

Taking A Trip Without Your Son/Daughter Tip Sheet

How To Prepare	While You're Gone	When You Return
Prepare a written document of his/her daily routine and share with the caregiver in your absence.	Have the caregiver provide the most consistent and familiar routine daily.	Continue to provide the most consistent and familiar routine initially. Wait a few days/weeks (as appropriate to your son/daughter) to introduce any changes.
Create a photo album with him/her and spend time looking through it several times in the days before you leave.	Have him/her use a calendar to count down days until your return.	Increase verbal reassurance that routine is going back to normal and that you are now home.
Create a social story about taking a vacation. Review this in the days prior to your trip.	Have the caregiver read a social story with him/her daily as needed to remind him/her where parents are and that they will return home.	Share experience from both vacations (daughter/son and parent) while you were away.
Prepare a framed family photo for him/her to have next to bed at night.	Identify activities he/she can do when missing you such as look at photo album, count days on calendar, read a social story, write a letter, create a video, open pre-made card/gift/video from parent, etc.	There may be a temporary increase in challenging behavior upon return from vacation. Continue to be consistent in providing a familiar and normal routine.
Have him/her assist in packing own bag if staying at a caregiver's home while you are away.	Provide reassurance that vacations are fun and that parents return when they are done traveling.	Support him/her in unpacking bags as needed. Stay positive and ask how much fun was had staying somewhere new!
Identify preferred items/activities to provide consistency and familiarity while he/she is away from home during this time. (E.g. blankets, toys, food, etc.).	Skype, Face Time or call when benefits of actually seeing & hearing parent outweigh potential emotional repercussions. Convey positive yet emotionally neutral conversation.	Initially, continue with preferred items/activities at a higher frequency than usual to set up the return from home to be successful (i.e. now is not the time to remove access to preferred or to start teaching new and difficult skills).
Pre-make cards, small gifts or videos for him/her to receive intermittently while you are away.	Have the caregiver give items on a schedule he/she can look forward to (i.e. in morning or at night) OR when desirable behaviors are present.	If you purchased a (likely) highly preferred new gift while on vacation, present it to him/her at a time when desirable behaviors are present (i.e. not during a tantrum or verbal outburst). Share how proud you are.