



Good Move

How to Make Moving
Easier on Kids

Moving to a new home may be stressful for you, but it's even tougher on your children. We've got tons of tips to turn it into a fun adventure for the whole family.



Ways to Get Kids Excited for the Move

Children feel powerless when you tell them you're moving. *"They usually don't have any input in the decision,"* says Lori Collins Burgan, social worker and author of ***Moving with Kids***. *"So involve them in as many other decisions as you can."* This helps them feel part of the experience and empowered.

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Make a Family Wishlist

A family wishlist will help you reach a consensus on some of the things **you all want** from your new home: a bigger backyard, a basement playroom, separate rooms for the kids. For Jennifer Thompson's daughter Raegan, 5, the beach was tops. *"My husband's new job was in Jacksonville, North Carolina, but we chose a house in Emerald Isle -- a 30-minute commute for him -- so we could be near the water,"* says Thompson. Allowing your children to take part in the decision making helps them feel *"at home"* in their new house.



House-Hunt Together

If it's practical, take your children to see prospective houses with you. If you're searching online, bookmark your favorites so your kids can take a look. Ask for their input, and let them know how important their opinion is in this big family decision. Show them they matter.





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Let Them Map Out Their New Room

Creativity is your child's specialty! Bring home paint swatches so that your child or children can choose a color. Then make it an art project: Have your child(ren) paste snapshots of their bed and furniture onto a sheet of construction paper... and watch as his or her new room comes to life!

Pack A Treasure Box

Give your child his or her own packing box that can be decorated with stickers or drawn on with markers or crayons. Use this special box for his or her favorite things only. Make sure to take it in the car with you when you move so it can be kept close by.



Throw a Goodbye Party

Host a goodbye party. *“It will bring closure to the friendships you’re leaving behind,”* Burgan says. Keep it simple: a basic chips-and-dips affair or a potluck, a picnic or pool day. The point is to spend a nice day together with those you love and care about.



Tour Your Old Favorites

Visit special neighborhood spots one last time before you move. *“My sons Alex, 8, and Andrew, 6, had become really close to their babysitters,”* says Jeanhee Hoffman, from Honolulu. *“So before we moved we arranged for the sitters to spend time with the boys and take them to say goodbye to their favorite places.”* Plan a fun day trip stopping at the places you have enjoyed together as a family. You can even take photos and create a scrapbook together.





Make a Memory Book

Create a memory book that your child can fill with photos of your home and friends, along with their e-mail addresses or phone numbers.



Say Goodbye To Your Home

During a family meal before you move, ask each child to recall a favorite memory in the house. They can elaborate and talk about all the fun times, or why they loved living there. Once you move, at another family meal, go around the table and say what you are each excited for in the new home.



How Can You Help Your Child Adjust to Sleeping In Their New Room?

It's normal for your child to be anxious the first few nights.

Unpacking her box of special belongings as soon as she arrives will make her feel more at home. Carole Conner, from Knoxville, Tennessee, found this worked well with her boys, Daniel, 7, and Seth, 5. *“As soon as they pulled out their favorite toys the new house wasn't quite as foreign to them,”* she said.

While you unpack, point out all of the great things about the new room: *“It’s so much bigger; those shelves are perfect for your books; look how much sunlight comes in that window.”*

Knowing the lay of the land will also help to make children feel more comfortable. Walk around, walk your child to their bedroom, your bedroom and the bathroom. Be sure to point out the light switches in case he or she gets up at night (it’s a great idea to use night-lights along the route to the bathroom). Even on that hectic first day, try to stick to the bedtime routine and hour. If your child cries or comes to find you, be comforting and remind them that this is their new room and they’ll love it and be used to it very soon.





How to Prep Kids for a New School

Switching schools can be scary for a child of any age. Remember to be positive about it and your child will take cues from you.

Here is a list of what to **Do** and **Don't** do that will help make the transition smoother.

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Do help her break the ice. Get a class list from the school office and arrange some playdates with your child's new classmates. Once school's in session, stay involved. Michelle Gwin, from Durham, North Carolina, did some social networking for her 6-year-old daughter when they moved: *"I volunteered to help with class trips and other special days -- it meant I met other parents and was able to set up more playdates for Mackenzie."*

Don't wait until the school year starts to get informed. Inquire about the curriculum, lunch program, and after-school activities so you can help your child get excited about going to school. *"You can even plan the route you'll be taking,"* suggests child psychologist Anita Gurian, PhD, executive editor of AboutOurKids.org.



Do take a tour of the building. If you move during summer vacation, your child's new school may have a "meet the teacher" session before the school year starts. *"If you enroll during the middle of the semester, ask if an older kid can show you around,"* suggests Jane Winn, guidance counselor at Taylor Ranch Elementary, in Venice, Florida.

Don't let your child stay home all summer. See whether your child's school offers day camp; if not, check at the library for info on local camps. It will give him or her a chance to meet some classmates before school starts.



How to Make Yourself at *Home*



Once you've set up camp, try these tools to help your children get acquainted with their new home and 'hood.

Explore your house. Make it fun with a game of hide-and-seek, or give your kids projects to tackle. Ask them to count the rooms, rank them in size order, and tell you how many tiles are in the bathroom.

Track down local kids. Take a walk around the neighborhood together, searching for signs that kids live nearby. *"Look for toys and bicycles in yards, tire swings, basketball hoops,"* says Lori Collins Burgan. *"And put some play equipment out in your yard too."*

Teach your child to meet and greet. Give a lesson in introductions, something along the lines of “*Hi, I’m Kelsey, and I just moved here. Would you like to play?*” If you see any children outside with their parents when you’re exploring, stop and introduce yourself and your child. Not only will they will learn from *watching you*, but it’ll help them to feel more comfortable.

Plan a welcome party. Once you’ve met a few neighbors with kids, host an event like an ice cream social, pizza party, movie night, or scavenger hunt. Go to ParentsMag.com for fun hunt ideas.

Clue yourself in to the community. The library is a good place to ask about local kid-friendly facilities. Check out the YMCA, community pools, and churches too -- all great places to meet families.

Do the grand tour. Think like a tourist and go see the local sights. Your town’s Chamber of Commerce website should have plenty of suggestions for what to see and do.





A Few More Tips

Let Your Child Express Her Feelings

Give your child(ren) adequate notice to get used to the idea of moving - even a year in advance may be appropriate. Acknowledge her sadness about leaving behind friends and familiar places. Let her know you are sympathetic and that you understand that she might feel nervous about what awaits her, whether it is the new people, the new school or the new bus ride. At the same time, tell her you will try to make the move as easy as possible for the entire family, and emphasize some of the positive aspects listed earlier.

If you are also experiencing stress about the move, be open with these feelings. At the same time, keep in mind that your own anxiety might rub off on your child. For that reason, try maintaining and communicating an optimistic attitude about what lies ahead. The stress of moving is greatest about two weeks before and after the move. Be sure to take some breaks to relax and play.

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Emphasize The Excitement of Moving

Remind your child that while the move may be making everyone a bit uneasy, it will also be *adventurous* and interesting. Use the example of the pioneers or the immigrants who overcame their own fears and traveled to unfamiliar lands, where they encountered exciting new sights and smells. You can also give some age-appropriate books that describe families moving from one city to another. Encourage your child to make plans for the move, including a list of tasks or projects so they feel involved and important.

Make The Move A Family Event

If you plan the move as a family, and support one another as you adjust to the new community, it can **bring you closer together**. Let your child know that you will always be available to help deal with any problems or concerns that arise.





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