

Earning Spending Money on Family Trips

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The following suggestion comes from a terrific video for parents called *1-2-3-Magic* by Thomas Phelan, PhD. The video and book address the challenges of discipline with humor and concrete examples.

Dr. Phelan gives an example of using the docking system for a long road trip with your children. I've used his suggestion and it works like a charm.

Here's how we did it:

We were taking a trip from Berkeley to L.A. to visit relatives and go to Universal Studios. We knew that we would be giving our children spending money while we were in L.A., so we decided that they would earn it by making our trip pleasant (which means no fighting, whining, or name-calling). Our children can easily get on each others nerves and cause the intensity to rise above the boiling point.

We told them that they would have to earn their spending money. We set the timer every 30 minutes, and if there was no disturbance they earned \$1.50 each. This would give each of them \$18 to \$21 for a six or seven hour trip. Either both children got the money for the pleasant half-hour or neither got it. They couldn't get sneaky and get the other one in trouble. On this trip our children earned the maximum amount and we had a terrific 7-hour drive to L.A.

The timer serves the purpose of keeping track of the half-hour intervals. If you have younger children (ours were 8 and 13) you can set the timer for 15-minute intervals to give more frequent positive reinforcement for their ability to control their impulses.