

Moving with Children

PCS Tips and Tricks



Your mindset is key

- Focus on the positive aspects and model positivity.
- It is stressful, but kids will feed off of your mindset.
- Understand that change is hard.
- Treat the move like an adventure.
- Be flexible, stay calm, and be prepared for the unexpected.
- Involve children when possible.
- Let kids experience their emotions and support them through them.
- Ask for help when needed.

Once you know next assignment

- Research as much ahead of time - good schools (even if you homeschool) usually means safe area.
- Contact your [Educational School Liaison Officer](#) (SLO).
- School Rating resources:
 - [Great Schools](#)
 - [Niche](#)
 - [School Digger](#)
- Schedule any necessary doctor/dentist/specialist appointments (lead time is usually a while for new patients).
- Talk about new activities to look forward to.
- If young kids - get on the waitlist for daycare/childcare.
- If kids are old enough - let them help with the research.

Preparing your child(ren)

- Talk about the move leading up to it - the process and the new location.
- Young children:
 - Read books about moving
 - Show pictures of previous moves
 - Talk about what movers will take vs. what you will take with you
- Older children:
 - Talk about the move
 - Involve them in the planning of the move
- Maintain routines for as long as possible leading up to the move.
- Answer questions honestly, but age-appropriately.
- Find something for them to look forward to.

Move preparations

- Start early!
- Consider donating unused clothes and toys (involve kids if possible).
- Organize toys and clothes.
- Put small toys in gallon ziplock bags so they don't get separated/lost in move boxes.
- Have kids pack their own backpack of special items to take with.
- Pack fragile models, i.e. Legos, yourself.
- Involve children in preparations so they know where things are when unpacking.

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What to pack

- Plan to be without your HHG for longer than you think.
- Extra clothes. (Will your kid size up?)
- Special items i.e. favorite toy, stuffed animal, etc.
- As age appropriate, let your child pick a few special items for their own bag or backpack.
- Young child - make sure to have a stroller and car seat (and pack n play if you intend them to sleep in that during move).
- Travel with all baby essentials that you need for a few weeks.
- Consider entertainment:
 - Electronics charged and loaded with age-appropriate shows/games
 - New small toys for each day/state.
- For potty training children - bring a training potty.
- Plan for snacks!
- If moving OCONUS ship some flat rate boxes of favorite things, new toys, books ahead so children have something fun and familiar when arriving at the new location.
- If shipping car, ship your second car seat inside your car as it will likely arrive before your HHG.

Friends

- Talk about the move and prepare child(ren) for leaving friends.
- Take pictures before you leave, maybe have a goodbye party.
- Find ways for them to stay in touch (based on age) - preschool children can color pictures and mail them to their friends, older children can call or FaceTime.
- Make a photo montage of friends from your previous location as part of room decor at the new location.



Image by Gordon Johnson from Pixabay

Paperwork prep

- Make sure all medical appointments are up to date
- Get (and hand carry) school and medical record, immunization record, and birth certificate.
- If possible - get a school physical before leaving especially if your child plays a fall sport
- Look into area schools/daycares (depending on age)

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Moving with Children PCS Tips and Tricks



Car ride/road trip

- Plan Plan Plan! Plan and book ahead!
- Consider and decide if you're stopping for any adventures along the way (national parks, zoos, etc).
- Make a vacation out of the trip.
- Be prepared for more stops than just adults would take.
- Plan short legs.
- Determine what is important when picking a hotel - pool, providing a portable crib or pull-out couch, etc.
- If you can't all travel together (driving 2 cars) and you have really little kids, contemplate bringing a friend, grandparent, another relative along with the person who has the kids. A grandmother who can be the official snack-getter and entertainment coordinator.
- Be prepared with activities, snacks, and entertainment. Bring more than you think you need.
- Prep snacks so they are easy to hand out.
- Have electronic chargers/external chargers ready.

Packing and unpacking

- Make sure to have the items going with you in a separate location (and labeled as such) during packing.
- If possible, have the child(ren) elsewhere when movers are at the house (babysitters, friend's house, hotel, etc.)
- If children must be at the house consider finding someone to watch (grandma, babysitter, friend)
- [CGMA](#) has some funding for childcare (rank dependent).
- Label boxes with kid's name so it can get to the correct location at the new location.
- If young kids - let them put stickers on loaded boxes so they can recognize them at the new house and feel a part of the move.
- Save some empty boxes for play.
- Consider leaving kids with grandparents during unloading and for a few days after. until unboxing is under control.



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Once you arrive

- Prepare your expectations. Everything takes longer. Routines need to be reestablished.
- Consider setting up your child's room first (or early).
- Consider getting them involved in local activities quickly - summer camps, sports, religious activities, volunteering, clubs, etc.
- Encourage socialization, but be aware it can take a while.
- Take them on a tour of the new location and show them new places - schools, parks, etc.
- If small children - build a box fort with old HHG boxes to distract children while you unpack.

Additional resources

- [Military Child Education Coalition](#) supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.
- [Department of Defense Education Activity](#) is one of only two Federally-operated school systems on behalf of the Department of Defense (DoD). DoDEA is globally positioned, operating 160 accredited schools in 8 districts located in 11 foreign countries, 7 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico.
- [Sesame Street for Military Families](#) aims to help families with young children cope with the challenges of deployments and change. The website, with videos, games, tips, articles and more, is offered in both English and Spanish for kids and parents.
- [MilitaryKidsConnect](#) (MKC) is an online community of military children (ages 6-17 yr old) that provides access to age-appropriate resources to support children from pre-deployment, through a parent's or caregiver's return.
- [Military One Source Parenting and Children Resources](#)
- Books on moving for small children:
 - Moving Day Berenstain Bears
 - New House, Same Underwear
 - Moving to the Neighborhood (Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood)

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