

Flying With Children

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I have lived in Australia for nearly 30 years. During those years, I have flown to the USA and back more than 25 times. Most of those trips have been with children. There are a few reasons why children and flying don't go together well.

First of all, children don't like to sit still, and flying requires a lot of sitting still. Children like to kick seats, and people don't like to have their seats kicked. Children often become nauseous and may throw up; people don't like the sound or smell of vomit. Babies need their nappies changed and it is not always easy to go to the bathroom to change a nappy (and if you have twins and need to change one, what do you do with the other one?), and people definitely do not like the odor that comes along with nappy changing.

So, what does one do to overcome these challenges? Firstly, there is the option to stay home. I have friends here in Australia who take that option. But for those of us who feel we must fly with our children, here are some tips born of long experience.



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FLIGHT SIMULATOR FOR TRAVELING WITH TWIN TODDLERS

1. Sit down on a kitchen chair, with both babies on your lap. Do this in the space between your couch and the wall. Do not pull couch away from the wall; the amount of space that's there is fine. Face the wall.
2. Feed yourself and the babies a peanut butter sandwich.
3. Spill water or other drink all over the front of their shirts and your lap.
4. Change nappies.
5. Read books.
6. Give back all the dirty stares you are getting from passersby.
7. Every hour, to stretch your legs, take all the chairs in your house. Line them up in two rows down the corridor, with approximately 30 cm in between. Now, holding both babies, walk up and down that corridor **WITHOUT** touching any of the chairs!
8. Alternately, allow the babies to walk sedately up and down that corridor without touching or knocking into a single chair.

Repeat this exercise over and over for 15 hours. Then take a two-hour break (to simulate going through customs in L.A.) and then back to practicing for another five hours.

Please don't be afraid to fly with children! I have done it over 20 times. And it's worth almost any suffering for the children to know their grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles.



Never take nosh on an airplane. I always take what my kids call boring food. Rice cakes, plain jam or peanut butter sandwiches, cut up carrots and cucumbers, and pretzels. NO chocolate bars, chips, or cookies. I tell the kids that when we get to New York (or home if we are going the other way) I will give them all the nosh, but not on the airplane. Why? Because they are much more likely to vomit junk food than real food. I once flew alone, the only adult, with six kids, and on the same flight was a couple with their four children. They kept on offering my kids chocolate bars, chips, and other garbage, which I did not let them accept. Throughout the night, my kids all slept soundly while they were busy with barf bags.



Practice. Let's say you are about to travel with toddler twins from Melbourne to New York. See sidebar and follow instructions to prepare yourself.



Prizes! For children who can understand bribery. Tell them that if they can sit and not complain about their brother's feet on their lap, or their sister's head on their arm, when you arrive you will buy them a prize.



No sweet drinks. Sugar causes hyperactivity, so I only allow water and occasionally juice. I sometimes allow one sugary drink (never a full can, just a cup) at the end of the flight, especially if I need the kids to be walking and awake to change terminals or go through customs.



Entertainment is prepared before going overseas. I buy the kids coloring books, story books, little games to play, and lately, with more modern inventions, I take an iPod with a double adaptor so more than one child can use it at the same time. On our last trip, with three small children, I bought a DVD player and took that with me as well.



Backpacks. All children aged two and up have their own backpack, with their own change of clothing, pretzels, paper and crayons, and toys.



Prayer. I pray a lot, especially on planes.

COME VISIT US SOON!