



Are We There Yet?

Games and Activities for the Car



Dear Parents and Guardians,

At E-470, the “E” doesn’t stand for “enjoyment,” but it should. We believe that driving should be a pleasant activity.

To avoid the dreaded “Are We There Yet?” syndrome, employees at E-470 contributed some of their favorite car games to share with your family. This collection of games can be played on a road trip or even when you are just taking the kids to school.

We have included some old favorites and some new games that will be sure to delight your children. A few activities require some outside materials, but many of the games can be played without anything extra. We hope your family will enjoy these games as much as we do.

Safe and happy journeys,

Ed DeLozier, Executive Director

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Odd or Even?

This is a game for two players. Have each child guess whether there are more license plates that end in an odd or even number. (License plates that end in a letter do not count.) Give each child a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. Set a time limit. 10 to 15 minutes works well. Have one child look for license plates that end in an odd number, and the other for plates that end in an even number. A tick mark or dash should be marked for each car they find. At the end of the time limit, have the children add up their marks.

The Alphabet Game

This is a classic game where the children find the letters of the alphabet (in order) on the signs and license plates around them. You could either have the children take turns and point to where they find their letter, or play the game separately to see who finishes first. A variation on this game is to give the passengers a word that they must spell using letters on signs and license plates. Another variation on the game is to choose a category such as "Fruits" or "Animals." Have the children take turns choosing something for each letter. Begin the game by saying, "I'm going on a trip and I'm bringing..." The first player will name something that starts with the letter A. The second player names something that starts with the letter B, and so on. A third variation on this game is to have each child recite what came before, starting from A.

Guess the Number

Someone will choose a number between a stated range, such as from 1 to 100. The players ask questions about the number, such as "Is it more than 30?", "Can it be divided into three equal parts?", and "Is it an even number?". This game can also be played with letters. Players can ask questions such as "Is it a vowel?", "Is it in the word marshmallow?", and "Is it ever silent?".

Are We There Yet?

As much fun as car trips can be, there comes a time when every child asks that dreaded question: "Are we there yet?". Some ways to respond include asking the child some questions of your own, such as:

- How far do you think we've gone? How fast do you think we're going?
- If it's 4:45 now, and it takes us two hours to get there, what time will we arrive?

Using a Map

Give your child a copy of the map to where you are going. If possible, show them how far you have gone. You could also work on map-reading skills by teaching them how to read grids, legends, and scales.

Mystery Writer

One child holds out their hand and closes their eyes while the other child "writes" with their finger. The first child tries to guess what the other child is writing. Start with just letters, and slowly move up to two- and three- letter words.

License Plate Collectors

Print out a chart of each state and keep it in the car. During your trips, have the kids mark which states they have seen and when.

License Plate Sentences

Someone sees a license plate and calls out the letters on it (someone may want to write them down). Everyone tries to come up with a different phrase using the letters in the order they appear as the first letter of each word. For PST, the sentence might read “penguins singing tenderly.” Creativity should be encouraged! When no one can think of any more phrases, it is time to look for another license plate. A variation on this is to come up with a word that contains all those letters in order. For PST, you might use “past,” “postage,” or “possibility.”

License Plate Numbers

Similar to the alphabet game, this activity involves finding numbers 0 through 9 on license plates (in order). However, after finding 9, the next step is to find doubles of each number (00, 11, 22, etc.). You can continue this game until trying to find triples or even quadruples, though this may prove very difficult.

Word Sandwich

The first player chooses two words that can “sandwich” one word in the middle and tells the players what those two words are. For example, the two words might be FIRE and PET. The other players have to guess the word in the middle of the sandwich. In this example, the middle word is HOUSE. The complete word sandwich is FIRE – HOUSE – PET, since firehouse and house pet are both common words and phrases.

Origami Fun

Bring along square pieces of brightly-colored paper and a book on origami. There are no scissors needed, and your children can learn how to fold paper into cranes, frogs, and balloons!

Play Cards

Teach your children how to play simple card games, such as War, Spit, or Go Fish. Bring the cards and rules along with you for the trip.

1, 2, 3 – What Do You See?

Choose an object, such as cows, cars, or trees, and have the children count until they find a certain number of that object. For cars and houses, you can keep a running tally of the number, color, and type to see what is the most commonly occurring combination.

Scavenger Hunt

Bring a list of things for children to find while driving. This list can be adjusted for the trip’s scenery. Examples include: a farmhouse, a waterfall, a tree with no leaves, two cows standing together.

Reading Together

Bring along some family-friendly books and take turns reading out loud. Alternately, pre-record yourself reading on tape (or buy an audio version) to play.

Travel Journal

Give each child a sketchpad or blank photo album. They can use the time in the car to color, write, or paste photos or postcards into the book.

Mad Libs

You can either buy the pre-written version, or have one child write a short story and choose which words the other child will replace. They can take turns reading the story at the end.

Aluminum Foil Art

Children can make art and sculptures from foil with no glue or scissors! They can create animals, masks, crowns and more!

Learn a Foreign Language

A road trip is a great time to practice a new language, especially since there will be many things to look at to practice vocabulary. Bring foreign language tapes and then move on to practice sessions.

Spelling Bee

See who can spell the most words correctly. Don't forget to bring a small dictionary! You can also play a variation on this game where one child chooses a word in the dictionary and the other players try to guess the correct definition out of four choices.

Just the Cards

Many games such as *Trivial Pursuit* lend themselves to playing only with the cards. You might keep score on a piece of paper, but your children will still have fun guessing the right answers. Other games without small pieces, such as *Scattergories*, work well in the car.

Lines and Dots

This is an easy game that only requires a pencil and paper. Make a grid of dots on a sheet of paper. Each player takes turns drawing a line between two dots. The lines may be horizontal and vertical, but not diagonal. If a player makes a complete square, they mark it with their initials and receive another turn. The player with the most squares wins!

Twenty Questions

The first player thinks of an object, and the other players ask "yes or no" questions to determine what the object is. The player who guesses in 20 questions or less wins!

How Far Away Is It?

Have someone choose an object that you will pass on the trip (ex: the red house on the left, the beginning of the fence, etc.). Each person guesses how far away it is, then you clock it on your odometer.

Playing Favorites

Ask each child their favorite color, then encourage your children to think of different “favorite” questions (movie, flavor of ice cream, song, game, toy, place to visit, restaurant, book, animal, meal, etc.)

Personality Questions

There may be books and Web sites that have lists of “icebreaker” questions, but you can encourage your children to come up with their own. Here are a few to get you started:

- If you were a weather forecast, what would you be?
- If you were going to live a new planet, what three plants would you bring?
- What are you most looking forward to about college?
- If you could have super powers, what kind would you most want?

100 Things to Do

One fun activity is to ask your children to list 100 things they would like to do in their life. They might be places to visit, things to learn, or goals they want to accomplish. This makes a great way to come up with gifts when they don’t know what they want!

People Poems

Have your child write their name vertically down the side of a sheet of paper. Then have them find phrases, nouns, verbs or adjectives that describe them.

Ex: Jumps a lot
Oreos are my favorite
Happy
Nice

Fortunately-Unfortunately

This is a fun and silly game where the first player begins with an “unfortunate” statement. The second player counters with a “fortunate” statement, and the next player counters with another “unfortunate” statement. For example, the first player could begin with “Unfortunately, there’s a shark in the swimming pool.” The second player could counter with “Fortunately, he’s a friendly shark.” The next player could respond with, “Unfortunately, he’s having a bad day.”

Classic Radio Broadcasts

The library and Internet often have recordings of classic radio broadcasts such as “War of the Worlds” or “Superman.” Play the recording, and then discuss with your child how the experience was different from the experience of watching television or a movie. If the recording was made into a television show, discuss how it was different.

Who Am I?

Think of someone everyone in the car knows, a friend, a relative, or a famous person. The first player gives three hints about that person's appearance, occupation, personality, or another aspect of that person. Each person gets a turn to guess who the person is. If no one has guessed once everyone has had a turn, the first player gives another hint. This continues until someone guesses the person. A variation is "What Am I?", where the first person gives three words that could describe a place or thing.

Magazine Collage

A new twist on an old favorite is to bring along magazines for the children to use to make a collage. Bring safety scissors and contact paper. The children can cut out the pictures and stick them to the contact paper – no glue needed!

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie

This classic book by Laura J. Numeroff is the story of a mouse that demands a cookie. Of course, if you give him a cookie, you will have to give him some milk. And if you give him some milk...the story continues from there, but you can encourage your children to create their own versions of the story. For example, "If I had a pet tiger, I would ride him to school. If I rode him to school, my teacher would let me keep him by my desk. If he sat by my desk, he could learn how to write. If he learns how to write, he could write a book..." A simpler variation is the "What If" game that asks the children to consider what would happen in a certain scenario. For example, "What if we saw a dinosaur on the way to the park?"

Slug-Bug

This classic car game can be altered so that instead of slugging your neighbor when you see a Volkswagen Beetle, you hug them. A variation on this is to have special words for specific vehicles. For example, saying "honk" when you see a semi-truck or "beep" for Volkswagen Beetles. You could also include emergency-personnel vehicles: "fuzz" for police cars, "ow" for ambulances, and "hot" for fire trucks.

A is For...

Pick a letter and everyone finds an object that corresponds to that letter. For the letter "A," someone could spot an airplane, animal, architecture, or avenue.

Parson's Cat

The players begin their sentence with "Parson's Cat is..." and have to end with an adjective to describe the cat. To make the game more challenging, you can limit the adjectives to a certain letter. You can also use family members and other objects to personalize the game: "Dad's Shoes," "Mom's Car," or "Bobby's Room."

Ring Around the Whatsit

One person chooses an object and writes it on a slip of paper. One person is "it" and cannot look at the paper. Everyone says a word or phrase to describe the object and continues in a circle until the player who is "it" guesses the object.

Categories

One person thinks of a category. Everyone takes turns naming items that fit in that category. If someone cannot think of anything else that fits in that category, they're "out." However, the last person left cannot win until they come up with a final answer. The categories can be as creative as you'd like. Some examples include cities, candy bar brands, things that grow, or cartoon characters.

Monster Match

The ideal number of passengers for this is three, but it can be played with two passengers or more. Each person needs a pencil or pen and a sheet of unlined paper. Each player folds the paper into three sections lengthwise. Start at the top section and draw the head or top third of an alien, monster, person, or other creature. Extend the two lines of the neck just barely across the fold into the next third so the next person can see where to attach the midsection. Fold the paper so the next person cannot see your work and pass it to them. Draw the midsection for the paper you receive and repeat the directions from the first section. When everyone is done, open the papers and display your art.

Billboard Poetry

Take turns picking out four words from road signs and billboards. Give the words to a player who has one to five minutes to turn the words into a four-line, rhyming poem using one word per line.

Word Connections

This game is a variant on word association. The first player says a word and the next person has to say the first word that comes to their mind. The next player says the first word that comes to mind after hearing that word, and so forth. For example, the chain of words might be: dog – animal – elephant – trunk – traveling – roads.

Word Ladders

This game might be easier to play when writing the words. The first person says a word, like "gate." The next person has to change the word into a new word by changing only one letter, like "gape." The third person also has to change the word, and so forth until no new words can be formed. This game can also create "quiet time" when you have multiple passengers. Each passenger does this by themselves, then writes down the first and last word and the number of letter changes needed on a piece of paper. The passengers trade papers and try to fill in the missing words.