

Fuss Management: Planning Ahead to Prevent Tantrums



There's no sure cure for young children's public temper tantrums. But some simple steps can reduce the chances that your toddler or preschooler will "pitch a fit" when you run errands together.



Go on "practice" outings and errands with your child.

- Have pretend outings at home to help your child know what you expect of her. Play "riding the bus," "getting groceries," "having a check-up."
- Go on short, simple outings as practice for longer trips. Introduce basic ideas: "Look, don't touch." "Stay next to me." "Notice what's around us." Such practice trips can be especially helpful to very active or impulsive children.
- Remind your child, "I'm helping you learn how to run errands."



Plan errands and other outings with your child's needs in mind.

- Sometimes a child should not go with you. Let him stay with a trusted caregiver, if you can, when he is ill, his meals or naps will be disrupted, or he is likely to feel overwhelmed at the place you are going to.
- Pack wisely. You may need
 - healthy snacks and drinks
 - comfort items—a blanket, books, or small toys (avoid items that easily get away, such as balls)
 - a list of songs your child enjoys
 - learning activity kits (see the Tip Sheets in the "Things to Do While You're Waiting" series for ideas)
 - a change of clothes in case of spills or accidents
- Tell your child what to expect. Be brief but clear: "We have two things to do—get groceries and mail the bills. We'll be home for lunch." "After your eye exam, I'll take you to child care."
- Let your child make choices: "Will you ride in the cart, or walk by me?" "Do you want to sing a song or hear the radio?" "What do you want to see first—seals or elephants?"



Prepare yourself.

- Be ready to divide your time between "taking care of business" and interacting with your children. A few minutes of positive attention can go a long way.
- Some experts suggest that parents not reward children for good behavior on outings because they believe that having a pleasant time is its own reward and that rewards can lead to frustration. Decide your "reward policy" and be ready to stick to it!
- Ask the pediatrician about motion sickness if your child often complains of stomach upset, headache, or unusual tiredness when traveling.

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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