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Tips for Making Road Trips Easier and Better With Children 5 Years Old and Younger

As parents, how many times have we heard or thought to ourselves, "Are we there yet?" when taking road trips with our children? Road trips are perfect opportunities to talk and sing with your child. Words and images stimulate children's brains, helping them grow stronger and develop faster. First 5 California offers some ideas for fun and stimulating road trip activities for a range of age groups.

***Babies** may not be ready to talk back to you yet, but their brains are preparing for those future conversations with every word they hear.*

Tip #1: Simply describe the world as it goes by. For example, "Look at the long, big truck with big, round wheels!" These kinds of descriptions will improve their language and brain development for the rest of their lives.

Tip #2: Nursery rhymes not only provide for good storytelling but also often have a fun rhythm that is attractive to babies.

***Toddlers** enjoy using their senses and enhanced motor skills to explore the world around them.*

Do you love music? Your child does, too. Singing along to music is not only fun, it's also calming and comforting. What's more, singing creates a sense of togetherness.

Tip #1: First 5 California has a Pandora station for kids, where the whole family can sing along. Chances are you also sang with your parents on the road. Teach your child a song from your childhood.

Tip #2: Play "Find the Animals." Whether it's a dog looking out the window of another car, or a lion on a billboard for the zoo, when you see an animal, ask your toddler to name it and tell you what sound the animal makes.

***Preschoolers** can do and say more than younger children because they have better control of their physical abilities.*

Games can be fun and educational. You don't need toys. All you need is imagination.

Tip #1: Play "Once upon a time." Take turns making up a story. For example, you start with, "Once upon a time a girl went swimming in the ocean and saw a big fish." Your child makes up the next line, such as "The fish was green and yellow and smiled at her." You and your child go back and forth until one of you says the story is finished. Your child then starts a second story, and so on.

Tip #2: Play "I spy something with my eye." Is it a car, fence, bird, or something else? Take turns in this fun game of clues and guesses. Keep track to see how well your children can guess. Preschoolers love outdoing themselves.