

Top Tips: Road trips without screens



In September 2016, parenting author and educator Maggie Dent put a post on Facebook about road trips without screens.

DISCLAIMER: These tips are shared from our Facebook community – please [do your own research](#) when making choices for your family. Also please note we have left people’s entries largely unedited so there will be imperfections in grammar and spelling.

The original Facebook post:

Maggie Dent

Any other suggestions most welcome - especially audio books?

<https://www.kinderling.com.au/.../are-we-there-yet-road-tripp...>

Are we there yet? Road tripping without screens

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Most common suggestions

- Colouring books, maps, reusable stickers, felt story boards, crochet and drawing
- Healthy snacks and treats
- Audiobooks (some great titles listed in the comments below)
- Music, podcasts and books
- Regular pit stops
- Look out the window, contemplate and expand imagination, don't over distract and allow them to get bored
- Singing and conversations
- Talking games and games (great ideas listed in comments below), quizzes, maths and spelling
- Toys, dolls and treasure

Responses

Jayne Taylor

I also travelled several thousand km per year with my toddler son. Minimal toys etc meant he learned to enjoy the trip without needing extras. Never considered a screen. He loves skies and the bush and landscapes now. I am sure from those days. He had maps and colouring books. Took turns to choose music. He is now 15 and out camping in the bush for 12 days along WA coast. Forget over-distracting kids from what is actually happening. Mindfulness is important in later life.

Megan James

For slightly older children.. Chronicles of Narnia audiobooks are a beautiful dramatised recording of all 7 books.. No one (children 14, 11, 9) wanted to get out of the car when we arrived home after long road trip, as they wanted to hear the end!

Ralph Southall

We use to sing in the car and mum always packed pencils and colouring stuff to draw. We would also play some kind of game with the numbers on licence plates, eye spy & Car Lotto we all had to pick a model car and the first one to 10 would to win. We got nothing other than the satisfaction of winning :-)

Meredith Myers

We play 'the alphabet game' pick a topic and we all have to come up with something for each letter... cars is the most used topic, followed by fruit or veg, sometimes countries... I've also put a trivia game (cards only) in the car and I read them out and everyone answers.

Monica Jessop

Travelling Treasure Box. Buy or make a small box or bag for each child, and allow them to find little treasures each time you stop. It's amazing, what they find! Keep them secret till they get back in the car and on your way again. Gives them something to show and tell, and talk about for a while! We even had a tiny little dried up pellet of rabbit poo once! On the Nullarbor.

Kelly Asphar

We do audio books here too, which are great. Love listening to Enid Blyton more than my son does. Melissa and Doug's reusable stickers were a hit (to stick on the windows) and a bag of pipe cleaners kept our 3 year old entertained for over an hour without any interference from us. We find the less things he has access to the longer his attention span is. Tablet gets taken out an hour before we reach our destination.

Sharon Diver

Audio books get from your local library. Great way to enjoy a long journey. You may be able to get an extended loan if travelling for a long period. Also kindles. But you can't beat a good paper book!! Smells and feels the right way to read!!

Ali Bennett Cant

Audiobook - Jack and Harry. Fantastic family friendly adventure. Also pad and paper to play mr squiggle. One person draws a squiggle and another person makes it in to a picture. Kept our lively boys entertained for hours.

Christine Williamson

We play I'm thinking of an animal and give clues until someone gets it. We have 3 boys - 9,7,3 and they all like it - the occasional dinosaur drops in. And when the little guy is asleep we use the cards from the adults' vs kids trivial pursuit, they ask us, then we ask them - good for keeping the driver alert too!

Otherwise those colouring in books with the white pen for the little guy. Mine are big readers so there are always books. And the chewy lollies from the natural confectionery company have cool questions we ask each other - some silly, some deeper - funny the things you find out.

Grace Coleman

We have also travelled thousands of kms with toddler and 4/5 yr old without screens in remote Australia. Found clipboards with paper and crayons / pencils, felt story boards (can often get them cheap from post office etc), finger puppets, pipe cleaners and match box cars. Also little shakers for when we had music on - particularly like the play school music as there are usually actions for the kids to do too. The Usborne finding books are great for 3yrs plus as well (have a pictorial list of what to find in each picture). We always have a bag of books between the kids so they can help themselves. Definitely agree with other suggestions on audio books and healthy snacks - found the long life plain milk poppers great as a change from water and has the novelty packaging value too!

Kay Whiteley

For under 10s, especially boys:

- Stig of the Dump
- Danny Chamion of the World.
- The Waterhorse
- The Famous Five series

My six year old boy listens to them all over and over and still loves them (our school run is an hour each way)

Bryn Hird

Radio music quiz...a point for artist, another for song title...my daughter loves it. Or pub cricket...legs = points, arms or head, you're out. So The Red Lion = 4, The Kings Head, you're out. Adapt the rules as you wish...good game for back roads in UK, less so for motorways.

Bec Nelson

We have Roald Dahl CDs in the car for the last few years & kids still love them. I'm looking into getting Harry Potter ones too, & we play 'would you rather' with interesting results lol

Margareth Michaelsen

Singing. Hi-5 all the way from Albany to Coral Bay. The songs are still stuck in my head 20 years later. Also Barbie dolls. The girls played "let's pretend" continuously. We had no screens. It was great.

Meg Dunley

We (3 boys aged 7,9&11) travelled 28000 km over 9 months without screens. We did have audio books - long ones - and they also got used to staring out the window. I also had a bag of play-by-yourself games that were doable in the car. And when my middle boy pulled someone's hair we knew it was time for a break and we had a frisbee we pulled out while having a cuppa and a biscuit. Sometimes the boys would read books or the Hema map and we would talk about distances and get them to work out how far, how long, how much fuel - maths on the road. Sometimes I sat in the back and our eldest sat in the front. This broke things up and there were even a couple of times we did some art (dry water colours on fabric). Sometimes we just listened to music - not even kids music. Most importantly we got used to reading the temperaments. So much better without screens.

Kathryn Vidler Joseph

We travelled Oz last year with 4/5 yo, at the Pardoo Roadhouse (near Port Hedland in WA) we came across a copy of Charlotte's Web audiobook. We must of listened to it 43 times. I think I could recite it. Mr 4 loved it!

Megan Hogan

I've just taught my 9yo (boy) to crochet & while he hasn't tried it on the road yet I think it will feature soon. We don't do screens for trips under 4 hours & then limit it. They do well sight seeing, reading, drawing, listening to music & playing games. We also do a bit of maths & spelling here & there but keep it relaxed.

Michelle Popplewell

As children we travelled Australia playing the Alphabet Game, now my girls play it and anyone new in our car gets a lesson by my girls.... Each person must work their way thru the alphabet finding letters on signage or number plates, depending on how hard you want to make it, but can be that no-one uses same letter on a sign/number plate ... Also can be played in teams with younger ones

Elle Maynard

Famous Five and Secret Seven audio books, and Queen, Abba, Celine Dion and Michael Buble, this is a part of the memories that we have from our drive from WA over east with our children many many years ago. It's amazing how a particular song can invoke a memory of being in a particular place!

Julie Brickwood Barrett

We always do an audio book on long road trips. We love sharing the stories together. Our favourites have been BFG, Anne of Green Gables and Wind in the Willows. This trip we are listening to Stig of the Dump.

Rochelle Southwell

Audio books - David Walliams, Dahl, treehouse, Harry Potter (must have English or Australian narrators). Little times table quizzes. Quality Australian Bird, Reptile, Fish and Mammal books to flick through and Discuss

Juliet Sheridan

What a great article - thanks for sharing. Love audiobooks on our long trips! Recent fav's are The faraway tree series and Charlottes Web.

Nicola Kelliher

The best thing is to allow the children time to be bored; staring out the window allows their imagination to expand.

Ruth Savage

I got to making children word searches related to the different things we had seen, learnt along the way.

Pam Willox

I got a 10 story Roald Dahl CD set from Groupon for about \$25. Best buy ever! We listened to BFG this weekend. Awesome!

Milica Kippin

Toys, snacks, sleep, music, regular pit stops along the way to shake the sillies out, give the kiddies an old camera to take photos with, talk about past holidays and what this one might be like...

Chantelle Rouge

RACV has 8 different pages for back-seat spotty or bingo. Works great with my 5yo.

Kellie Lamond

WA number plates are good, guess what town the letters are for as the cars go past

Nicki Atkinson

Tree House audio books. Car games and then kids modify to make their own games - great problem solving:)

Michelle Sonsee

No screens for us! Our toddler spends the whole time making up stories and playing with toys - oh and having conversations

Rebecca Petty Sampson

Short and curly podcast - philosophy based, pauses for discussion. Fabulously entertaining :)

Christie Jones

I got our boys (2&3yrs) the magnetic drawing boards. We take turns drawing pictures of things we see or things they want to see. And no mess or running out

Marie Ashton

no having to make sure everyone's app is fully charged up, eh!

Fiona Felton

Create a story and get everyone to add details, Spoto, eye spy, A Series of Unfortunate Events audio book.

Kamisha Henderson-Kelly

We drove across the Nullarbor in the April holidays and downloaded Eaudiobooks through our local library. The stand out favourite was Jessica Watson's self narrated True Spirit - entertaining and inspirational.

Lis Anne

Our kids love listening to music while staring out of the window, I spy and spotting animals. They are 6 and 4 yo boys

Mandy Farabegoli

The [Travel Australia With Kids Quiz Book](http://www.travellingaustraliawithkids.com/shop.html) is a great way for you all to pass the time in the car :) Passes those loooooong hours and made so that you can all play together. :)<http://www.travellingaustraliawithkids.com/shop.html>

Carlie Woods

Looking for ideas as we traveling South West WA for a month with a 5&2yr old we don't own i-pad or portable dvd player. We have magnetic boards and audio books, threading and drawing

Vanessa Leever

Small cars/toys.

Make up little activity bags for every hour or so.

Jayne Taylor

Not for really young kids but probably year 7 up is "the graveyard book" Neil Gaiman. Has fantastic narration. I just listened to it age 50! The voices are excellent and great story.

Nancy Scherbarth Czerw

'Are we there yet' audio book

Amy BewleyPont

Enid Blyton audiobooks- faraway tree series, naughtiest girl series.

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Maggie Dent
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