



Parents: 10 Tips to Prepare Young Children for a Move

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Over the years, many studies have been conducted to define and rank which typical life experiences cause the greatest amount of stress for the average adult. For anyone who has had to make a move, it probably comes as no surprise that moving ranks within the top 10 of the most stressful events... and once you add children to the equation, the stress level only increases.

We have compiled the following tips to help parents prepare their young children for a move, and to also help them adjust to their new home and community once the move has taken place.



1. Tell your children about the upcoming move as soon as possible.

Waiting until the For Sale sign appears on your lawn, or having your kids feeling left out and most likely, angry.



2. Discuss with your children, in an age-appropriate manner, some of the pros and cons of moving.

Most children get great comfort from simply being heard, and by being assured that their parents are committed to helping them adjust to a new environment.



3. Encourage your children to help you investigate your new community.

Most cities or towns have their own website, which they use to advertise and promote life in their community. In addition to information on the area lifestyle, you should also amenities, such as schools, places of worship, recreation centers, community sports associations, and parks. Most community sites will also include locations of the nearest shopping malls, movie theatres, and special attractions such as water parks, horse stables, and public beaches.



4. When packing, resist the urge to throw out all of your children's old, unused toys.

Instead, ask your children to help you prepare for packing by separating their toys into three piles. Pile 1 comes with them to the new house. Pile 2 is for donating to a local shelter or community centre, and pile 3 is only for those toys that they understand are beyond repair, and for safety sake, should be thrown away. Allowing your child to decide what to do with his/her worn toys provides them a feeling of control in a situation that is largely, out of their control.



5. Pack any young children's belongings last; allowing them prolonged access to their familiar possessions reduces their anxiety.

Ask your children to help you pack some of their belongings into boxes; and be sure to explain that the boxes, and every item that goes into the box, is going to be unpacked at the new house. Assemble some fun packing materials; a variety of brightly coloured (washable) markers for writing their name on each of their own boxes, bubble wrap for swaddling their dolls and soft toys, and a selection of stickers to decorate, and easily identify what is in each of their boxes.



6. Take your children to visit the new home at least once prior moving day, and be sure to keep the visit short, and upbeat.



7. Ask your child if he/she would like to have a moving party.

Invite his/her friends over to enjoy a night of pizza and movies. Take pictures of each guest posing with your child using an instant or digital camera. Keep one copy for your child, and give one copy to each guest to take with them.



8. Most kids make new friends at school fairly easily, but if your moving date is scheduled after the end of the school year, your child could be facing a long, lonely summer break.

To keep your child from feeling isolated you will have to take steps to help him/her meet some new friends. Soon after moving into your new home, ask your neighbors if there are children of the same age close by. Ask those neighbors who have young children if they are interested in allowing your children to play together at the local park during supervised play dates.



9. Once the move has taken place, organize a "family exploring day".

Let your children help you plan an afternoon walk, or scenic drive through a specific only be helping your children to familiarize themselves with their new community, but your family will also be creating fun, new memories associated with your new home.



10. Involve your children in deciding how to decorate their new bedrooms.

Even the youngest child should have some of their ideas incorporated into the new design. Whether it's a big decision (choosing the wall color), or a small decision (selecting just the right spot for his/her toy box), giving your child "a say" helps them to embrace their new space.

Above all, keep the communication lines open - before, during, and after the move. Depending on the child, it can take anywhere from a few days to many months to adjust to their new surroundings.

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