In-Flight Toddler Essentials

Date : 09-09-2019

When most people think of traveling with a toddler, the most intimidating part is generally the flight… and with good reason! A bad flight can be really really bad, and there's nowhere to escape your toddler, or for other passengers to escape them either. Plus, you're also more likely to be nervous and have your hands full, which can make the situation seem even more overwhelming.

Sometimes there are just flights where everything goes wrong, but for the most part, with a little preparation, you can travel with a few things that can make the whole experience much smoother. The key is to keep your toddler engaged, minimize mess, and keep it easy for you as well! Here are some of our in-flight essentials that have made things go so much more smoothly.

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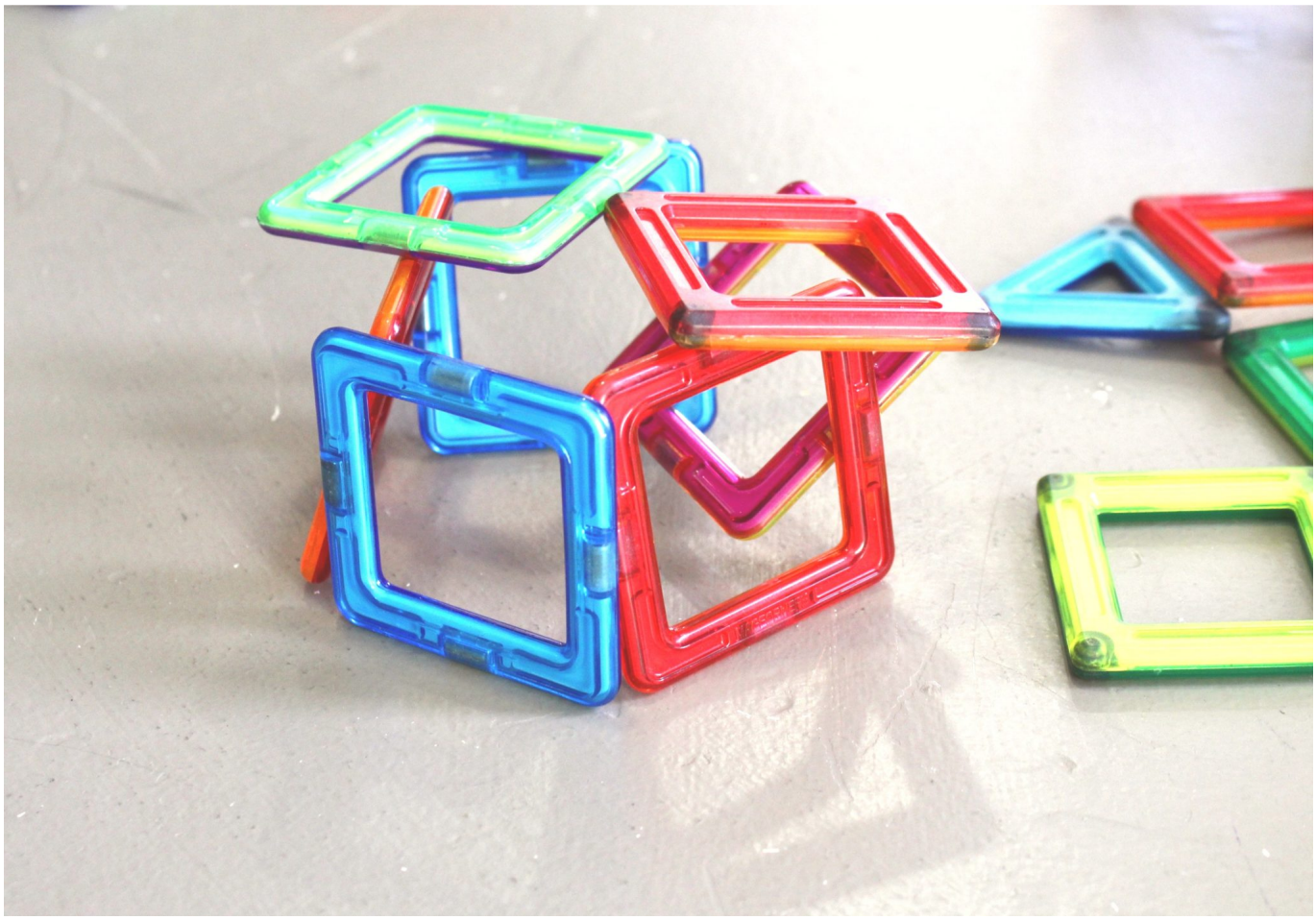
NO-MESS ACTIVITES

Generally, the easiest way to keep a toddler cooperative is to keep them engaged. That said, an airplane isn't exactly the place you want to keep track of a million crayons rolling down the aisles or under the seats, but there are several easier interesting activities you can keep on hand.

Remember, you just never know how long one activity will hold your child's attention before they start getting restless, so you're always better off being overprepared.

These are the things I love to carry:

Magnetic Tiles



I love these under any circumstances, just because they encourage so much creativity, and spatial reasoning. On a plane, though, these are especially great since they're magnetic (and the magnets are strong!), so they're not likely to get very far.

They come in all sizes, but the small ones like these don't take up much space at all, and can easily fit into a zip-lock and get thrown into any carry-on bag.

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Sticker Books

Not really sure what it is about putting stickers all over my face that my son loves, but a good sticker book can keep him engaged for at least an hour!

The stickers generally aren't that strong, so they aren't going ruin anything, and each book contains hundreds of stickers, but they're light and take up no space.

We love the National Geographic sticker books since there are so many on interesting topics like robots, world maps, and different kinds of animals.

Water Magic Coloring Books

These are the perfect alternative to carrying around crayons, or colored pencils, and inevitably losing several along the way, and winding up with doodling all over your seat.

The "pen" fills up with water, which then reveals the colors on each page. The best part is that when the pages dry, the color fades away, so you can use the books again and again.

Books

A good book or two can go a long way. We always carry one or two of his favorites, and then sometimes an interesting book about our destination, which is always a great way to get your child excited about the trip!

SNACKS

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Some of us can turn pretty terrifying when we're really hungry… but have you ever seen a

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hungry toddler? There probably isn't anything more terrifying. In order to safeguard against my son (or me!) ever having to go through that, I always carry snacks.

Try and stick to dry snacks that won't melt, so your child can eat them on their own without getting their hands or clothes messy. Individual size (or zip-locks with individual servings) are also a good idea so you don't have to put leftovers back in your bag and risk having a bunch of crushed pretzels or chips all over your things.

Here are some of our favorites:

Brave Peas

I don't really go anywhere without some of these in my bag! They're actually roasted peas that come in some of the most delicious flavors. I know roasted peas may not sound that appetizing, but these are so good, and my son loves them too.

We're especially into the chocolate and salted caramel, and the salt and vinegar.

Annie's

Annie's has the most amazing selection of organic snacks, and almost all of them come in an individual size option.

They have the most yummy crackers, cookies, and fruit snacks... the snack mix is especially good too!

Legendary Foods

These are the. best. tasting. nuts. ever. In flavors like pizza and cheddar bacon, their individually wrapped nuts are a HUGE hit for all of us.

These are a more heavy-duty snack and work really well if a mealtime gets delayed, or someone's really hungry.

BABYZEN YOYO PLUS STROLLER

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This is, unquestionably, the single thing that has made traveling infinitely easier. We got the

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Babyzen Yoyo before my son's first flight, when he was around three months old, and we still don't go anywhere without it now.

Though a lot of strollers claim to be easy to open and shut with a single hand, this is the only one that actually delivers on that. If you have a baby you're carrying around, then you know how crucial that is, and if you have a toddler who's running around, then you also know the importance of saving a few seconds!

The Yoyo also fits into overhead compartments on almost all planes (we've only had to gate check it once), so your child can go straight from seat to stroller. This also means that if you're connecting to another flight, you have the luxury of using a stroller in the airport during your layover.

KID-SAFE HEADPHONES

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While we nearly never let my son use the iPad when we are at home, when we travel, it’s another story!

When all else fails, I am an unabashed supporter of using the iPad as and when needed when traveling. Whether it’s on flights, or when you’re done eating at a restaurant but you want to stay a while, the iPad can give you a huge degree of flexibility that you wouldn’t otherwise have.

That said, when we do need to pull out the iPad, I am extremely particular about keeping a pair of kid-safe headphones handy. That way, wherever you are, your child can safely enjoy their shows, without disrupting others. We really like the ones by JBL because they're really comfortable, fold pretty small, and are extremely durable. They have also released a wireless version, with you can find on Amazon here.

The list may sound like a long one, but if you arm yourself well, you’ll be prepared for anything! Always remember to prepare for the worst, so even if some things are unpredictable (travel delays, a bad mood, missed connections), at least you’ve got some things under control!

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