



# Parenting Your Child To Have Successful Field Trips

This article is intended for parents and is meant to provide some basic ideas that may help you're your child while traveling on a fieldtrip. However, this should not be in lieu of an Occupational Therapy evaluation and/or treatment. Your child's Occupational Therapist may be able to provide more detailed and customized ideas to help your traveling be successful and stress-free. As a parent, it is important to prepare your child for field trip day!

## Consider the following ways to help prepare them:

- **Virtual Tour:** Take a virtual tour of the field trip site to educate yourself on the site and discuss with your child.
- **Explore:** Show your child objects they may see on the field trip (e.g. flowers, mud, rocks, sand, etc.) and expose them to these objects prior to the field trip.
- **Communicate:** Discuss with staff any concerns you have about your child and/or aversions you feel they may have to certain aspects of the field trip (e.g. my child does not tolerate the feel of sand and reacts like this...) Discuss ways to address these aversions with staff and your child (depending on their age) prior to the field trip. For example, if your child has an aversion to sand, attempt to expose them daily to little bits of sand to help to decrease their aversion (start with using a stick to draw in a sandbox, then next day encourage them to play with their pointer in the sand, and keep adding small steps until they are able to sit in the sandbox).
- **Travel:** if the site is close and your schedule permits consider going to the site with your child during an off-peak time. Helping make it a more familiar place may help them to be more relaxed and able to learn when they are there with school.
- **Calendar:** count down the days leading up to the field trip.
- **Schedule:** Children benefit from structure and planning ahead to decrease anxiety and rushing. Ask the teacher to send home the field trip schedule and discuss this with your child the night prior to the field trip and in the morning before leaving if necessary. Teach them that unknown things will happen and that is okay and also the reason why it is best to plan in extra time.
- **Morning Routine:** Make sure your child has a good breakfast and a stress- free morning prior to going to school. Allow extra time in the morning so he or she is not rushing. Consider driving them to school that day to give you more time if you feel it is necessary. Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Layer your child's clothing if you are unsure of the weather. Consider laying clothing out the night before. Send a poncho if you are concerned about rain and your child tolerates one. Make sure IPOD or any other devices being sent are charged.
- **Volunteer:** Discuss with your child's teacher if they feel it would be helpful for you to go on the field trip with them.
- **Checklist:** Use a checklist of what your child will need to take. Discuss this with them to help them to feel secure, decrease anxiety and facilitate independence in your child.

## Parent Field Trip Checklist

Item	In Bag	Returned
First Aid Kit		
Medication		
Toiletries		
Sunscreen		
Sunglasses		
Hat		
Extra Clothing		
Hand Sanitizer		
Snack and/or Lunch		
Tissues		
Cash		
ID in Wallet		
Cell Phone and Charger		
Book-bag and/or Fidget Bag with helpful items		



## More Helpful Items to Consider:

**Ask your child's teacher if he or she feels any of the following would be helpful for your child to take on the field trip:**

- **Book-bag:** A book-bag applies a more even pressure to the child's back as a form of deep pressure. This would be a school tool your child could bring on the trip that helps comfort them in regards to applying deep pressure and also can hold items that they find comforting.

**Depending on the child's age, allergies, and situation/fieldtrip the following may be some items to consider packing:**

- Blanket or favorite animal inside (if child has a scent that calms them consider spraying it on their blanket or animal). Squishy animals help provide deep pressure if a child squeezes it.
- Weighted neck rest (can be found on internet) to provide deep pressure
- Snack: Always pack snacks. Keep a snack in your car that is safe for the drive and keeps well. Dependent on the types of food you use, this too provides deep pressure input to the jaw. Try to use a combination of textures (e.g. chewy and crunchy) such as trail mix. This can be homemade with safe items your child likes (e.g. cheerios and dried fruit, etc.).
- iPod or head-set on the plane with calming music: This may muffle noise from plane that may provide stimulation to the ear causing anxiety and frustration.
- Sunglasses to decrease sensitivity to the brightness
- Fidget attached to the outside of the bag (e.g. squishy stuffed animal key chain). This may provide a quick deep pressure and touch stimulus for their hands and help them keep their hands to themselves.
- Gum to provide deep pressure input, decrease ear popping if on the plane, and it may also help with motion sickness (possibly mint for motion sickness)