tote as a carry-on is a brilliant idea, as you'll be able to save space. You'll be able to fit in what your children need, and be fashionable at the same time.

Have a great trip!

