

moving with children

While moving house is undeniably stressful for adults it can also be a traumatic time for children. A move may be precipitated by decisions made by adults, leaving children feeling powerless and distraught at the loss of familiar friends and places.

Some children will see a move as an exciting adventure but others might be distressed by the experience. Bed wetting, baby talk and clinginess can be signs of stress in younger children while older children can become shy or aggressive, refuse to eat or have trouble sleeping or concentrating. Nourishing food and plenty of rest are essential as is quality time with parents to help ease the difficult transition period.

Talking to children about the move is a simple way to involve them points out Mark Werner, Country Manager for Allied Pickfords, Hong Kong. Be positive and let them know about it as early in the process as possible to give them time to grow to accept the change. Explain why the move is necessary and try to involve them in the process of moving by letting them take part in decisions about décor in the new house. If possible, a visit to the new house or town will help make the whole move seem more real. If you are moving further away use a map to show where you are now and where you are going together with photographs of the new place.

Children under 5

Although small children might worry about being left behind they tend to be less traumatised by a move

than older children as they have fewer friends and are more reliant on their parents for their sense of security. Stories about children who are moving house can be of benefit and some relocation companies use fun-to-read, illustrated books or web pages specially designed for children to help get them excited about the possibility of moving. It's important to explain that toys are being



Moving can be a very stressful and emotional time for everyone involved. You will move many valuable possessions when you change addresses, but none are as precious as your children. If you are relocating during the school summer holidays, now is the time to start preparing.

packed to be transported and not thrown away and to keep a hold of old furniture which will help to promote a feeling of familiarity and security. Small children may benefit from spending the moving day with friends or relatives to avoid feeling ignored or excluded by their parents.

School-age children

Older children start to worry about how their every day lives will be changed when they move and particularly how they will fit in to their new school. If you move during the summer holidays organise activities to occupy them and prevent them becoming

bored or lonely without their old friends. Try to assure them that they will still be able to enjoy the things they love when they move and that things might even be better. Allowing children to pack their own belongings is a great way to get them involved in the move but remember to mark this box so it can be unpacked early on to help the child settle in to the new place.

Bryce Burns of Santa Fe Relocation Services reminds parents to make sure children become aware of new or different safety aspects of travelling and living in a new country. Traffic driving on the opposite side of the road can be a major danger to young children as can unfamiliar wildlife.



tips for moving with kids



- **Before you leave**, make a final visit to your child's favourite places. Bring a camera so your child can hold on to their favourite memories after the move.
- **Encourage your child** to exchange home and email addresses with their friends and take pictures of them too. When they get to their new home, they can write to their friends and tell them all about it.
- **Include children** when making plans for the move. If it's possible, take them with you when you visit your new home. This will help to alleviate some of their fears of the unknown.
- **Talk to your children** about the move. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, and to tell you if they feel scared, nervous or apprehensive. If you explain why you are moving, what the new home will be like and the exciting things that will be found in the new area, they might start to feel more optimistic about the experience.
- **Help your child** learn about the place they are moving to. Libraries, tourist information centres, the local Chamber of Commerce, book stores, the internet and moving companies are all good sources of information.
- **Find out about places** like zoos, parks, museums and shopping districts that they might enjoy in their new neighbourhood. Some of these places might have a website so they can read about it and see what it looks like in advance.
- **Prepare a package** for each child with their favourite toys, books, clothing and snacks. Label it with the child's name and keep it handy during the move.
- **Don't discard** old toys and furniture as this can be unsettling and provoke feelings of insecurity. Let children unpack some of their well-loved toys and put them in their new room.
- **Let your child** help decide how his or her new room will be arranged and decorated.
- **Survey your new home** for loose steps, low overhangs and other possible accident areas. Keep an eye on the children until they become familiar with the new home's peculiarities.
- **Take a break** from setting up your new home and spend as much time with your child as you can.
- **Accompany your child** to school for the first few days to help them feel more relaxed. The first few weeks in a new school can be difficult.
- **If you are moving** to a radically different environment be sure your children are aware of the differences and understand what to look out for.

Teenagers

Moving house and school can be particularly stressful for teenagers who will be separated from friends and boyfriends or girlfriends. Their primary concern will be fitting in when they reach their new home and their lack of control over their environment could lead to frustration and anger. Share information with them about the place you are moving to and listen to their concerns. You know best what your children like, and what might excite them to new possibilities. If you can demonstrate to them that this is a positive opportunity, they are more likely to look forward to it.

Pets

When planning your move don't forget your pets and be sure to plan in advance. As Stacey Tucker of Ferndale Kennels points out, some countries have very strict regulations which can take months to comply with so if you don't start early enough you might have to leave Fido behind in quarantine. New regulations for many countries require that your trusted companion has two

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rabies vaccinations at least 30 days apart before they can have a rabies blood test. Your pet then has to wait six months before they can travel.

In addition to quarantine regulations, most countries now require pets to be identified by a microchip which is implanted under the skin between the shoulder blades. There are two chips readily available in Hong Kong - the American Veterinary Identification Device (AVID) chip and the International Standards Organisation (ISO) chip - both are valid for most countries.

When deciding on what shipping crate you should use you will need to find out if the airline or country you are going to have any special requirements. All crates must conform to IATA standards and pets should be measured properly to ensure that they have enough space inside the crate to stand up, turn around and lie down in a normal position.

With airline regulations, shipping crate regulations, quarantine, boarding, import and export arrangements and identification to consider a professional pet mover can remove much of the stress of moving a pet. Regulations may change, but a pet mover stays abreast of these changes and will make sure everything is in order for your move. **pt**