

How to Entertain Kids on a 13-Hour Flight

By Parents Who've Done It: Georgian Circle of Friends

Our kids started their lives with us as world travelers, flying from Georgia to their new home in the US or Canada. So if you want advice on how to entertain a child on a long flight, see what the experts say!

Kathy

I've completely removed the memories of my trip home with my Georgian angel. Kind of like the memory loss that goes along with child birth! Here is what I normally tell people: Magnadoodle, Playdoh, and M&M's delivered one at a time...over and over and over again.

I think the biggest pain is that you have to give them your undivided attention. I love to read or sleep on the plane so if you already know those things are impossible, you will find things to occupy the time. Just going through the flight magazines will take time, and my little one was particularly fond of the safety brochure. Good thing it was laminated. I think the obsession with that was that it showed people exiting the plane and that is what she wanted to do!

Cindy

We've done a great deal of flying with my angels -- at least it seems like a great deal to me. I agree that it's exhausting because the little ones require constant attention or you'll get booted off the plane by the fellow passengers. My techniques, in order of preference:

- Benadryl (if that didn't work I'd ask my pediatrician for something else)
- LOTS of water, because they get dehydrated very, very quickly and get very, very cranky
- A new purse/bag from the dollar store, filled with new books, etc., that the child doesn't see until on the plane
- The laminated safety card, which for some reason is fascinating
- The airline magazine, which can be disemboweled with impunity
- Walking back to the toilet area, where you can stand around for a while
- Handing the child over to a baby-starved flight attendant
- Handing the child off to Papa

Robin

Vomit bags were all the rage for my littlest! Use like balloons and pop - also annoys others enough that they willingly move away from you and you score an additional seat that little one can lay down on and get some shut eye with the high powered drugs that the pediatrician MUST give you or you will stalk him. If the bag doesn't work effectively enough to make people move away from you, don't forget one of those books that has sound effects to be used upon reading cues in the story... VERY effective after the 30th time reading the story.

A little more seriously, the airlines usually give you a kid pack. Don't forget to order in advance the kid-friendly meals as well. They will serve you first and it will be food they will be happy with as opposed to Chicken Korma for the third flight. Your plane may have individual TV screens for each seat – my kids loved it. As for candy, they ripped through that before we left the ground. They loved the coloring books, activity books, headphones, in-flight movies, and a few surprises from Mom's bag along the way. Keep 'em guessing!

Morena

Here's what's worked for me:

- ❑ Fly at night when possible. The kids will sleep most of the flight and it helps with adjustment to the time change.
- ❑ Get the most direct flight possible. It may cost more but is worth every penny!
- ❑ Hide all the new toys you've bought. Pull them out one at a time as needed to distract/entertain.
- ❑ A portable DVD player has saved my life on many layovers.
- ❑ I pack little cars, etc. and take my child to the open areas, usually in the back near the restrooms, so he can crawl around and play.
- ❑ It's never as bad as you imagine it will be, but it is tiring! I've traveled twice alone with my Georgian angel, and he usually travels better than I do.

Amy

I NEVER let my kids see what they are getting in their backpacks until we are out of town! The things I have included are:

- ❑ Silly Putty
- ❑ mini Etch-a-Sketch
- ❑ Magnadoodle travel size
- ❑ playing cards
- ❑ activity books, with no larger than an 8-crayon box...too many to lose and no where to lay them all out; usually I keep a couple of extra boxes hidden, because everyone always loses their red and that is the only color to color Clifford and to make flowers out of...
- ❑ sticker books, preferably reusable
- ❑ small board books and magazines
- ❑ Gameboys are always good
- ❑ My sister-in-law uses Video Now for her girls ages 7 and 5, and she says they are wonderful for long flights and layovers
- ❑ I usually include a small car or truck or plane, bigger than the Hot Wheels size, which are too easy to lose
- ❑ one or two small action figures or small doll
- ❑ a watch with a timer to lessen the "are we there yet" and "are we there YET" and "are we THERE yet" and "are we ALMOST there yet"
- ❑ I usually include a few treats in each kid's bag that they can have access to on their own, but a limited-mess kind of treat – NO CHOCOLATE EVER on a long trip; yikes! (PEZ dispensers are always good with a couple extra refills, suckers or Lifesavers if flying, maybe gum for older ones, goldfish crackers or Teddy grahams or something like it; fruit snacks or cereal bars)

- each kid has a water bottle

The last trip we took I had my 8 yr old on a treasure hunt. I made a list of wacky things and everyday things, like “find a woman in a blue dress wearing a red hat; find an elephant.” Signs and advertisements count, too, so anything’s possible! A pirate, a ballerina, a sundial, a waterfall, even specific words.

Tracey

I noticed with my Georgian angel that we had to really make an effort to get her to drink enough water on the flight home. She really loved the in-flight magazine and she loved this little Magnadoodle thing that we brought. We also took a little doll with a hair brush, and by the time we landed in Atlanta she had almost brushed the poor thing bald. She couldn’t have cared less about the TV, which was very sad to me because I was really sick and needed to rest.

We traveled a bit in the car and on a plane since we have been home and she does pretty well up until the two-hour mark and then it's No Holds Barred. Two words: chewable Dramamine. Our doctor told us the dosage to give her, and it works like a charm. She gets a bit motion sick anyway, and it takes that away as well as the freak-outs.

I did have one thing that was really bad happen recently on a trip that taught me a lesson. We're pretty adventurous eaters and luckily so is our daughter, but she got hold of something she is allergic to and had a really bad reaction. We had to find allergy medicine. I now keep a little zip-lock bag in the car with just enough basic medicine for an emergency; same with my backpack. I'm sure more seasoned Moms know this, but I still feel pretty green. I think I know why my Mom's purse weighed a ton.