

Planning an Organized & Successful Vacation

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Create a Vacation Planning File

Vacations result in some of the happiest memories for families including a wonderful time to bond, without all of the distractions of our typical daily routines. However, the time leading up to vacation time can be quite stressful if we are not properly prepared.

In general, it's a good idea to begin preparing for your vacation at least 2-4 weeks in advance, to avoid last minute surprises. However, preparation time will depend on the type of vacation you are taking. For instance, if you will be camping, you'll need to pack quite differently than if you're staying in a hotel. For travel overseas, you may even need to prepare several weeks or months in advance, especially if you need to apply for passports or get immunization shots.

Vacation Planning File:

One way to keep track of all that needs to be done is to create a vacation or travel file or binder. Included in the file will be packing lists, reminders and information that you'll be collecting to prepare for your vacation. Typical categories in your file may include, but are not limited to:

- A master packing list
- Car Rental/Airline Contact Nos.
- Travel Agent info
- Airline or Attraction Tickets
- Itinerary & Maps
- Travel insurance documents
- Travelers checks info
- Hotel/Campsite info
- Local area activities
- Special activities for children
- Babysitting info
- Local medical centers, in case of emergencies
- Emergency phone list of family & friends
- Contact info to leave with family and/or a trusted friend or neighbor

Master List:

Each traveler will have their own packing list that they are responsible for, but there should also be a master packing list. A master list is a general list, not specific to any individual, and will most likely be in the front of the binder or file. On the master list, you'll have things like:

- Camera & Video Camera
- First Aid Kit
- Sunblock
- Beach towels
- Camping equipment
- Ski equipment

- Food & kitchen supplies etc.
- Laundry Supplies & bedding
- Travel iron
- Travel Games

Medical Issues:

If a family member has a health issue, be sure to plan accordingly so that they can still have an enjoyable vacation. Be sure to have information on their prescriptions, doctors' info and anything else that might be needed in the unlikely event of a medical emergency.

Packing Tips:

It's a good idea to begin packing early. This will give you more time to think about additional items you may need before you leave, and also prevent either over packing or under packing. This usually occurs when you have left packing until the last minute and have not given yourself enough time to think about what you really need. There's nothing worse than having to buy an overpriced disposable camera in the hotel gift shop because you have no other choice! If you will be in an area with plenty of convenient and inexpensive stores, then under packing may not be an issue.

Over packing creates problems too. When traveling by car, the more weight your vehicle has to carry, the more fuel it will use. When traveling by air, you may be charged an exorbitant fee if you exceed the maximum weight, so it's worth weighing your suitcase at home before leaving for the airport.

Now that you've created your vacation planning file, I recommend you have a family meeting a couple of weeks before you leave to go over everyone's expectations while on vacation. All family members will have the opportunity to discuss one or two fun things they'd like to do, resulting in a fun vacation for everyone!