

45 - Highways

How do you get from place to place? Unless you live in a big city with a subway system, you probably use a highway. Highways are an everyday part of American life but who thought they should be built and why?

Most people love to drive fast. And the best place to do that is on a National highway system. The USA has more than 220-thousand miles of highways, enough road to go around the world more than EIGHT times, at speeds sometimes zipping past 80 miles per hour! The most famous highways in America are the Interstates, recognizable by their red, white and blue shields alongside the road. The Interstate system was developed less than 100 years ago, but it completely changed the way Americans travel.

Activities

1. Gather some small cars and painter's tape. Either the adults or the kids can use the painter's tape to lay out "roads" on the floor. Make sure you add intersections and curvy parts for extra fun! If you really want to get creative, add some blocks to make houses or your favorite highway stop. The kids can run their cars on the new track. How fast can you get from one point to another?
2. Print out a map of your neighborhood. Ask a neighbor if you can put a "treasure box" or some other small item in their yard or front steps. Mark out a trail on the map for your kids to follow and pretend you are pirates searching for lost treasure! The kids will learn map reading skills while having an adventure.
3. Find a map of your favorite amusement park online. Ask your kids to find the best route to their favorite ride. You can make it harder by asking for a different route because there is a parade or you need a route that goes by a bathroom first. The next time you get to visit, ask the kids to be your tour guide and see where you end up!

Additional Resources

Road trips are the source of wonderful family memories -- and endless boredom. Here are some ideas for your next road trip vacation, a trip to visit family, or the grocery store.

1. Here are 50 electronic, free ideas. [50 ideas for a car ride](#)
2. Love the quietness an iPad brings to the car? Here are some [fun games](#) to help keep your kids busy.

Kid News: Animal Bridges

Roads are wonderful for humans who need to move people and goods across long distances. However, animals don't understand how to cross roads. Sometimes, animals (or even people) get confused and hurt or killed while trying to cross a busy road. Engineers are coming up with ways to keep wildlife and people safe by creating animal bridges! These bridges connect wildlife areas that would normally be separated by large highways. Have you ever seen one? Sometimes, they even have trees and grass on top of the bridge to make the animals more comfortable. You can [read more here](#).¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com