



# Sesame Family Newsletter

May 23, 2007

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



## For Parents

[On the Road Again](#)  
by *Jordan Brown*

A dad turns car time into fun time.

**Featuring:**

- Live from the Backseat
- Great Ways to Pass the Time Together
- Car Safety

> [Read this issue](#)

**Games and More: Muppets on the Go!**

Elmo's Road Trip  
Look and listen to clues to spot all the items outside Elmo's car window.

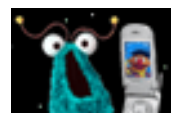
- [Elmo's Road Trip](#)
- [On the Road with the Honkers](#)
- [Natasha in her Car Seat](#)
- [Things in a Car](#)
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

### From the Workshop



[A charitable gift to support Sesame Workshop will go a long way...](#)

### Sesame Store



[Get Sesame Street ringtones and wallpapers for your cellphone at Sesame Street Mobile!](#)

College Savings Foundation



Share your hopes, plans and concerns about saving for college with us. Please take 10 minutes of your time to complete this online, anonymous survey to help The College Savings Foundation, a nonprofit organization working to help American families achieve their college savings goals, develop a base of knowledge to better understand the issues facing parents like you and increase awareness about the importance of saving for college. Please [click here](#) to take the survey, and thank you for your consideration.

## On the Road Again

---

### LIVE FROM THE BACKSEAT

**It's a glorious spring day in the country.** The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and once again, I'm stuck in the car with my children. (Did I say, "Stuck?" Let that be our little secret, okay?) Anyway, as I keep my eyes on the traffic, I eavesdrop on the following conversation from the backseat:

"You're a SLUG, Olivia!" my 6-year-old son Finn says, with a playful laugh.

"I'm not a slug. I'm a PRINCESS!" my 2-year-old daughter Olivia retorts, giggling.

"No, you're a SLUG!" Finn says again.

"I'm a PRINCESS!" Olivia repeats, more indignantly.

This charming exchange continues for another minute, with no signs of dying a natural death. So, before things get out of control and this banter ends in tears and "time outs," I firmly say, "Enough! Be nice to your sister. Let's talk about something else."

After a moment of silence, Finn says, "Okay...Daddy's a SLUG!"

Olivia chimes in with "No, Daddy's a cow!"

Finn responds, "No, Daddy's a chicken!"

Eager to top her brother, Olivia says, "Daddy's a POOP!"

Both kids burst out in hysterical laughter, then continue to brainstorm a variety of funny descriptors for their weary chauffeur.

This good-natured teasing doesn't bother me. Honestly. I know that Finn and Olivia are just unwinding after a long day at kindergarten and nursery school. I figure a little irreverent silliness is just the ticket to help them blow off steam, and pass the time while we drive. I've learned that sometimes the key to good parenting is knowing when to pick your battles.

It could be worse, I think. At least they are not having a screaming contest... When I haven't had enough sleep, or am otherwise having a bad day, car time can be an ordeal. Since we moved from the city to the country last summer, I



**ARE WE THERE YET?**  
[Plan for a more relaxing ride with this parents' guide to surviving car trips.](#)

**THE LONG AND WHINY ROAD**  
[Use our kid-tested travel planner for smoother getaways with your preschooler.](#)

**AFTER SCHOOL MELTDOWN**  
[When good kids let off steam.](#)

**PICKING A PRESCHOOL**  
[A dad discovers that separation anxiety goes both ways.](#)

spend a lot of time in the car with the kids. During the long hours that my wife Ellen is at work in an office, I spend much of my time shuttling the kids to this place and that. As you may have read in my recent newsletter ("Picking a Preschool" - see link to right), my daughter's preschool is a 45-minute drive from our home. My son's bi-weekly martial arts class is 30 minutes away. Swimming lessons? That's another 60-minute roundtrip. Even a simple trip to our pediatrician is an hour of travel time. Because we spend so much time in the car, I do all I can to prepare for our trips, to make this time worthwhile and stress-free.

---

## GREAT WAYS TO PASS THE TIME TOGETHER

**I'm lucky that Finn and Olivia do a great job entertaining each other.** There are rarely any formal games involved. Usually, I can sum up as follows: "Let's be super silly!" Some of their favorite antics include pulling off their shoes and socks and tossing them into the empty third-row seat behind them. They also love to take turns imitating each other's funny actions. "Let's mess up our hair, Finn!" Olivia might say, before running her fingers over her head. Or "Let's make fish faces!" Finn will propose. Eventually, their raw energy flags, and I find it necessary to introduce some more structured activities. Here are ones that I've had luck with.

\* **LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR DAYS** - You have to be extra-tricky to make this one work. As any parent knows, questions like, "So, how was your day?" and "What happened in school today?" are likely to be met with a monosyllabic "nothing." However, asking specific questions like, "Finn, who did you sit next to at circle time?" might get at least a name or two.

When Finn is especially reticent, I try a game that I invented called "What Happened? What DIDN'T Happen?" Here is how it works: Finn and I take turns telling two events from our day -- and the other person has to guess which one really happened, and which is made up. I might say, for instance, "One thing is that I bought new AA batteries for your robot, and the other is...I found an iguana in my underpants." Once the game is rolling the "didn't happen" stories don't have to be so obvious. The great part of the game is that during Finn's turn, he tells me something that DID happen that he probably wouldn't have thought to share during the car trip. Getting 2-year-old Olivia to chat about her day isn't as hard. Sometimes to get the ball



### TAKE-AWAY TIPS: FUN ON THE RUN

[Five games you and your kids can play in the car.](#)

### MUPPET CAR GAMES

[Keep the kids entertained on your next car trip.](#)

### TRAVEL BOREDOM BUSTERS

[Seven travel games to keep your preschooler amused.](#)

### EASY RIDERS

[Keeping kids entertained is the first step to keeping them safe.](#)

rolling, I'll look over the summary sheet that her wonderful teachers provide. For example, I'll see a note that says she had fun playing in the sandbox, and we'll talk about that.

\* LET'S LOOK FOR COWS - Living in a rural community, we drive near farms and see all kinds of animals. Challenging each other to count horses or cows is both fun and educational. Spotting animals also inspires us to play a rousing game of "What animal am I?" Similar to the game 20 Questions, we give each other clues, and try to guess the other person's animal. ("I eat grass." "Are you a horse?" "No!" "I go, 'mooo!'" "Are you a cow?" "Yes!") When driving in the evening, we search for the moon. Even Olivia enjoys reporting whether it is a "crescent moon" or a "full moon." Seeing the moon is also a great excuse to start singing songs about the moon, such as "Moon Moon Moon" by Laurie Berkner. This brings me to the next activity...

\* LET'S SING A SONG - While driving along, I may ask Olivia what she'd like to sing. Current favorites include the "ABC" song, Itsy-Bitsy Spider, The Wheels on the Bus, and Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious from Mary Poppins. After we run through her "hits," we move onto a game where I sing songs that she doesn't know as well, and let her fill in the blanks at the ends of lines. I might sing, for example, "On top of spaghetti, all covered with-- " and Olivia fills in "cheese." A variation on this game involves my singing the song mostly right with a few mistakes. For example, while singing the Pete Seeger song, "Wimmoweh," I'll start, "In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the chicken sleeps tonight!" Olivia laughs, and says, "Not chicken, Daddy. It's the LION sleeps tonight." After which I'll say, "Oh, what was I thinking?! Of course!" And then I'll repeat the opening lyric and "accidentally" use the word chicken again...and AGAIN. Preschoolers LOVE repetition--especially when it involves parents acting silly.

\* LET'S MAKE UP A STORY - "Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess named..." I start, and my daughter fills in the blank by yelling "OLIVIA!" From there, she and I will spin a simple tale about the adventures of this young princess. Shockingly, this princess loves and hates the very same things that my daughter does. When Finn is in the car, he helps us expand the story, invariably adding space aliens and robots to the mix. On longer car trips, Ellen and I give the kids crayons and paper to illustrate these stories.

---

## CAR SAFETY

**Having fun in the car is important but keeping the kids safe is, of course, the paramount concern.** Part of keeping them safe is making sure they always wear their seatbelts. Now that Olivia is 2 and a half, she wants to do everything herself. This includes clicking the seatbelt closed. While I am happy to let her do this when we start the day, it becomes rather tedious when we have multiple errands to run. "C'mon, we'll be late for picking up Finn," I say, trying to close the belt. "NOOOO! I do it myself!" Olivia pleads.

Wishing you and your family a summer of laughter-filled, tantrum-free, and safe car trips ...and a good dose of patience and humor when things don't go as planned.

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop



### AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO CAR SEAT SAFETY

[Buckle up infants and kids the right way with these safety demonstrations.](#)

### CAR SEAT SAFETY

[Check the safety of your child's car seat.](#)

### AROUND THE BLOCK

[Try these handy tips for short, safe car trips.](#)

---

## Weekly Trivia

**The word "Muppet" comes from a combination of.**

- A. mop and puppet
- B. manipulate and puppet
- C. marionette and puppet
- D. my and puppet

The answer is C. marionette and puppet. The rods Muppets use are like those used in marionettes.

---

## FROM THE WORKSHOP

In 1968 when it began, it was one little street. Now Sesame Street reaches around the world to over 120 countries. Your gift of support will allow Sesame Workshop, the non-profit organization behind Sesame Street, to use media for what may be the greatest good, helping children around the world reach their highest potential.

[Support the Workshop today!](#)

---

### COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

[Tell us what's on your mind.](#) Kindly note that we are unable to respond to every email received.

### ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary Sesame Street. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like Dragon Tales and Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat, Pinky Dinky Doo and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of Sesame Street, Dragon Tales and Sagwa products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)

Sesame Workshop

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)