

# MOVING WITH KIDS

As stressful as moving can be for adults, it can be doubly so for children. How your children handle the move will depend on their personality and how you prepare them.

*No one knows them better than you do, so make sure you only use advice you think will work for your child.*

There are lots of things you can do to make the move easier on your kids and help them transition into their new home:

## Declutter

If your kids are old enough, involve them in the decluttering process. If they're too young to lend a hand, talk to them before you start purging so you don't get rid of anything they're still attached to, and so you can save anything with sentimental value. You could even give each of your kids a "memory box" to fill with old things that they can't part with.

## Have a plan

As soon as you start thinking seriously about moving, you need to start thinking about how you're going to tell your kids. Discuss it with your partner, if applicable, and devise a plan. Here are some things to consider:

- **How to broach the subject** and begin the conversation.
- **How soon before the move you're going to tell them.** Would more time to adjust be helpful, or will it make them anxious?
- **How things are going to change**, but also what will remain the same. Younger children may need to be reassured that their toys and other familiar objects are coming with you.
- **Discuss what the moving process involves.** Knowing what to expect will help quell some of their anxiety.
- **How you're going to handle their questions** and how much you're going to reveal.
- **What you're going to do if they are very anxious** or emotional about the prospect of moving.
- **How involved they will be with packing and on moving day.** This will depend on their age. If they're younger, you may need to make arrangements for a friend, family member, or babysitter to watch them for the day.



## Let them express their emotions

Moving can be an emotional time for everyone, but your child is still learning how to cope with their emotions and will likely be dealing with separation anxiety on top of that. Accept that there will be tears, and address their concerns. Let them know that they can talk to you about the move and understand that it will take time. It usually takes children at least six months to adjust.

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## Use distractions

Keep your children occupied with other activities like games and playdates with friends or family. This can help them encourage and maintain a positive mindset throughout the moving process.

## Toddler and Preschoolers

Child-care experts recommend giving your toddler one to two months notice of a move. This gives them enough time to prepare, but not enough time to overthink it and get anxious. Calmly break the news to them and then provide them with easy-to-understand details about what it will involve.

There are lots of books that can help your toddler or preschooler understand the concept of moving and prepare for the changes. Try these:

### Ages 2-5

*Big Ernie's New Home* by Teresa and Whitney Martin  
*Bella and Stella Come Home* by Anika Denise  
*Katie Moves* by Liesbet Slegers

### Ages 2-5

*My Very Exciting, Sorta Scary, Big Move* by Lori Attanasio Woodring, Ph.D.  
*Hey, New Kid!* by Betsey Duffey  
*Anastasia Again! (An Anastasia Krupnik story)* by Lois Lowry  
*The Kid in the Red Jacket* by Barbara Par

### Ages 3-8

*A Kiss Goodbye* by Audrey Penn  
*Moving House (Usborne First Experiences)* by Anne Civardi  
*Boomer's Big Day* by Constance W. McGeorge  
*The Berenstain Bears' Moving Day* by Stan and Jan Berenstain  
*Augustine* by Mélanie Watt  
*Moving Day* by Ralph Fletcher  
*Louis + Bobo: We Are Moving* by Christiane Engle

## Watch out for regression

Watch out for changes in behavior and regression with things like potty training, clinginess, tantrums, eating habits, and attitude. This is natural in the face of a stressful situation. Rather than punishing them or trying to get them back to where they were immediately, accept that they have temporarily taken a step back and allow them to readjust. If they don't begin to make progress again after a month or two, or if they're displaying behaviors you find especially worrisome, talk with your pediatrician.

## Be positive

Children look to you to gauge how they should react to things. Do your best to remain positive, especially around your child. Share photographs, tourism advertisements, and websites with them to give them a mental image of what their new life will look like.

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## Keep it routine

Routine is reassuring. Get your child back into their daily routine as soon as possible after you move, and make setting up their room one of your top priorities. Try to keep their bedtime schedule as much as possible. A couple of late nights are okay if they help get your kids excited about the move.

## Involve them in the moving process

Involving your children in the process and allowing them to have control over small things can reduce any move-related anxiety. Try letting your kids:

- **Pick their new bedroom**, choose the layout of their furniture, or select the color of their new bedroom.
- **Pick out or approve a new piece of furniture**, bedding, or other accessory for their room.
- **Pack their own bag or box of important things**, so they can feel reassured that these treasured items are coming with them.
- **Unpack and arrange their belongings** the way they want.
- **Make small decisions about other rooms** in the house by allowing them to choose between your final picks.
- If they are old enough, they can help **research restaurants near your new home** and plan take-out or dinners out for the first few days while you are getting settled.



**PRO TIP:** If it's early on and feasible to do, take them with you to open houses and viewings so they can get a preview of what's to come.

## Maintain connections and say goodbye

To help your kids transition, do some fun things to say goodbye to their old home and neighborhood:

- **Give them a camera** to take pictures of their favorite things or record a tour of the home and neighborhood.
- **Have a family photoshoot** with the house.
- If there are renovations being done, allow them to **take a piece of the old house** with them. They could also sign their name on a wall before it's repainted to leave a piece of themselves there.
- **Make a scrapbook** dedicated to your old home.
- Throw a **goodbye party**.
- If possible, **take them to all their favorite spots** one last time before the move, or at least the most important ones.
- **Share memories** of your home as a family.

You can also help them stay in touch with family and friends they may be leaving behind. Set up **weekly phone calls or video chats**, or help them participate in online games or activities that will allow them to continue to play with their friends even when they're far away.

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## Get to know the neighbourhood

**Before you move**, try to take your kids to the new neighbourhood to show them around. If it's too far to make the trip, use Google street view to give them an idea of what their new neighborhood looks like. **After you've settled in**, try to find ways to make this new place feel like home:

- If it's a new city, act like tourists and see the sights.
- Try to check out a few local food spots a week and make a game of finding new favorites.
- See if your local library or community center has a schedule of free events.
- Help your kids explore the house by playing games or giving them fun tasks.
- Have a welcome or housewarming party. Invite neighbors and classmates, as well as friends and family who live nearby.
- Volunteer and get involved in the community or at the school.

Young children are still learning how to develop their social skills. Rather than expecting them to make friends on their own, talk to your child about ways they can approach and befriend other children. Reassure them that they will make friends again and sign them up for any activities that interest them, especially if it's a while until school starts. Locate other kids their age in the neighborhood and help them introduce themselves. If possible, have them meet their teacher and show them around their new school before classes begin.

## Make the first night special

You'll probably all be exhausted at the end of moving day, and while it may be tempting to just crawl into bed and fall asleep, try to take some time to make the first night special and do something fun. It doesn't need to be fancy - family time with takeout and a movie is enough.

## SAFETY TIPS

If your kids are going to be in the house on moving day, there are a few steps you can take to keep them safe and happy:

- Seal all boxes with tape.
- Place heavy boxes and objects on the floor.
- Don't pile boxes too high.
- Leave a clear path through the whole house.
- Keep tools off the ground.
- Assign someone to keep an eye on them all day.
- Secure furniture and bookshelves.
- Keep drinks and snacks in a cooler.

