

Outdoor Field Trips with Preschoolers: Planning Ahead



You've chosen a field trip destination, and you know how and when your class will get there. Here are some basic preparations that can help make the trip a good experience for all.



Get organized early.

- Be sure all your plans meet your state and program requirements for field trips.
- Work out a schedule for the trip, from start to finish. Decide which adults will be responsible for specific tasks, such as carrying supplies or taking children to the restroom.
- Find out how much money (if any) will be needed and decide who will carry it on the trip.
- If the class will use public transit, get to know the route very well. Schedules often vary throughout the day.
- Assign children to adult-led small groups for the trip. Make a list of the children for each adult. Adjust the lists on the day of the trip if necessary.



Help parents prepare.

- Several weeks before the trip, ask parents/guardians to sign their children's field trip permission forms. Inform families about the date, time, location, and purpose of the trip. Tell them how the class will travel. Let them know if they should provide money, sack lunches, drinking water, or other items. Send one or two reminders as the day of the trip approaches.
- Encourage family members to ask questions or express concerns about the trip. Explain how the staff will keep the children safe.
- If family members are invited to help out during the trip, explain clearly what is expected of them.



Keep safety and security in mind.

- Review emergency procedures with staff members who will go on the trip. What should they do if a bee stings an allergic child or if the bus must be evacuated?
- Plan how children can wear their name tags so strangers can't easily learn their names. Consider having children and adults wear colorful T-shirts printed with the school name and address.



Collect "must-have" items right before the trip—and take them with you!

- Organize and pack the signed permission forms, emergency contact information, and identification tags for each child. Take a complete list of all participating adults and children and leave a copy at school. Carry a first aid kit and any medications individual children may need, plus sanitary wipes, facial tissues, and a bag to collect trash. Keep snacks and drinking water separate from other items.
- Pack children's field work supplies (magnifiers, sketch paper, field guides, etc.) separately.

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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