



Canadian Association of Movers Help Sheet: Moving with Children

Children need special attention when moving. Moving can be a major upheaval for children. They may feel anxious about separation from friends, schools and neighbourhoods. As exciting as relocating can be, every family that moves experiences some loss, sadness, and apprehension. CAM advises parents to prepare their family for moving day, to help reduce everyone's stress.

Involving children in the move can help to calm their fears and make the transition more tolerable. Here are some tips that may make life easier on your kids (and you!)

- **Answer their questions:** Give them as much time as possible to ask questions or express their feelings about the move. Answer all of the questions, even if it's an "I don't know".
- **Prepare them:** Several experts say how you handle the time leading up to the move has a big impact on how easily your kids adapt. Don't focus on what will be different, focus more on what will be the same i.e., furniture, clothes and, most importantly, their toys.
- **Understand their fear:** Even if your children are excited about the move, it is still difficult especially if they are moving away from someone they love. All children accept things at their own pace. Most experts estimate that it takes at least six months for kids to fully acclimate to their new life.
- **Set the right example:** Your kids look to you, so be positive. Negativity rubs off on them, so watch what you say about your new home. Highlight all the good things about your new home so your kids will see them too.
- **Stay on schedule:** Maintain as many of your old routines as possible. Provide as much familiarity as possible: maintaining the same daily routines in the same order as often as you can.
- **Let them decide:** Let your children make some of the decisions especially about the layout and look of their bedrooms. If shopping for new bedding, window treatments ask them to weigh in.
- **Let them help:** One of the best things you can do is to let them pack some of their own boxes. Make sure that it's non valuable, non breakable items, such as towels/bedding, clothes, kid's books, stuffies, or Lego. A really fun thing to do is to find a smaller box that they can pack their favourite (non breakable) items in. Let them decorate the box however they want and get the driver to personally load it on the truck last (so it can be the first thing off the truck at the new home). If you can sneak in a new toy, some snacks or a new colouring book and crayons, opening the box upon arrival will surprise your children and keep them busy in their room while you are working with the movers to get everything else placed. Don't forget to make sure you have them select a few favourite items to carry with them on their trip.
- **Get some help:** Arrange for someone to take care of the children while the movers are packing and loading. Parents will be very busy overseeing the move and may not be attentive to children's needs.
- **Get them set up first:** Children will need to adjust to their new setting. Set up the child's room first so that their space provides some normalcy. If possible, invite old friends to come for a visit so children can show off their new home.

When you arrive in your new community, you may find that organized activities are already under way. It may be too late for your children to participate. Neighbourhood children may be away on vacation, making it difficult to make new friends immediately. And it may be several weeks before new friends can be made at school.

Here's some ideas that might help the transition to the new neighbourhood easier:

- **Let them know their new home:** Show them the new neighbourhood – the house, the parks, the school - using online maps. If you are able to, drive by your new home and visit stores or dining spots in the new area before the move so the kids are already familiar after the move.
- **Plan ahead for the new neighbourhood:** If you're moving in the summer, contact community centres about summer programs and make arrangements for children before the move. Contact schools as soon as possible to find out about registration and orientation programs.
- **Get to know neighbours:** Throw a housewarming party or reach out to your Facebook and Instagram friends and see if your connections are also connected to a new neighbour. Make friends with other moms by arriving a little earlier to events/school. It gives you an opportunity to start conversations; volunteer to be a room parent or work the concession stand at the little league field.
- **Practice social skills:** Have kids practice how to start a conversation. If other kids are playing soccer, teach your child to play. Let them know that wherever they go they will make friends but that it may take a little time. Remind them of past experiences when they easily made friends. It will give them the confidence to try.

Remember nothing worth happening happens overnight. Be patient, and you will "feel at home" in no time.

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