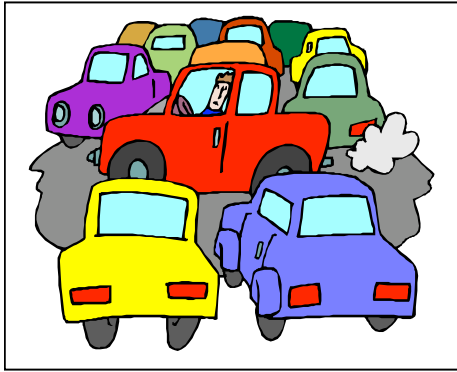


## Are We There Yet?



Summer holidays are coming and millions of Britons will be heading to the highway for a family day out or on the way to their holiday destination.

Many parents will be wondering how to make the journey a fun part of the holiday. We've all heard the familiar chorus "Are we there yet?" which starts just as the car turns the first corner from home.

Your family trip can go smoothly with a little planning and some entertaining ideas. First of all decide when you'll set off, children will settle in their seats for longer if they are tired. With younger children it's easier to travel at times they'd usually be asleep and with older children set off after they've had some active play. Try a run around the park, football in the garden or dancing to tapes indoors to run off energy before long journeys.

Secondly plan some in-car entertainment. Sing-a-long and story tapes can keep children occupied for up to half an hour. Older children and teenagers may prefer their personal tape or CD player. The whole family can enjoy games like quizzes and I Spy, you can adapt this game for younger children by spotting things of a certain colour like "First to spot a red car". Remember these games can get noisy so put a stop to them if you feel distracted.

Sticker books, travel puzzle pads and children's magazines add variety and electronic games hold the interest for long periods.

To avoid boredom change activities every so often.

Thirdly you'll need to bring along food and drink to keep your children going during the trip. Having a picnic in the car can be messy so choose easy finger foods and sports type bottles, which tend to be more difficult to spill. The final essentials are wet wipes and a litter bag to keep the mess under control.

And parents don't forget, you'll need a break to keep your journey safe. Make a short stop every 1 to 2 hours to keep yourself alert and let the family stretch their legs.

If you're travelling by air there's more to think about. Air travel can be thrilling and the rush to get packed and away may get children over excited. It can be hard

to stay calm when you've planned a big holiday but try to take your time, arrive early for the flight and notice how your children are reacting. If this is their first flight you may need to reassure them and let them know what to expect, this will help them stay relaxed.

## PARENTS TIPS

Kieran father of Alex aged 5 from Hartshill, says: "We take plenty of food and drink on car journeys and an 'etch-a-sketch' and books keep Alex occupied. Before a trip we make sure his car seat is fitted properly and that's he's comfortable in it."

Cherry mother of Roman aged 5 from Tunstall says: We always plan to start our trip when Roman is tired and we take along a tape of his favourite songs to play in the car. Before the trip Roman packs his own bag of favourite toys to take with him.



For more information on First Steps  
Psychological Service  
Please call 01782 425 883

Written by Claire Halsey  
Consultant Clinical Psychologist