

Packing the Right Toys for Sensory Needs

Packing for a trip is stressful. If you have a child with sensory needs, traveling is a daunting task. To help alleviate some pressure from your trip, it's important to pack the right toys and accessories for your child's sensory needs. Start planning several days prior to departure. Do not plan as you pack. Planning ahead will give you time to add missing items or things you may have overlooked.

Separating your child's sensory toys from the general family luggage is a good idea. Even better, consider packing a "sensory suitcase" for your child. A sensory suitcase is a separate bag, sack, or box where your child's sensory toys and tools are stored. It gives you easy access to things that soothe meltdowns and make remote experiences more pleasant. Sensory suitcases don't need to be expensive and can be as simple as throwing a few things in a Ziploc bag.

When deciding what to pack in your sensory suitcase, think about your **child's needs** and what they use on a **daily basis**, as well as their **triggers**.

Other important factors to consider are:

1. How long is your trip? This will help determine the number of items needed.
2. What mode of transportation will be used? Flying is more restrictive in terms of bag size, so items need to be compact and easy to store. Ground transport allows for larger bags and more items.
3. What are your child's sensitivities?
4. New activities can cause stress and trigger a meltdown, so be prepared with fidgets and other favorite sensory tools.
5. Pack your child's favorite snacks to ease anxiety about new foods.

Ideas for Your Sensory Suitcase:

- Gum/Snacks
- Crayons/Markers
- Small notebook
- Favorite book
- Sunglasses

- Stress/Squeeze ball
- Earplugs or noise-canceling headphones
- Ropeless jump rope
- Sensory sock
- Fidgets

With proper planning and a sensory suitcase, traveling can be fun and (almost) stress-free. Happy travels!

- Amy Wilkinson, *Springible Contributor*

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