

# Learning and Fun on Family Field Trips



*What is a family field trip? When you and your child travel into the wide world with learning as your goal, you are on a field trip! Your destination can be as close as the front porch or as distant as a museum in another town. What are the secrets of successful family field trips?*

## Plan with care.

*Where will you go?* Illinois and neighboring states are packed with interesting places to visit. But keep in mind that to a young child, even the back yard or the neighborhood can offer many discoveries and new experiences.

*What will you see, do, and find out?* Any trip can be a rich learning experience if you and your child go with questions to answer, problems to solve, or a list of “things to look for.” You and your child can observe, sketch, write, photograph, record audio, count, measure, or take notes about the place you visit.

*How will you get there?* Walking and biking are good ways to get physical exercise as part of the field trip. (Be sure to wear protective gear!) Traveling by bus, boat, train, or trolley can add to the learning experience.

*What will you want to consider in scheduling the trip?* Trips with young children may need to include mealtime and naptime. Plan ahead so your child can get both. It’s a good idea to set a “rain date” with your child in case of bad weather. You might also want to avoid peak visiting times at large public places.

*What will you take?* Maps, drinks and snacks, diapers (if needed), wipes, a change of clothes, books, paper and drawing materials, and change for parking meters are basic field trip equipment. Your trip might also call for special items such as cameras, binoculars, audio recorders, or plastic storage bags for collecting specimens or storing wet clothes. Family members can carry backpacks or “fanny packs” so their hands can be free.

*How will you assure your child’s safety on the trip?* Parking lots, trails, and large crowds call for special safety precautions. Talk with your child ahead of time about how to stay safe. Be specific and firm so that your child knows exactly what she needs to do.


## Have a good time.

*Don’t try to do too much.* You can see and do more another time!

*If you have to wait,* try playing games or looking at books with your child.

## Follow up.

*After the trip, make time to talk with your child about the experience.* Encourage her to tell you the story of the trip, and write it down while she watches you. Keep a scrapbook or collection box of specimens, photos, or other reminders of the trip. Your child might enjoy dramatic play with items from your field trip.

 For related Web resources, see “Learning and Fun on Family Field Trips” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>

 For a copy of the annual Illinois Travel Guide, visit <http://www.enjoyillinois.com/travelguides>

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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