

AIR TRAVEL essential CHECKLIST

Pre-Travel Preparation: Building Familiarity

- ☐ **Create a "Pretend" Airport at Home**
 - Role-play the check-in process and dropping off bags to remove the mystery of these steps.
 - Set up a mock security line to practice placing items in bins.
 - Practice wearing a seatbelt while sitting in a kitchen chair to get used to the physical sensation of being "buckled in".
- ☐ **Utilize Visual Aids and Frequent Discussion**
 - Use pictures or a "First/Then" board to outline the sequence of the day (e.g., First: Security, Then: Gate).
 - Talk through the steps of the flight often so the language of travel becomes familiar and safe.
- ☐ **Visit the Airport in Advance**
 - Check if your local airport offers "rehearsal" programs for families of autistic children.
 - Even a simple trip to the terminal to see the crowds and hear the announcements can help desensitize the environment.

Packing Checklist: Sensory & Comfort

- ☐ **Manage Sensory Triggers with Essential Gear**
 - **Noise-cancelling headphones:** Essential for blocking out engine roar and loud overhead announcements.
 - **Sunglasses:** To help manage the bright, fluorescent lighting found in most terminals.
 - **Chewy or gum:** To help with self-regulation and ear pressure changes.
- ☐ **Pack a Customized Activity and Snack Kit**
 - **Preferred Snacks:** Airport food is unpredictable; bring familiar, high-preference foods to ensure they stay nourished and regulated.
 - **Fidget Toys:** Include items with different textures to provide calming tactile input.
 - **Digital Devices:** Ensure tablets are fully charged and content is downloaded for offline use.
- ☐ **Provide Emotional Anchors**
 - Bring a "security object," such as a favourite blanket or a specific "lovey," to provide a sense of home while in the air.

On the Plane: Strategies for Success

- ☐ **Use a Stroller as a "Safe Zone"**
 - Use the stroller for long walks through the terminal to prevent fatigue.
 - The stroller acts as a mobile "boundary," providing a sense of physical security in wide, open airport spaces.
- ☐ **Build a "Circle of Care" on the Flight**
 - Disclose your child's needs to flight attendants early; they are your allies and can often help coordinate quiet moments.
 - Consider handing out small "information cards" to neighbours to foster an environment of understanding and inclusion.
- ☐ **Manage Meltdowns with Grace**
 - If your child becomes overwhelmed, use a blanket to drape over their seat, creating a temporary "dark room" for decompression.
 - Focus on the "wins" - celebrate the successful moments of the flight rather than dwelling on the difficult ones.



A Note for the Journey

Remember, you are doing a wonderful job. At Monarch House, we believe that every environment should be an environment where your child belongs. Whether you are on the ground or in the air, we are standing with you.

Safe travels!