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Smooth Move

How to avoid family mayhem during the transition.

By Peggy Abkemeier-Alford

A recent survey from Rent.com, the nation's leading Internet listing site in the rental housing industry, found that 69 percent of families have moved to a new home at least once during their children's lifetime. Many families have gone through the hassle multiple times, with 18 percent of families admitting that they've moved three or more times.



Regardless of our reasons for moving, changing homes can be tough on kids. And this gives us parents an added amount of stress during a move. More than half of parents worry about their children's apprehensions regarding the move. Additional concerns include finding the right time to move the family, ensuring moving day logistics run smoothly with the kids and getting everyone motivated to help with the move.

Children fret about their new homes, but in ways that may be different from their parents. More than half of American parents report that their children worry most about making new friends at school or in their neighborhood while others wonder if they'll truly feel at home in the new place and feel anxious about getting acclimated to the neighborhood.

Luckily, I have a few tips to make the move easier on your kids, allowing the entire family to have some fun in the process:

- **Be Honest.** Communicate with your kids about the move as soon as possible, giving them time to adjust to the idea of change. About 10 percent of parents polled said that they have told or would tell their kids about a move over e-mail or text message. But I recommend a more personal approach, such as over a meal or during a family meeting. Involve children in the moving preparations by talking to them about the homes you're considering and sharing photos or videos.
- **Take Care of Mr. Bear.** If you have small children, set aside a special time to sit with them. After the talk, make a small box of their favorite things, like a stuffed animal, doll, a few toys and a blanket, to keep in a designated place during the move. This way, your child's essentials don't get lost or end up on a moving truck that might result in a long

separation from your child. These little creature comforts can go a long way toward making kids feel safe and secure among new surroundings.

- **Make Space Personal.** To help your kids feel at home in a new place, give them the freedom to decorate their own rooms and create a space where they feel comfortable. Allowing kids to choose their paint color, curtains, bedding and décor gets them more excited about the move and gives them a sense of control. Before you move, visit the new home with your kids and show them where their new rooms will be. If visiting is not an option, share pictures or floor plans of their bedrooms to excite kids about the possibilities of their rooms.
- **Find New Best Friends.** If your kids are nervous about making new friends, research activities of interest to them in the new community. It's easy to find information online about sports leagues, art classes and children's events. Getting kids involved with things they already love puts them at ease and encourages them to make friends more quickly. If you live near other kids their age, introduce your children to those families and arrange a playdate to enable all the kids to meet.
- **Tool Around Town.** To combat the anxiety your kids might feel about getting acclimated to their new neighborhood, show them around town. Up the fun factor with a scavenger hunt approach. Give your kids clues each step of the way and see if they can figure out what the next destination is in town. Even running errands in the new town can be enjoyable.
- **Check Out the New School.** If your move involves your children changing schools, see if you can find a time for them to visit their new school prior to their first day to walk the grounds. If kids are familiar with the layout of the school, it is less stressful when the halls are crowded with strangers and they are trying to fit in, make friends and get to their classes.

As a parent, doing your homework beforehand eliminates some of the concerns that kids have with moving. Rent.com's search capabilities can help you to locate a property close to your children's school or one that features a pool or a garden, allowing the entire clan to spend time together in a peaceful setting outdoors. Avoid getting caught up in the franticness and stress of moving, and consider how your children are feeling about the transition. As soon as everyone gets settled, they'll love their new home.

President of Rent.com, Peggy Abkemeier-Alford was the company's chief financial officer for three years prior to her current position. She came to Rent.com from eBay, Inc., the world's largest marketplace, with a portfolio of Internet companies, including Rent.com. Abkemeier-Alford lives in the Los Angeles area with her husband Willie and son Kristopher.