

Pointers For Parents

Make Your Next Car Trip A Smooth Ride

(NAPSA)—Are we there yet? How often do parents want to ask this question when traveling with a car full of unhappy, restless kids? By following a few guidelines, your next family trek can be a pleasant one.

- Set the scene. Kids who are squished between bags and packages can get irritable, so don't overpack the car. Put the kids in casual, layered clothing and bring along blankets and pillows for added comfort. Allow them to settle in for the ride.

- Avoid boredom. Youthful energy that's bursting at the seams prevents kids from enjoying a long immobile stint in the back seat. Head off misbehavior by bringing along a backpack filled with activities for each child. Look for long-play items like travel games, playing cards, crayons and simple crafts.

- Eat on the road. "Eating in the car can keep the kids happy," suggests Elizabeth Pantley, parenting expert and author of *Perfect Parenting: The Dictionary of 1,000 Parenting Tips*. "Food serves multiple purposes. It keeps the kids' blood sugar levels even, thus preventing fussiness. And snacking keeps the kids busy." She suggests bringing along an assortment of snacks, including items that take a long time to eat, like lollipops and dried fruit.

Pantley also recommends grabbing meals to go from family-friendly restaurants. "Look for restaurants that offer wholesome food choices as well as entertainment value, such as the KFC Kids Laptop Pack which offers kid-friendly favorites like



Experts say eating in the car can keep kids happy on a long car trip.

chicken legs with healthful side items like green beans. It's served in a flip-top box that's easy for kids to balance on their little laps with entertaining, educational games and activities to keep them happy and busy throughout the ride."

- Publish car rules. Before you embark on your journey, write down a set of car rules. Pantley warns that a lack of rules invites misbehavior. "When your expectations are clear, simple and exact, children behave better," she says. A few instructions can keep the peace.

- Involve the kids. Pantley suggests that you provide the kids with a map, colored pencils, a compass and a journal so that they can follow and record the journey. "You can even give them a calculator so when they ask, 'How long 'til we get there?' you can teach them how to figure it out themselves!"

Following these suggestions won't banish "Are we there yet?" from your traveling child's vocabulary but he or she just might ask the question with a smile.