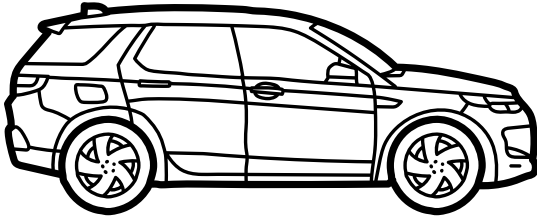


# LET'S TAKE A TRIP



## WITHOUT THE TABLET?

*pro tip* ✨ ✨

STIMULATION OF  
THE BRAIN IS  
CRUCIAL FOR  
SUCCESSFULLY  
MAINTAINING  
ATTENTION AND  
AVOIDING  
BEHAVIORS

*key elements*

- \* NOVELTY IS KEY FOR SUCCESS
- \* TASKS THAT CHALLENGE ARE MORE STIMULATING
- \* UTILIZE PREFERRED INTERESTS TO MOTIVATE

Yes, yes. We know how hard it is to go anywhere in the 21st century without technology at our fingertips. We know there's nothing more stimulating for a child than a tablet-that's why they fly off the shelves and everyone has them. They are a great source of entertainment because of the level of stimulation they enact in the brain. For adults too. There's little that is more stimulating than screens. However, if you are wanting to increase your child's capacity for attention, focus, and self-entertainment and want them to be able to achieve these things without the use of a highly stimulating tablet,

WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

No, this will not be easy, and like we said before, nothing competes with the stimulation of the tablet. It will be hard to find something that is as ENTERTAINING and REWARDING as the tablet.

### STEP #1

We FIRST have to teach the brain that other things can be rewarding too.

### STEP #2

SECOND, we next provide an alternative that is exciting and stimulates the same reward center in the brain as the tablet does.

### STEP #3

THIRD, we find a solution that fits your child's interests such as games, toys, or activities that your child enjoys plus alternative ways to spice it up so that it not only works once but instead creates new pathways in the brain for finding joy in other things so that you can leave the tablet behind.

### STEP #4

LAST, stick to your guns on the expectations you set for what is allowed in the car. Just like with anywhere else, once you set expectations and require for them to be met each time, it becomes a habit.

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# REWIRING THE BRAIN

## TO ACCEPT CAR RIDES

## WITHOUT THE TABLET



### STEP #1 *rewire the brain*

To teach the brain that other things can be rewarding too, you need to stop or at least drastically reduce overall time spent on the tablet. Because if the brain is constantly getting that much stimulation, it's going to be very difficult for the brain to ever find less stimulating things as rewarding (especially in the boring environment of the car) or at least rewarding enough to reduce or end meltdowns/tantrums/upsets/constant complaining in the car. Remember, that the whole environment of the car, is incredibly hard because no movement is possible. Your child is strapped to a chair with no way to change the environment/scenery. Recall that even for us adults, it's hard to handle long car rides, we often seek entertainment too. We don't blame kids for being this way, it's how they are wired (we all are) but WE can help them to overcome this problematic seeking behavior, that is actually just increasing overall negative behaviors and reducing capacity for good attention and the ability to find happiness in non-screens.

### STEP #2 *provide an alternative*

After completing step #1 and reducing or eliminating tablet time, the brain is in a better place to accept non-screens and find them pleasing AKA stimulating the reward center of the brain. Now, again this is hard to find something as cool, but the following pages list a ton of things that might help you find the perfect fit for your child. Start by helping your child find success and happiness in accepting and completing appropriate challenges outside of time in the car. Remember that it's highly stimulating to the brain to complete a challenge and find success in the accomplishment of a challenge. Start by helping your child complete "just right" challenges (not too hard, not too easy) outside of car rides, then you can begin to introduce these same types of satisfying challenge tasks in the car.

### STEP #3 *find the perfect fit*

Now that we have begun to rewire the brain, we can find a solution that fits your child's interests and alternative ways to "spice it up" so that these new activities work not only once but many times and can change and grow as your child changes and grows. This process is what will create new pathways in the brain for rewiring the reward center to enjoying activities other than tablet time when riding in the car. The next page lists a ton of different activities that you can try with your child, to help stimulate the brain similarly to the tablet to help them maintain happiness in the car.

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# REWIRING THE BRAIN

## TO ACCEPT CAR RIDES

## WITHOUT THE TABLET



### STEP #4 *hold your ground*

Last, we have to think about the past and recognize that tablets have only been around for a few years. You as the parent had to figure out how to stay satisfied in the car as a child, and you did survive it. It's not going to be easy to transition away from tablets in the car because they truly are so stimulating and satisfying. If you are considering no tablet time in the car, it's likely because your child is experiencing some negative effects that you have contributed to tablet time. Recognize that only you have the power to set expectations about car rides. If you want the problems to subside and for your child to be able to ride in the car without a tablet, YOU must be the one to set the expectation and "stick to your guns" on the expectation you have set. Just like with anywhere else, once you set expectations and require for them to be met each time, it becomes a habit. It just takes some grit and patience to ride out the behaviors that incur. Please note: It's highly likely that your child will go through withdrawals related to tolerating car rides without this highly stimulating activity. These withdrawals are expected and usually significantly increase behaviors, because that's how our brain is supposed to react to the withdrawal from a highly stimulating activity. Don't fear, it's normal for your child to be going through this. You just have to ride it out and know that it will get worse before it will get better. It's expected and normal. You got this!

## *keys for success*

### \* REGULATING THINGS/PREFERRED THINGS

### \* PARENTAL ATTENTION

### \* CHALLENGES

### \* NOVELTY

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*toys, games, and activities that target:*

*are often the most effective ways to hold a child's attention in the car*

# WHAT IS REGULATING FOR YOUR CHILD?

First, we have to put on our detective cap and think about what is regulating for your child? What have you found that has been comforting, and helps your child feel happy/successful? For some kids, it's building things, for some kids it's creating something, for some kids it's sensory based toys, etc. Plan to bring things that are regulating for your child.

# WHAT INTERESTS YOUR CHILD?

This is often easier to recognize. You know your child best and you know what type of toys/games/activities are their favorite. It's so much easier to peak and keep your child's interest if it's something that they are intrigued by. If you know your child dislikes fine motor activities or coloring, writing, etc. don't use that as a car activity. Yes, it would be great if they used car ride time to practice skills and work on challenge areas, but it's extremely difficult to get a child motivated for completing challenges in the car, because there is no one but themselves back there to encourage and help them to get through it. Car rides are not the time to work on challenges (right now-maybe later), right now, the emphasis will be on keeping their attention and helping them to get through the trip without major emotional upsets/behaviors.

# NOTHING COMPARES TO A PARENT'S ATTENTION

Fortunately and unfortunately nothing lights up the human brain like the attention of another human being, especially the attention of someone who is loved/appreciated/admired/etc. There's truly nothing quite as stimulating as social interaction, that's why social media companies have hit the jackpot. They combined the stimulation of personal attention and social interaction with a few other highly stimulating factors to create the ultimate brain stimulating and addicting activities. It's incredibly hard to give children the amount of attention their sweet brains crave, especially when you have more than one child. It's super hard to do "all the things" as a parent, as you know. Giving each child your attention while you are busy managing their lives and your family's life/day-to-day tasks is really challenging. When stuck in the car, something that really helps some kids to be able to get through a car ride and not totally lose it, is attention. Of course this is more difficult because of location with you in the front seat and them in the back, but once old enough, children can engage in language based games and activities that give their brain a lot of stimulation through that connection of parental attention.

# NOVELTY WORKS AMAZINGLY WELL

Y'all there is just something about novelty that really fires up the human brain. You can probably recognize this in your own life, and how new things, new places, new people, new objects, etc. are just really exciting and pleasing, especially because they are novel. This works for every age of human being, novelty is a high level stimulation trick. So, a key take away, is that novelty is a key to success for keeping kids occupied in the back seat. Great in theory, but hard in practice you say? We have so many ideas for keeping things fresh without buying more! See ideas on the next page.

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# novelty #1

## HOW TO KEEP IT FRESH!

Use this guide to help you find some activities/games/toys that you feel will be intriguing and fun for your child. Our favorite places to go for these are the dollar store, the dollar section of Walmart and Target, and discount stores such as Ross, Stein Mart, TJ Maxx, Home Goods, Tuesday Morning, etc. and of course the regular toy sections of Target, Walmart, and Amazon. We always price check toys and games (larger non dollar store/dollar section items) at several places because sometimes one place will have the same item for a few dollars cheaper, and we always try to save money when we can!

## #2

Once you have decided upon some fun things to have in your car, our recommendation is to get a bag/sack/box (whatever floats your boat) and fill it with some highly preferred, novel, and "cool" items that you feel like your child would enjoy engaging with and would sustain their attention.

THIS BAG WILL LIVE IN THE CAR

AND CANNOT BE PLAYED WITH OUTSIDE THE CAR!

It's very important that these toys are "special" and are set aside only for your child to play with in the car SO THAT THEY WORK.

Find a method for rotating toys/games/etc. and utilize some strategies to help keep the options fresh and exciting! Here are our favorite methods:

- 1) Blind grab- Have your child reach in the bag/box with eyes closed and grab 1-2 things to play with. At the next stop, or when child needs something new, extend the bag back and let them grab another thing.
- 2) It's a surprise- Parent chooses 5 items (from a larger repertoire of hidden items in a bag/box that lives in the car that child does not know about) and each time they get in the car they won't know until they get seat belted in, what the surprises of the day are.
- 3) Have them make the plan- Have your child help you make a "schedule" or plan for what toys they want to play with in the car on the next trip/ride to Target. You can use a dry erase board that lives in the car or paper works!

★ trick for  
getting it  
done: ★

We know! This all seems great in theory but hard in reality to do. Our suggestion: Dedicate a Saturday afternoon to shopping for A BUNCH of items either online or in person (or from the back of their closet-haha), get a bag/box and put them all in the car and have it ready to go. Then, before you get on the road, take a couple of minutes to put the items you want in a separate bag for the car ride, let the rest of it just sit there for as long as needed until you need it. Then, change your methods for delivery (above #1-3) each day/week and slowly add new items from the back of the car as needed.

hack ★

Some kids do best with being a part of picking out their toys for the car, and other kids will LOVE it when you tell them that you got them "surprises" for the car that always stay in the car for them. You know your child best, use the approach that best fits their personality!

pro tip ★

We find the best toys around Christmas time and in the fall when stores are stocking up on toys for the season. We also search for dollar aisle/dollar store toys around holidays.

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# OUR FAVORITE CAR TOYS/GAMES

## INTERACTIVE TOYS/GAMES:

- Whack a Mole
- Bop It
- Simon
- Leap Frog
- Talking flash cards
- Fun water/drink cups
- Snack spinners
- Color changing cups
- Leap Frog Reader
- Suction cup spinner toys

Don't forget that sometimes when kids lose attention, they are actually hungry/thirsty and the brain needs energy (from food) and blood flow (from water) to stay focused

## BUILDING/CREATIVE TOYS/GAMES:

- Magnatiles
- Skillmatics Dot It! pages
- Magnetic dolls/scenes
- Busy boards/books
- Squigz
- Magnatabs/magnetic drawing boards
- Simple coloring pages or books
- Wikkistix- need board or window to stick them to or the travel kit
- Color Wonder- mess free coloring books
- Window clings
- Melissa & Doug re-useable sticker scenes (actually work) also in puff
- Water Wow Boards (come in a huge variety of types)
- Mazes/mysteries
- Coloring/writing
- Hidden pictures

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# OUR FAVORITE CAR TOYS/GAMES



for older kids



## THINKING/ENGAGING TOYS/GAMES:



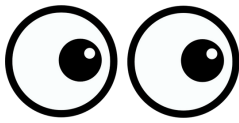
- Highlight books:
  - Mazes/puzzles
  - Hidden pictures
  - Riddles and jokes
  - Guess Who
  - Rubik's Cube and similar
  - Rush Hour

- Carpool Chaos
- Play Route Memory Cube
- Partner games (with siblings) such as:
  - tic tac toe
  - connect four
  - Memory Flash



✦ click underlined title for link to item

eye spy



## OUR FAVORITE PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIVE GAMES:

I'm thinking of an animal



Pick something either inside your car or outside (that's far enough away and your child has a good enough view to see well) and have your child guess what it is. You can play by either A) just giving clues, B) they can ask questions, C) they can ask only yes/no questions, etc.

\*For best success give your child clear expectations for how to play and know your child's attention and visual limits for this game-this one takes a lot of executive functions to be successful with-don't turn them off of the game by making it too hard, they will be more likely to "stick with it" if they feel successful!

Parent thinks of an animal (or object, place, etc.-switch it up for fun) and have your child ask questions to guess what that mystery animal is. You can increase or decrease the challenge by A) only giving them a certain # of guesses before they have to submit their final guess B) they can only ask yes/no questions to find out more about the animal, etc. C) take turns being guesser and thinker D) winner gets to pick the animal and be the thinker next time, etc. Note that this game requires good use of executive functions to be successful, please adjust difficulty level to help your child succeed!

✦ While we know that no screen time is the goal for you, please note that watching tv is far less stimulating and causes far less addictive and problematic behaviors than tablet use does. So, if you need something more entertaining for longer car trips, please know that watching tv is ok in moderation and far less problematic than tablet use due to the way in which the brain is stimulated.

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# OUR FAVORITE PODCASTS FOR KIDS

*for younger kids*

## KIDS SHORT STORIES WITH HEY MR. JIM

<https://open.spotify.com/show/695BG5wFUL0loKozKPiWZV?si=d6fb83fb8b4f46dd>

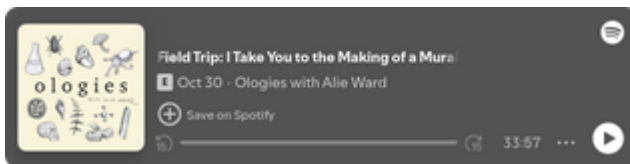
## KIDS ANIMAL SHORT STORIES WITH HEY MR. JIM

<https://open.spotify.com/show/6FuTSh5JhYNOGblRIF7q8O?si=297eb6f6f6094e29>

*for older kids*

<https://open.spotify.com/show/4EaTaVeNXR4OSFAArpyZyd?si=b585b44a2cac4451>

## BRAINS ON! A SCIENCE PODCAST FOR KIDS FROM AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA



<https://open.spotify.com/show/5nvRkVMH58SelKZYFZxiS?si=179e22f0e37d4a3a>

## OOLOGIES (SMOLOGIES) BY ALIE WARD



Look for the Smologies (Shorter episodes for smaller humans) episodes, they are kid friendly! The regular oologies episodes are only for adults-more complex in nature and sometimes have bad language

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