

Off We Go

Preschool

Involving young children in trip planning can be a time to introduce them to measuring and comparing.

What You Need

- * Maps
- * Marker

What to Do

- * Before your family leaves on a trip, sit with your child and show him a map that includes both where you live and where you're going. Talk with him about what maps are and how they are used. Use the marker to circle your hometown and then explain that this is where you live. Then circle the place you plan to visit and explain that this is where you're going. Draw a line between the two (a simple straight line—don't attempt to follow the highway route).
- * Point out and mark other places that have meaning for your child— the place where his grandmother lives, the place where his favorite theme park is located and so forth, and do some simple comparisons of distance: "Grandma's is closer to us than where we're going on vacation. See. She lives here and where we're going is way over here." The idea is to familiarize your child with maps and distances, not to have him understand complicated directions or measurements.
- * Use the map to play number and counting games as well: "Can you find three 2s?" "What is the route number on this road?" "How many rivers are in this state?"
- * As part of getting ready for a long trip, involve your child in finding and counting things that should be packed—two shirts, three pairs of socks, five books and so forth.

Show children that you use math skills by "thinking out loud" as you do things such as measuring distances on a map: "Let's see, it's five miles to Jackson and then three miles from Jackson to Albany, so that's a total of eight miles. It's two miles from Jackson to Corbin, so that's a total of seven miles. Albany is further away from Jackson than Corbin is."