

# Helping My Sensory Needs

## Everyday situations: Transport



Public transport provides a big challenge for the sensory system: sounds, smells, lights, from the transport and the people. Also, it is difficult to take a break during transport.

Children with additional needs often take longer to become comfortable with transport, need more reassurance, shorter trips, and sensory strategies to feel calm and safe.

Parents and carers can help children and young people to have a positive experience and develop a very important life skill, of using transport.

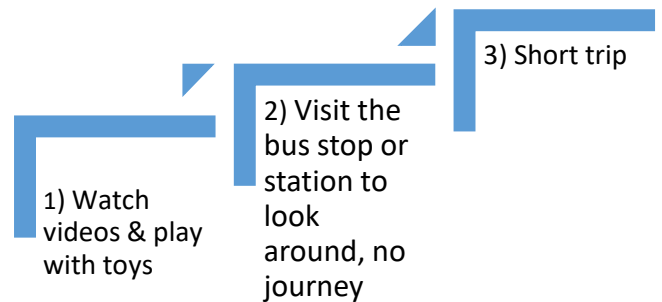
### **Prepare your Child:**

Play with toys that are related to transport to help familiarity. Find books at the library about transport, watch videos of other children using transport (see resources below).

Consider helping your child feel comfortable with transport through visiting the London Transport Museum. They have a social story to support children to prepare for a visit to the museum as well:

<https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/visit/families/families-send>

Take a 'step by step' approach, first visit the tube station or bus stop and look around, take some photos, play a game nearby so they can become more comfortable with the environment. Next time, take a short journey. When they feel ready, take a longer journey.



### **For the Trip:**

Think about what toys and calming items are easy to bring with you. Consider making a bag with small toys and calming items.

*Visual schedule:* make a set of pictures to represent each step of the day. For example: car, hospital, snack, car, park, home. You can use photos, drawings or pictures, it can be on your phone or in a printed copy.

*Now & Next:* If they are able to understand, explain 'now' bus, 'next' and provide a preferred activity for afterwards e.g. 'park'. Show pictures for now and next:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR6f3cXD68U>

*Move & Regulate first:* Consider doing a movement game before the journey e.g. run up the stairs, down & jump into parents arms for a hug.

Choose what time of day you make your journey, try and avoid busy times as these will be more noisy.





There are some changes you can make to the environment or the way you do the journey, that may help your child. Every child is different, try different things and see what works:

**Bus:**

Choose where to sit, would your child prefer to be upstairs where the noise of the door open and closing might be more quiet? Sitting by the window reduces the chance of being bumped by people walking past.



**Tube:**

Watch videos about the tube before going. Consider walking to the end of the platform where the carriage might be less full. Try to choose a seat facing in the direction of travel, or encourage your child to face the direction of travel, as this is less intense for their sense of movement.



**Flying:**

Many resources are available online to help prepare for flying. Consider bringing your child's comfort toys, walk and stretch during the flight for movement, and call or email the airline beforehand to discuss your questions.



QEF Tryb4u Fly:  
<https://www.qef.org.uk/service/accessible-aviation/tryb4ufly/>

**Car:**

Consider spending time playing in the car when it is stationary, if the child is nervous about going in the car. Consider changing the smell (e.g. scent), music, attaching blinds to the windows to reduce the lighting, adding a seat belt cover to make a soft belt, or adding a footstep or cushion under the feet if the child's feet don't reach the floor.



**Keep the experience positive:**

Decide what is most important: Often the child having a positive experience is much more important than 'achieving' the outcome of the trip at first.

**Resources:**

*Social Story for the bus to school:*

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-07/social-story-going-to-school.pdf>

*Autism on the London Underground:*

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/sites/default/files/blog-article/uploads/using-the-london-underground.pdf>

*Using the School Bus social story:*

<https://www.edithborthwick.essex.sch.uk/assets/getting-to-school-social-story-2-semi-formal-non-editable.pdf>

*Video of SEN students using the school bus:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Qr0JJX3h7M>

*Flying social story video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRtypPpFwAo>

*Flying Safely:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmjeCZGMS4>

*Toy transport kit from Argos:*

<https://www.argos.co.uk/browse/toys/toy-vehicles-and-sets/c:30311/>