

## TOP 10 TIPS FOR WALT DISNEY WORLD WITH KIDS



*If* you're anything like me, you've been dreaming of the day you can take your kids to Walt Disney World for the first time since before they were born. If you close your eyes, I'm sure you can even picture what it will be like for them to see the castle for the first time, hug Mickey Mouse, or ride on a safari to see real lions and elephants. You can practically see their eyes light up as they watch the fireworks.

As exciting as it is, I'm sure you have also started questioning whether or not your family can handle a Disney World trip yet. You might have even had friends and family advise you to wait until your kids are older.

Well, I am here to help you realize that you CAN have an AMAZING time at Walt Disney World with your family—whether your kids are babies and toddlers, pre-k age, elementary school kids, or pre-teens and teenagers. While these tips are specifically geared towards babies through early elementary-age kids (since those are the more challenging ages to vacation with), so many of these tips work for ALL ages – including adults!

*With these 10 tips, you will be well on your way to making family memories that will last a lifetime.*



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### **10. KEEP YOUR FAMILY IN MIND WHEN PLANNING YOUR VACATION.**

When you start to tell people that you are planning a trip to Disney World, EVERYONE will have tips to give you – even if they haven't been in 20 years. Where to stay, what to do, where to eat, what shows to skip... If you try to abide by everyone's tips, you will quickly become overwhelmed – and many of these might not be relevant to your family at all! Just because Susie-down-the-street stayed at such-and-such-resort doesn't mean it will be a good fit for your family. And just because Joe-from-work's kids loved trying African food doesn't mean that your picky eater will take more than one bite.

YOU know YOUR family.

So when it comes time to talk about where you want to stay and what you want to do, plan things that will make sure YOUR family has the best time possible. I LOVE talking with clients about their family's personal preferences and hopes for their vacation. It is so important as we begin to piece together what your trip will look like. Walt Disney World—like everything else in life—is not one size fits all. And while it's good to take note of friends and family's suggestions, be sure to weigh them against your family's unique needs and wishes.

### **9. ORDER GROCERIES ONLINE.**

Our family began doing this back in 2012, and it was instantly a game changer. Prior to this, we would either have to find a way to pack things in our luggage or pay inflated prices at the resort. NOT ANYMORE!

You can place a grocery order and schedule it to arrive on the day you check-in. Most of the time, it will be delivered right to your resort room for you. Snacks for the parks, diapers and wipes, bottled waters, cereal and milk for a quick breakfast in the room, fresh fruit and veggies, and more. If you can buy it in a supermarket, there is a good chance you can order it and have it delivered for your vacation.

So where can you go to do this? [www.GardenGrocer.com](http://www.GardenGrocer.com) is who my family personally uses. We have always had a great experience with them. They often have special discounts for ordering months in advance, and they will waive the delivery charge if your order is over a certain dollar amount. (Note: you can also place one big order with any other families you are traveling with. Just be sure you keep track of who orders what.)



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### 8. WATCH YOUTUBE VIDEOS OF ATTRACTIONS AND SHOWS.

This has been invaluable for me personally and for many of my clients. There are videos of almost every attraction, show, parade, fireworks show, and more.

If you have a child who is sensitive to scary things, watch a video about it to know if it's going to be too much for them or not. I send all of my clients a list of attractions with height limits and also things that might be too intense or scary for little ones. By watching a YouTube video of the "possibly scary" attractions on my list, you can see if you need to skip something, take turns with Parent Swap, or if your child will be fine and enjoy it.

You can also watch the parades, fireworks, and other nighttime shows to see if they are things you want to definitely see or skip. While you might be able to see all of the nighttime shows during your visit, some families have to decide on one or two to experience. This will help you narrow them down. On this same note, you can watch videos to help you make your "must see" list of attractions.

YouTube videos are also a great way to get your kids excited about the trip! One of our family's favorite things to do before a Disney vacation is

to watch one of the stage shows, fireworks shows, or attraction videos from time to time. Not only does this get them excited for the trip, but it also helps the ride, show, etc. be familiar to them once we get to the parks. One of my sweetest memories of a Disney vacation was my (at the time) three-year-old son getting so excited and telling us "The DRAGON is about to come!!" during the parade because he knew what was coming up.



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### 7. TAKE IT EASY ON YOUR ARRIVAL DAY.

It's so tempting to head straight to the parks as soon as you check in. After all, your Disney vacation has officially started—and what better way to kick it off than with a stroll down Main St. USA?! HOLD THAT THOUGHT.

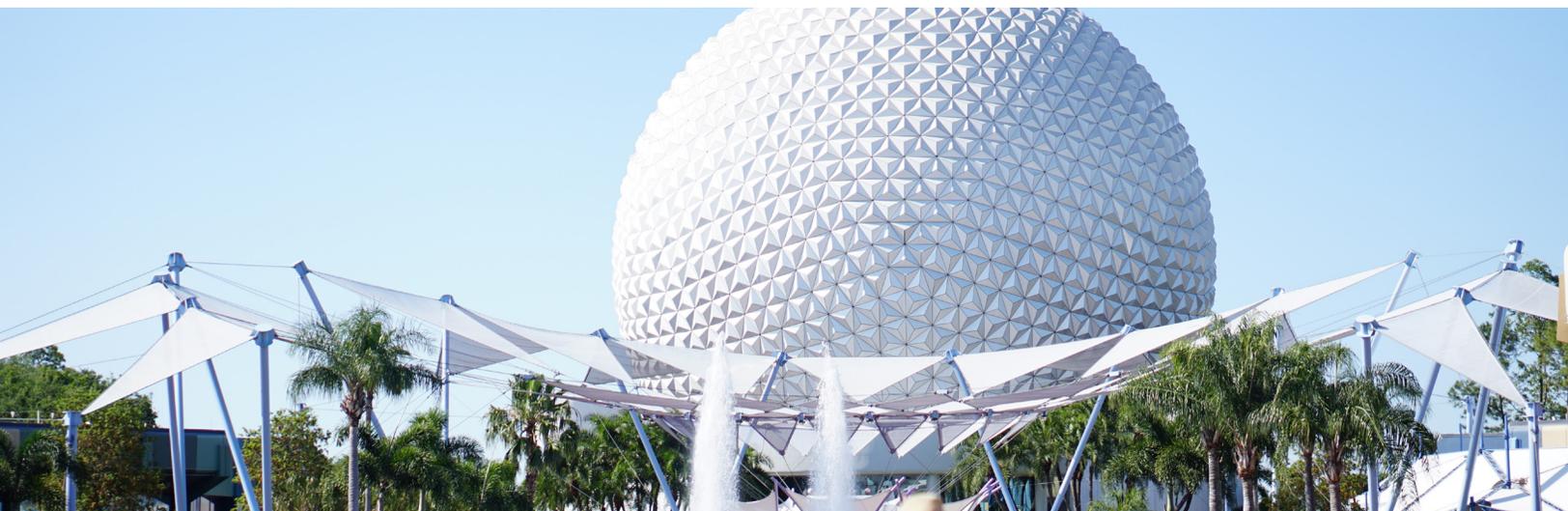
Instead of heading to a park as soon as you arrive at your resort, I HIGHLY suggest taking it easy instead.

By waiting to go to the parks until the next morning, you will be able to really enjoy getting acclimated to Walt Disney World. Many kids get overwhelmed if they are introduced to too much too quickly. They also LOVE finding adventures in things that adults might overlook.

So why not take some time to explore your resort? Maybe take a dip in the pool or a stroll around the grounds to see what fun things you can find. Let them play at the playground or pick a snack from the food court.

If you arrive early, consider a trip to Disney Springs after you've enjoyed your resort for a while. Disney Springs is Walt Disney World's shopping, dining, and entertainment district—and no park admission is required. There are so many fun shops to browse, along with countless dining options. Be sure to visit Goofy's Candy Company to make your own sweet treat!

Also, go to bed early. Traveling is draining, and you want your family to be well rested for a fun-filled day in the parks when they wake up.



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### 6. HAVE A SELECTION OF THINGS TO KEEP YOUR KIDS BUSY WHILE WAITING.

There are going to be a lot of opportunities to practice patience during your trip. There are lines for attractions, waiting for food, and waiting for shows and fireworks to start. Since you're a parent, you don't need to be told that "opportunities to practice patience" are not high on your children's list of likes.

That's why it's SO important to have things for them to do while waiting. Disney does a GREAT job of having fun, interactive things for kids (and kids at heart) to do in many of the lines. However, there will be lines that are not as engaging. At these times, you can pull out some sanity savers!

Some of my favorite things to keep in our park bag are small books (don't pack too many or they will get heavy), Water Wow! water reveal pads (made by Melissa and Doug), a pen and notepad, and one small car or doll per child. Mad Libs are a lot of fun!

If your children need some help with ideas, suggest that they draw a picture of their favorite thing from the day. They could also write a note or draw a picture for a character. Tic-tac-toe, "the dot game", and Mad Libs are all ways that you can get in on the fun of "practicing patience" with your kids.

### 5. DON'T STAY OUT LATE AND GET UP EARLY EVERY DAY.

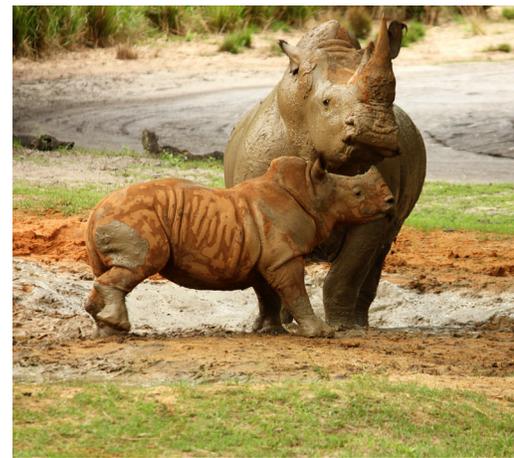
Even adults struggle with staying out late and getting up early every day. The younger your kids are, the more important it will be to manage your days and nights wisely. If you have babies and toddlers, you might just choose one or two fireworks/nighttime shows. If your kids are older or if they are used to staying up late, consider working in some later mornings so that everyone can have a chance to be rested before returning for another fun-filled day.



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If your schedule and budget allow, it is also a great idea to have a rest day in the middle of your vacation. You can relax at your resort, play mini-golf, go back to Disney Springs, explore some other resorts, head to Fort Wilderness for some outdoors fun, or even watch a movie.

If a full day of rest is not an option, that's fine! Along with helping you select which days are best to visit each park, I can also help you decide which nights are best to stay out late based on your morning schedule, your family's needs, and which nighttime entertainment options are highest on your priority list.



### 4. FIND THE BABY CENTERS.

If you have babies and toddlers, Baby Centers are a GEM. At each park, there is a Baby Center where you can go to feed, change, or just let your baby play for a little bit. (Check the park maps to find where each one is located.) Each center varies as far as size and accommodations, but they are all such a nice break for babies. There are places to warm food and feed a baby (as well nursing mom rooms). There are also changing tables, baby supplies for purchase in case you forgot something, and oftentimes a play area.

There are times that little ones just need a break from the crowds, heat, and sensory overload. There is something very soothing about being able to just sit on the floor and color or watch Disney Junior for a toddler, or rock in a dimly lit room for a baby. By taking some time to relax and "press pause", your little one (and you!) will be able to be rejuvenated and ready for more adventures in the parks.



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### 3. TAKE SNACKS AND OTHER NECESSITIES INTO THE PARKS.

Did you know that Disney allows you to bring your own snacks and drinks into the parks? Many people assume that Disney, like so many other places, does not allow you to bring your own food. In fact, this might be one of the best-kept “secrets” of visiting the parks.



Be sure to have a selection of snacks for your kids to enjoy while waiting in lines or if they just need something to get them through until the next meal. Our family likes to take things like pre-packaged sliced apples, baby carrots, fruit chews, and peanut butter crackers. By ordering our groceries (see tip #9), we can take healthy snacks that we know our kids will actually eat.

If you have a picky eater, this is also a great way to make sure they have food in case they don't eat their restaurant meal. PB&J, cheese sticks, pretzels...whatever it is that you know will be eaten. You can also take granola bars or other breakfast items with you if you don't have time to eat before you leave your resort. Please note that alcohol, glass bottles (baby food is allowed), and large coolers are not allowed.

Other “park bag” items include ponchos (it's Florida—there is a great chance it will rain), a pair of sandals for the kids (so they can play in the splash areas without getting their shoes and socks soaked), a change of clothes or swim suit, an assortment of plastic zip baggies (you never know when they will come in handy), sunscreen, hats, bandages, and anything else you know you will need throughout the day.

### 2. GET TO THE PARKS EARLY AND TAKE AN AFTERNOON BREAK.

This tip is for every single guest: from babies to adults, and everyone in-between. The majority of Disney guests arrive at their park-of-choice an hour to an hour and a half after the park opens. Whether they are sleeping in, taking their time eating breakfast, or driving through Orlando traffic (if they are staying off-property), they aren't there before the gates open.



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This leaves you with a great opportunity! While they are all slowly making their way to the parks, you can be enjoying minimal wait times at the attractions.

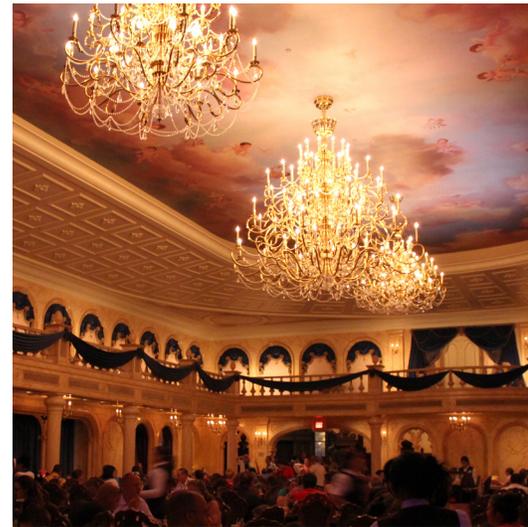
Personally, I would rather be at my bus stop an hour before the park opens, just to make sure that we are some of the first people in line when the gates open. By giving my family ample time, we don't have to worry if the bus is running behind schedule, if someone in front of us has a million zippers on their bag during bag check, or anything else. I know that we will get there with time to spare instead of feeling rushed. (Note that Magic Kingdom opens the gates before the park opens. Double check what time this will be with a Cast Member.)

Even though I will have helped you select FastPasses that allow you to bypass the long lines for three attractions each day, there will be more rides, shows and character greetings that you hope to visit throughout the day. The first hour of the park being open is the best time to do some of these "non-FastPass" attractions. You will likely be able to do more in your first hour than you could do in 2-3 hours during the busiest time of the day.

Speaking of "busiest time of the day," THIS is the perfect time to take an afternoon break. The busiest (and oftentimes hottest) time of the day is typically between 2 and 4pm. People are no longer eating lunch, which means everyone is out and about trying to visit attractions. Since you will have arrived bright and early, you can afford to take time off to relax—you are on vacation, after all.

You can go back to your hotel for a nap or TV show, visit another resort and spend some time reading in their lobby, or even take a boat ride across the lagoon. Just do something to get out of the park and rest your feet for a while. If your kids are little, this is the perfect time to go back for a real nap in a real bed. Even elementary school-aged kids benefit from lying down and watching a movie or reading.

I cannot stress enough how refreshed you will feel after your break. Then you can head back to the parks for dinner, attractions, and/or evening entertainment. Some might argue that you are missing valuable park time by leaving for a break. However, by taking your break, you will be rejuvenated so you can enjoy your time in the parks to the fullest.



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### 1. LET EACH PERSON CHOOSE ONE THING PER DAY TO EXPERIENCE.

There is SO much to experience in each of the Disney parks. From headlining attractions to “hidden gems”, snacks to try and characters to meet, shows to watch and fireworks to experience, there are enough things to keep you busy for weeks. And this doesn't even include all of the things you can experience outside the parks. Simply put, you will NOT be able to do and see everything.



But instead of seeing this as something negative, it can actually help you have the best vacation possible.

When you allow each person to choose one thing as their “number one” for the day, you will know exactly what is important to each person in your family. One person might choose a show, while another chooses a headlining attraction, and still another chooses a certain snack that they have been dying to try. If you have babies and toddlers, you will get to choose their “one” for them, whether it is riding “it's a small world” or going on the monorail.

Each person choosing a “number one” also gives you a positive perspective on all of the other attractions. Instead of being disappointed that you didn't get to everything on your list, you will be excited that you were able to do so many “bonus things” and still do everyone's most important thing. It also helps your children to prioritize their most important thing for the day and to vocalize it—which encourages your whole family to work together to make sure that everyone gets their “one” accomplished.

Yes, you will probably be able to do a great number of other things—so be sure to have a list of “these would be great to experience if we can” attractions, snacks, etc. (a great place to start is my suggestions I will send before it's time for us to book your FastPass+ selections). But you won't be basing the success of your day on whether or not you got to do each and every thing on your wish list.

Instead, you will be focusing on each person for at least one part of each day, and enjoying making memories together.

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I truly hope that these tips help you see that a Walt Disney World vacation with kids is something your family can enjoy together. By being aware of some of these little tips and tricks, the entire planning process—and especially your actual vacation time—will be much smoother.



It is a joy of mine to be able to help families experience memory-filled vacations together. I love working with you to help figure out what the best “fit” is for your family—whether we are talking about resorts to stay in, parks to visit, or your “number one” attractions to select. I know how important vacations have been in my life, both as a child and a parent, and I feel like I am contributing to your family's happiness as I help you design your vacation.

If you are ready to begin the planning process, I am thrilled to be able to help! You can schedule a time to talk with me by booking a free **Vacation Memory Planning Session**. You can also contact me at [Staci@FairyGodmotherTravel.com](mailto:Staci@FairyGodmotherTravel.com) if you prefer to communicate via email.

*P.S. Just so you know, my planning services are FREE. Our agency is paid directly by Walt Disney Travel, cruise lines, etc. so we do not charge our guests anything.*

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