

# How to Travel with a Small Child

## *Student Essay*

When you travel with a small child, a properly packed diaper bag is the key element to a successful journey. The necessities of young children are many, and a pre-prepared satchel containing all of the required paraphernalia is of fundamental importance. When the diaper bag is not well stocked, the minutes before leaving the house are spent snatching diapers, seizing bottles and formula, searching for pacifiers and scouring the playroom for favorite toys in a haphazard attempt to collect all of the essentials.

Certain fundamental apparatus must be contained in the diaper bag at all times. First, and perhaps the most obvious, are the diapers. Unfortunately, more than once, I have found myself locked in a bathroom stall at Kmart with three size 2 diapers and a wet and cranky baby who wears size 4. Since it is impossible to tape two of the size 2 diapers together to make a size 4 (I did learn some math in high school), it is essential to update the stash of diapers that remain in the diaper bag.

Secondly, the various diaper changing accessories (zinc oxide cream, baby wipes, dry washcloths and changing pad) need to be inspected regularly to ensure their quality and quantity. Again, I speak from miserable experience. Once, my inventory of baby wipes unexpectedly dried out leaving me with a pile of crunchy paper cloths. Another time, I found the zinc oxide tube empty and spent the subsequent three days nursing an undoubtedly painful diaper rash. Yet a third memorable time, I discovered that I was sans changing pad, and ended up changing my son on a plastic grocery bag.

Food is a third commodity that must be carried at all times. Because my son is still an infant, he is only able to eat baby food and to drink baby formula. Because this special food cannot be purchased at a fast food establishment, I must keep my supply current. The formula powder must be refrigerated after it is mixed with water, so I must carry two bottles. One of the bottles contains water and the other contains the formula powder. I must also remember to pack nipples for the bottle, washcloths to clean up after the meals, jars of food, spoons, and bowls. Into the diaper bag they go.

Finally, and of the utmost importance, a diaper bag must contain toys. When I was little, my parents would refer to the snack foods they purchased to occupy and keep us quiet on long car trips as "shut up food." At the time, I thought the term "shut up food" sounded a little harsh, but it was meant in good humor. Now that I am a parent, I understand fully. The trinkets and knickknacks that I pack with the utmost care into the diaper bag are indeed "shut up toys." Soothers, adoringly referred to as "binkies," are essential. Only once have I been out with my son and realized I had not packed any of these little

"binkies." I was, of course, at the grocery store and the wailing from my son that reverberated through the aisles was legendary. Since that day, I have become wiser. At least two "binkies" now maintain a position in the diaper bag at all times, and usually I have one or two stashed in the pockets of my jeans. Sorting through my diaper bag, you will also find a plastic set of keys, a fluid-filled teething ring, a storybook, a stuffed puppy dog, an octopus that jingles and crinkles, a soft terry cloth blanket and a plastic toy whale.

Once the diaper bag is packed, it sits beside the front door, ready at a moment's notice to be swiftly grasped and toted along on an outing. If all of the necessary supplies have been stocked, any journey should be successful. All that remains is figuring out how to carry this bag, now weighing a good twenty-five pounds, as well as my twenty-pound son, my purse (a definite ten pounds there), the baby carriage and my keys. That, however, is the subject for another essay.