



*Senior Contributor Essay:* Today's family cars boast GPS, TV, computer games, portable DVDs, CD players, SmartPhones, iPods and all the other gizmos. They fill your car with laughter, music, confusion, noise and visuals.

Therefore, it may seem unnecessary now to come up with any of the old-fashioned ways to make the road journey more pleasant. Cruising the highways, you'll hear: "do we have to leave now?" to "are we there yet?" to "stop before I wet myself" to "oh, goodie, we're here" to "why did you choose this dump?". To make the time pass more peacefully, there are hundreds of amusing and constructive choices available to your passengers.

Our kids grew up just before all the explosions of online electronics. On long road trips, they had portable radios, audio cassette players and counted cows. We always piled a bunch of books ... remember them? ... in the car before our journeys. We also took along crossword puzzles, coloring books, games, magazines and other printed materials. A family member who became a highly-successful TV comedy writer always listened to audio tapes from such stand-up idols as Garrison Keillor, Bob Newhart and Bill Cosby. And darker stuff from Lenny Bruce and Richard Pryor.

Another who grew up to promote rock bands took along audio tapes of the Beatles, Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys and others of the same ilk. Fortunately for we parents, both kids used earphones in the car.

We tried to alternate tape listening with group singing, word games and discussions of adventures ahead. At rest stops, we joined the kids in looking through gift shops for new

distractions, including games, puzzles, books and other such items.

Hours and days spent crammed together in a car on long trips can be trying times for families. However, with proper preparation, loading up of the necessary distractions and consideration for everyone's needs, it can be a more comfortable and pleasant experience.