

7 GOLDEN RULES: FLYING WITH CHILDREN

Tears before touchdown? Not with the nanny **Michaela Drake's** essential tips

Michaela Drake has worked as a travelling nanny for four years and flown hundreds of thousands of miles in the company of kids. She now runs My Travelling Nanny, an agency providing childcare to help on family holidays.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Is there priority boarding for families? Check the buggy situation: some airlines allow you to take a pushchair right

up to the plane and hand it over on boarding — then it will be waiting for you when you disembark. Do you need to book a baby cot? Under-twos can sit on an adult's lap, but it might be worth booking them their own seat.

STICK TO ROUTINE

You should follow normal routines as far as possible, but after a long day of travelling, you may need to surrender and let them eat or sleep as they need. If it's a night flight, treat it

as night: pyjamas, story, bottle, calmness. Get toddlers as tired as possible. Use the wait at the airport to wear them out, in a play area if there is one.

USE SUGAR

Forget healthy eating for one day. A hungry child is a grumpy child. On daytime flights, sweets and lollipops can turn the mood. Buy a pack of sweets of mixed flavours, and get them to guess. Banana? Liquorice? Make sure children are chewing or sucking during takeoff and

landing, as this will reduce the pressure pain. Use a dummy, a bottle or a finger for babies.

DISTRACT THEM

Modern technology is a lifesaver on flights, so take a portable DVD player, with children's headphones, or an iPad for games, films and nursery rhymes. Looking for Wally in a Where's Wally? can kill a lot of time. Mind-benders and puzzles are also a good time-filler. Or take a magnetic travel game, such as solitaire or draughts.



Masterfile

favourite type of jam. Take a "story bag" full of random objects, such as a thimble, some dried orange pips and a piece of ribbon, and encourage the children to make up a story using these as prompts.

MAKE IT A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Children are inquisitive, and feeding their minds will keep them busy. Teach older children a few essentials in the local language — the term for "ice cream" will always come in handy. Give them a small purse with local coins in, and explain their value. Print out a map of the world and look at the route you're flying. Look at how small Britain is.

BE CREATIVE

Take crayons, notebooks, Post-it notes, stickers and Sellotape or a glue stick — remember, no scissors — so they can make daddy a new tie or mummy a bracelet. And wear them. Make it fun. A spare pair of socks can easily become a sock-puppet show, and a Polaroid-style camera will be worth its weight in gold — especially as Teddy needs a passport, too. Ask your "in-flight photographer" to take a photo of him. Older children can add all the essential details: name, nationality,

KEEP CALM, CARRY ON

Don't be afraid to ask for help: that's what flight attendants are for. And don't worry about what people will think if your children act up. Most of them will have been through the same thing. Remember, your holiday memories start here, so stay in control and keep positive. Focus on the blue sky, sea or mountains awaiting you — and, above all, never forget whose idea this was.

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