



Moving With Kids

How to Get Children Involved In Moving

Moving can be a busy and stressful time in any family's life. Selling the house, finding a new home and making all the necessary arrangements takes up hour upon hour of your time. In all of the hustle and bustle, parents sometimes often overlook someone very concerned about the upcoming move... the children.

One thing you may want to consider is the timing of the move. Historically, most people plan their move to coincide with the end of the school year in June. However experts in the child psychology area are saying that if you have the option, you may want to consider moving at least a month or so before the end of the school year. This way your children will have a chance to see their new school and make some new friends before the long summer break. Children adapt much better to a new environment if they can establish some kind of routine and develop even a small circle of friends. Too often, children find themselves in a new area over the summer without new friends and as a result feel less positive about the move.

Children have feelings too. Parents, not friends or relatives should be the first to inform the children that they are moving. Once they have been told of the relocation, they should be given the opportunity to ask questions and to express their likes and dislikes regarding the move.

If small children have difficulty understanding what is happening in the world around them, parents might consider reading storybooks or colouring books with moving-related stories. The Berenstain Bears' Moving Day book is an excellent one. It is distributed by Random House under ISBN 0-394-84838-1. Many local libraries have other books dedicated to the subject of moving as it relates to young children.

Getting your children involved in the move preparation can ease some of their tensions. Consider giving them their own little "to do" list so that they can feel part of the process. Here are some suggestions for concerned parents.

A Family Affair

Moving should be a family affair. Get every family member involved in the move from the beginning. Atlas Van Lines has a video titled "Let Atlas Take You Home" which you may be interested in viewing. It provides an overview of the moving process. Ask your Atlas moving consultant about this or you can call Atlas' Marketing Department at 1-800-267-3783 to obtain a copy.

Learning more about the new city can stir some excitement about moving. The family can either spend some time at the local library or contact the Chamber of Commerce or Bureau of Visitors and Tourism for the destination city to obtain some information about what the city has to offer in the areas housing, recreation, leisure

activities etc. If you have access to the Internet, you will find a wealth of information on most cities is now available on the World Wide Web.

Many libraries have travel videos which may include your new city, highlighting its special features. Sometimes the Chambers of Commerce have such videos available for rent or purchase.

A Canadian firm publishes a series of helpful magazines called "Moving To" which you may also find helpful. Copies are usually available in most libraries and on some newsstands or they can be ordered directly by contacting:

MOVING TO PUBLICATIONS

44 Upjohn Road, Suite 100,

Don Mills, Ontario,

M3B 2W1

Telephone (416) 441-1168

or by fax (416) 441-1641.

Magazines are available for most areas of Canada or you can visit their web site at:

<http://www.movingto.com>

In addition your realtor in the new city can also provide you with this type of material. To help you further, Atlas Van Lines has concise Destination City Fact sheets available which

provide a basic overview of the city along with some useful telephone numbers.

Once a thorough "fact finding" has been done, ask the smaller children to draw a picture of the new city; the school age children to put together a little "story" about the city. All the children should make a list of things they want to do once the family gets settled in the new city (e.g. go to a ballgame, a park, a shopping centre, a museum, a theme park or other special location). Keep the lists for reference once the move is completed and be sure to fulfil some of your children's special requests.

Selecting the New Residence

Allowing the children to assist, or at least think they are assisting, the selection of the new home is another positive step. Encourage the children to make a list of their ideal home (e.g. near their school, near a park, a room to myself, a big yard with a swimming pool) in the new city. Of course, you can't promise your children that they will get everything on their "wish list" but it does give you some indication of what would help them to adjust to the new environment much quicker.

When the budget permits, it wouldn't hurt to take the children along for the final house-hunting trip to see where they are going to be living. When the budget doesn't permit such a trip take pictures or a video with your camcorder. One final suggestion regarding the new home is to draw a floor plan of each of the children's rooms and let them start deciding where they want to place their belongings when they get there.

Preparing to Move

A lot of the preparation must occur before the actual move takes place. Assign the children some responsibilities so that they feel needed during the rush. Some of the duties might include sorting out old toys or clothes; assisting with the garage sale; writing out the change of address cards; mailing cards to old friends with the new address; returning library books; and getting pets ready to move just to name a few.

Maintaining and Establishing Friendships

Good friends in children's eyes are hard to come by. All too often a child doesn't want to move because they are afraid of losing their only friends in the world. Parents can help reduce this anxiety with a few simple steps.

First, make every effort to find at least one pen pal per child in the new city. Contact the school they will be attending and ask that the teacher for the child's grade get a volunteer "pen pal" to tell your child about the school and the area. It is very healthy for children to share both words and pictures with someone his/her own age as he/she begins to make some adjustments.

Pen pals are also good for teenagers as they can share some "secret" things with other teenagers such as styles, fads, hobbies, activities and people of the opposite sex. This activity also provides the child with an "instant" friends for the first day of school in the new location.

Next, let the children know they can still write or call their friends in the old city even after they have moved. You might even want to consider purchasing one of the new "phone call cards" which come in pre-designated dollar amounts that the child can use for their own personal calls. It is also reassuring for the children to know they can go back to their old city for an occasional visit.

And finally, permit the children to have a party with their friends before they move and encourage a neighbourhood "get together" with the new friends once they get to the new home. There is nothing worse for children than to feel alone. By taking steps to overcome this fear, parents will find that the children adjust to their new environment much quicker.