

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.

8 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."*

Make a family *wishlist*

1

This 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.

House-hunt *together*

2

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.



Let her map out *her new room*

3

Bring home paint swatches so that your child can choose a color. Then make it an art project: Have her paste snapshots of her bed and furniture onto a sheet of construction paper.

Pack a *treasure box*

4

Give your child his own packing box that he can decorate with stickers and use for his favorite things. Take it in the car with you so he can keep it close.

Throw a *goodbye party*

5

“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.

Tour your *old haunts*



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 Jean-hee 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.”*

Make a *memory book*



Your child can fill it with photos of your home and her friends, along with their e-mail addresses.

Say goodbye to *your home*



During a family meal ask each kid to recall a favorite memory in the old house.



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

Your child is bound 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 what’s better about her new room: *“It’s so much bigger; those shelves are perfect for your books.”* It will also make her feel more comfortable if she knows the lay of the land. Walk her to your bedroom and the bathroom and point out the light switches in case she gets up at night (use night-lights along the route

to the bathroom). And even on that hectic first day, try to stick to her routine and bedtime. If she cries or comes out to find you, remind her that this is her bedroom now and she needs to sleep here.



How to Prep Kids for a *New School*

Switching schools can be scary. Be positive about it and she'll take her cues from you.

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



Do help her break the ice. Get a class list from the school office and arrange some playdates with your child's new classmates. And 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 him 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 her a chance to meet some classmates before school starts.



How to Make Yourself *at Home*

Once you've set up camp, try these tactics 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 her a lesson in introducing herself, 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 your child: She’ll learn from watching you.

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



Clue yourself in to the community. The library is a good place to ask about local kid-friendly facilities. Check out the YMCA, community pool, 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 Web site 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.

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 new lands, where they encountered new and stimulating experiences. Give her some age-appropriate books that describe families moving from one city to another. Encourage your child to make plans for the move. Have her make lists of tasks and projects to do.

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 your family closer together. Let your child know that you will be available to help her deal with any problems and concerns that arise.

