

"HOW TO" CHECKLISTS

Tips for an Amazing Family Vacation

Your family vacation is looming around the corner and you are fully aware it can go one of two ways...fabulous or torturous! Depending on the age of your children, the following checklist provides some helpful ideas to ensure a memorable vacation filled with fun, relaxation and excitement.

BEFORE YOU SET OUT ON YOUR JOURNEY:

❑ Have a family meeting:

- ❑ Discuss all the specifics of your upcoming vacation.
- ❑ Give everyone an opportunity to provide input on what the family can do while on vacation.
- ❑ Ideas can range from activities or excursions to meal ideas.
- ❑ Manage your kids' expectations for what will happen on the vacation. For instance, be clear about what is monetarily reasonable.
- ❑ Set specific guidelines for appropriate behavior so they know what is expected of them.
- ❑ Develop creative rules for fighting - be ready, it is inevitable!
- ❑ Get them excited about the trip, especially your teens!

❑ Pack it all up:

- ❑ Pack plenty of sunscreen.
- ❑ Over the counter meds for emergencies or potential illness.
- ❑ Easy accessible toys, books, games and activities.
- ❑ New activities or games to keep them busy and distracted when needed. This is especially helpful when you are traveling to and from your destination.
- ❑ Videos or try not having them and see what the world has to offer.
- ❑ Music, iPods or create a CD to play during your trip. After you are home, you can play the CD to remind you of your amazing time together.
- ❑ Pack chewing gum for air pressure changes on flights. Little ears are sensitive to changes in pressure and it can be painful...so be prepared.
- ❑ Your child's "night night" or favorite stuffed animal. Transitional objects are important to help them sleep in a new environment or come to the rescue during a meltdown.
- ❑ Plenty of snacks and treats to ensure you have something to feed a hungry moment.

❑ Have fun while you are away:

- ❑ Take turns sleeping with each other if sharing a room. Younger kids like to have slumber parties with their parents. It can make them feel special and provide some excitement. If kids are much older, make sure you have plenty of space. Tweens and teens can be quite messy, so let them mess up their own room!
- ❑ Let go of inhibitions! Jump in the pool, go under water, surf, take an ATV ride, or try the zip line.
- ❑ Let your kids see a sense of freedom and life come through you.
- ❑ Let them order room service for a meal -- this feels like an extra special treat for kids.
- ❑ For little ones, have lots of activities to keep them busy during downtime.
- ❑ Be sure to get a nap in to avoid meltdowns later in the day. Use their nap time to take a well deserved one yourself.
- ❑ Ask questions and get them talking. Explore their dreams and listen, you might learn something new.

