

# The Ultimate Family Moving Guide



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# What This Guide Will Cover:



## Introduction

Whether you've survived a family move before or this is your very first move, we have created this guide especially for you. Our aim is to help you to get you and your family from A to B in one piece, sanity intact.

## 1. Helping Your Family Prepare For The Move

The reason for a family move is often a deeply personal and emotional one. Moving during a difficult family time can take an especially hard toll on your family. Throughout this guide, we consider your family every step of the way and provide advice on ways to help all prepare and cope with the upheaval.



## 2. Packing Up Family Life

Taking your time to plan your move week by week, hour by hour and box by box in advance is easier said than done. This is particularly challenging when you are trying to run a household as well as juggle work with your three and five year old. The way you approach your move will depend on the moving circumstances and the help or resources at hand. We give you practical tips to help you successfully organise and pack up your family life ready for the big day.



## 3. Getting Through The Big Day

Using our experience and research we have gathered together some useful tips, advice, and things to consider for your family on moving day. Keeping some key pointers in mind for your moving day will help you support your family and tackle each hurdle as it comes.

## 4. Settling Into Your New Home

Now that you've arrived in one piece, we have gathered some helpful tips to begin to settle your family into your new home. We also consider ways to help your whole family to adjust to their new surroundings.



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## Acknowledgements

We would like to warmly thank all of the parents, bloggers and specialists who kindly took the time to share their experiences, wonderful advice and expertise to support other families looking for guidance.



# Introduction

Whether you've survived a family move before or this is your very first move, we have created this guide especially for you. Our aim is to help you to get you and your family from A to B in one piece, sanity intact. No two moves are exactly the same and every family's experience of a move will be as different as they are. However, a few things about moving never changes; it takes a lot of research, planning, preparation, proactivity and a whole lot of energy. If you have started any research on moving your family you'll know that there is a vast amount of really useful advice to be had out there, especially online. So what makes this guide different? Well, we've worked hard to research, scour and compile the very best of advice from an array of parent bloggers and child psychologist Dr Katherine Edwards, giving you one less thing to do. Our experience also means we've seen it all, from the smallest to the most epic of moves. Moving is our thing and our helpful advice is at hand.

Whether your reason for moving is a positive one or it is out of your control, moving is often an emotional and sometimes traumatic time. When you bring family into the equation, moving can feel daunting or even completely overwhelming. When moving your family, it is impossible to control every aspect and you won't get everything exactly right but being aware of the possible bumps in the road can make all the difference.



# 1. Helping Your Family Prepare For The Move



Moving home can be a very disruptive time for your family and leaving happy memories, friends and loved ones behind can prove painful for the whole family. Our aim is to help you support your family in coping with the emotions and fears that often arise when moving from the family home.

## Preparing Your Children For The Move

If you have children, moving home can be a really difficult and traumatic upheaval for them. The impact of moving on children can be as varied as their personalities. Some children may take the move in their stride or, if you are lucky, be very excited by it! Try to keep in mind that your children may not react exactly how you expect them to as it is likely to be a completely new experience to them. Even if your child takes the news extremely well, they might not fully understand what the move will mean or cost them. Above all, give each member of your family reassurance that they were given careful consideration in the decision to move and that as a family you will help each other cope.





## Talk To Your Children Early

Talk to your children early. You may be feeling apprehensive about telling your children about the move, perhaps you don't want to ruin Christmas or a birthday and you'll know what is best for your children. However, keep in mind that telling your children early gives them as much time as possible to get used to the idea. Telling your kids early can reduce the shock of the rug being pulled from under their feet. However we understand that you may not always have the luxury of allowing the news to settle in and some moves are unavoidably sudden. If this is the case, try and give your child as much information about their new home as possible beforehand.

## Acknowledge The Significance of the Move

Most of all, try to accept and acknowledge all of your children's feelings, concerns and attitudes and take the good with the bad. Let your children know that it is okay to feel anxious, worried or angry. While adults tend to focus on the practical aspects of a move, children of most ages will be more inclined to focus on all the losses that the move will bring. To your child, the loss of friends and familiar surroundings also comes with the loss of a sense of belonging. Expressing an understanding of their problems, however trivial it may seem in the bigger picture, can go a long way to help your children face the changes ahead.



*"My main advice would be that parents should recognise the significance of the move for children, and that it can feel very difficult and frightening for a child."*

Dr. Katherine Edward DCLinPsych, Ph.D., MA, AFBPsS.  
Chartered & Clinical Psychologist ([dredward.co.uk](http://dredward.co.uk))

## Set Realistic Expectations

Faced with a worried child, you might be tempted to tell them that everything will be fantastic and everything will be better after the move but try to set realistic expectations for your children. As much as you want to communicate all the positive things that will come with the move, be careful not to raise great and unrealistic expectations, making more room for disappointment. Explain to your children that you'll also have to make new friends in your new town or community and that it might take some time to settle in and for it to feel like home.



*"As with anything, it is always important to listen to children and if they are expressing worries try not to reassure ("it'll be fine") too swiftly, but to let them know you truly hear what they are worried about. Then they themselves can feel these worries are properly shared, understood and more manageable"*

Dr. Katherine Edward DCLinPsych, Ph.D., MA, AFBPsS. Chartered & Clinical Psychologist ([dredward.co.uk](http://dredward.co.uk))

## Highlight Any Silver Linings

To some children, a move could mean a positive new start, particularly those who might have experienced bullying or difficulty in fitting in. Help your child see that the opportunity of a new beginning could be really exciting.

## Make Time For Saying Goodbye

If possible, make the time to say goodbye to the people and places you love together as a family. It could be a nice idea for each member of the family to take it in turn to choose a special place to visit as a family before the move.



## Try To Dispel The Fear Of The Unknown

If possible, try to take your children to see their new home and school as many times as feasible. Children can be really frightened by the aspect of change and moving from the only home they have known can feel to them like their world is collapsing. Try to remind your children that home can be made in many places and can also be made wherever their loved ones are too. Make sure your children know that they can ask you any question and you'll give them an honest answer. It might be a good idea to use stories or movies to help your younger children understand their situation. Finding a character your younger children can relate to might be a good way to better help them understand and cope with their feelings. If you'll need to organise new childcare, you should look into what is available as soon as you know you're moving so you can familiarise your little one with their new nursery or child-minder and begin to introduce the idea of the transition before the move.



*"We might know as adults what a house move looks like, but for children they may have no template to understand what is coming up. Children generally do not like change anyway, and it can be hard to understand why they are not excited about a bigger house, for example, when the thought of moving from where they feel secure is making them anxious."*

Dr. Katherine Edward DCLinPsych, Ph.D., MA, AFBPsS. Chartered & Clinical Psychologist ([dredward.co.uk](http://dredward.co.uk))

## Try And Maintain A Positive Attitude

During times of transition, younger children often look to their parents to understand their own feelings and can often mirror their reactions. A parent's attitude during an emotional time can greatly affect how their child handles their own emotions. Younger children will be looking for reassurance so ensure that you give them plenty and try to remain as positive as you can around them. However, older children may relate more to honesty and openness. It may be a good idea to talk with your older children about any worries or fears that you may have. Showing them that you have the same concerns as them can make them feel understood and allow some comfort in knowing what they are feeling is normal.

## Preparing Your Baby Or Toddler For The Move

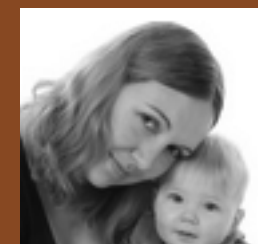


### Provide Family Stability

Babies and toddlers tend to thrive with predictable routines and when those routines are disrupted it can make them anxious or confused. Much of the distress a young child might face during a move is caused by the changes all around them such as a new room, new school and new friends. As much as possible, try to keep some routines and family habits stable during the move whether it be story time or a watching your favourite TV programme together. With babies and toddlers around, it is especially important to take care of yourself in the moving process. If there is lots of stress and upset in the home, your little ones will feel it and react to it too. Keeping yourself calm and relaxed will help you ease your baby or toddler through the transition.

### Acknowledge The Significance of the Move

Some toddlers will be more sensitive to change than others. Either way, talking to your toddler about the move and your new home to get them used to the idea will help reassure them. Even if your toddler doesn't understand, it will be reassuring to hear the mention of a "new room" or "new home" before reality hits. Do your best to help them walk through each change. It is a good idea to point out and talk about all the things that will change and what will stay the same. Depending on their level of understanding, knowing some things will stay the same will be a great comfort to your toddler.



*"We moved house with an 18 month old daughter. In the weeks leading up to the move we slowly packed away one of her toys each day so that it didn't come as a shock to see everything disappear on moving day."*

Emma Button ([www.mellowmummy.co.uk](http://www.mellowmummy.co.uk))

## Preparing An Elderly Relative For The Move

Moving home can be a very disruptive time for your family and leaving happy memories, friends and loved ones behind can prove painful for the whole family. Our aim is to help you support your family in coping with the emotions and fears that often arise when moving from the family home.



### Make Sure They Know Exactly What To Expect

As with every member of your family, you will want to ensure they know what to expect during and after the moving process. This knowledge is essential in reducing worry and stress from the unknown and unexpected. As a family, it is always a good idea to visit your new home or town to start to understand new places and meet some

### Allow Them As Much Control As Possible

You might need to help an elderly person sort through and pack their belongings. It is a good idea to allow them to make their own decisions as much as possible as the move might mean they have to part with some of their belongings which can be very difficult. When packing, it could be a good idea to keep a few sentimental things for them for peace of mind or for comfort during the move.

### Give Reassurance

Whether or not they have been involved with organising the move, reassurance will be key to every member of your family. You may have your own concerns, but reassurance that their belongings will be safe during transit can go a long way to soothe anxiousness. If there are any required medications, make sure you reassure them that you have them and know exactly where they are.

## 2. Packing Up Your Family Life



So it's time to start packing and now you have to decide where to start. The way you approach your move will depend on the person you are, your moving circumstances, and the help and time you have to hand. However you approach your move, our practical tips should help you successfully organise and pack up your family life.

### Out With The Old, Unused & Unloved

To save money, time and energy during your move, get rid of belongings that you don't use. Moving is a great time to take stock of the things you've managed to accumulate. A good rule to follow is if you can't remember the time it was used or came in handy, it shouldn't be coming with you. While all this sorting can be time-consuming, it will make for a smoother move. Start a separate box to collect things that you would like to donate or sell. Tread very carefully when throwing out your families' belongings, especially your children's. Old socks are okay but an abandoned moth eaten teddy bear might feel like the end of the world to your 5 year old.



*"Start running down the freezer if stocked up so you move with very little in it. Use the excuse to clear out a lot of stuff you are hanging on to but might actually never use. If it's been in the loft for 5 years - chuck it."*

Marianne Whooley ([marisworld.co.uk](http://marisworld.co.uk))



*"My tried and trusted tip is simple: if in doubt don't pack it, bin it! In other words de-clutter and de-clutter some more and only pack what you really need!"*

Tim Atkinson ([bringingupcharlie.co.uk](http://bringingupcharlie.co.uk))

OUT WITH THE OLD,  
UNUSED & UNLOVED

GET EACH MEMBER OF  
THE FAMILY INVOLVED

START SMALL,  
START EARLY

LABELS ARE YOUR FRIEND

NOT ALL BOXES  
ARE MADE EQUAL

## Get Each Member Of The Family Involved

It is usually a good idea to let each member of the family be involved with packing their own possessions as it can help ease anxiety and panic. Allowing your children to make decisions however small can let them feel a little more in control of their situation and will also help children feel like they are a part of the move. When it's time to start packing, allow your children to make some decisions about what to pack and what to leave behind. Explain to your younger children that their toys are just being put in boxes so they can be taken to their new bedroom to save them worrying that all their toys are being taken away from them. To a child, a move can feel like their world is coming crashing down so if keeping that threadbare teddy bear could help hold a piece of their world together, pack him with care. The fate of a holey pair of yellow cords that your husband has held on to since university might not be as bright. Pick your battles carefully!

## Start Small, Start Early

Depending on the size of your home and the space available you could start with a few boxes in a room that is not as frequently used or one box in each room. It all starts with that one box! Start placing things there that you know you really won't need from now until you move. You will find there are loads of things that you don't use every day and that can be packed in advance.



*"Garages and sheds can be packed away early too."*

Marianne Whooley (marisworld.co.uk)

## Labels Are Your Friend

Before you know it, you will have boxes all over the place, all with their own purpose. Now before you lose sight of the purpose of each box LABEL IT. The more detail the better; colour coordinate, go crazy and get creative with your little ones.



*"Start packing boxes one month before you're due to move. Label which room they are for on each side for easy reference - invest in a good thick felt pen."*

Marianne Whooley (marisworld.co.uk)

## Not All Boxes Are Made Equal

Not only should you be labelling what is in each box so you can find the kettle when you arrive (because you'll need the kettle), you should decide which boxes you want to be "last out". These boxes will be last out of your home, last onto the moving van and the first ones opened at the other end. "Last out" boxes will be the ones that are filled with the more essential things e.g. bathroom essentials, bed sheets and things your family use daily. The rule of thumb is to include all essentials that you and your family will need for at least 24 hours. Presumably, there's a grocery or convenience store nearby, but just in case, you should have some food stuff on hand that you can quickly prepare for your family. You'll also want to label your child's boxes "last out" so you can unload these first and set up your little one's room as soon as possible. You will also want to include safety essentials such as socket covers and stair gates in your essential boxes so you can get them set up straight away. Keep some basic tools in this box in case you need a screwdriver or other tool to put some furniture together or break down boxes. You may not be ready to pack your Essentials Box yet, but that doesn't mean you can't start making a list of items to include.



*"Make sure you have the necessities all in one box, kettle, mugs, teabags, sugar, biscuits, pasta and a jar of sauce and cleaning products too as you may need to clean before you start using the cupboards."*

Marianne Whooley (marisworld.co.uk)



## Pack Your Survival Bags

Prepare a family suitcase as if you were going on a three-day trip and include all the personal items you will need for a few days after the move. Ask your child to decide which three items they would take on a desert island and pack these in a bag, also filled with a few days clean clothes. This is not only a fun way to involve your child in the packing process but also provides a sense of security as depending on their age they will choose their favourite things. Make sure your children have toys, which can be easily accessed to keep them entertained. Make sure to have plenty of water and snacks for the whole family. Pack your baby's things separately and keep them with you to transport your baby in as much comfort and familiarity as possible.



*"In one bag put clothes you will need for the first few days for each member of the family. Socks, pants, t shirts, jeans, pyjamas etc. school uniform too if needed. Also have to hand bedclothes to make up the beds with duvets and pillows."*

Marianne Whooley (marisworld.co.uk)



*"Having moved twice in 8 months with 5 children I know how stressful it can be! My biggest tip for the moving day is to have the children's bed linen already made up so it can go straight on the beds and have a bag with their pyjamas, tooth brush, cuddly toy and a change of clothes ready so you don't need to frantically hunt for those things late at night when everyone is exhausted."*

Nova (cherishedbyme.com)

## Make Your Reassembling Easier

To make reassembling your children's cots and beds easier, bag and tape screws and bolts to the underside of the furniture as you dismantle them. These are the items you will want to reassemble first so keep everything you'll need to reassemble furniture in a separate box that is clearly marked. It might also be a good idea to take pictures of the connections of wires on your electronics. This will help you hook them back up in your new home easily. You could also use small stickers when moving electronics with multiple cords. Place corresponding stickers on the cord and on the place where it attaches on the device. You'll thank yourself later.

## 3. Getting Through The Big Day



It's moving day! The day you have been planning and packing for has finally arrived! Knowing what to expect and having a clear moving day plan can help ease stress and that horrible feeling that you are forgetting something. Every move is different but here are a few ways you can help your family handle the big day:

## Ensure Your Family Knows What To Expect

Remind your family what to expect on moving day; the more prepared they are, the less traumatic it will be. The preparing process is especially important for your children. If they are staying with you during the move, make sure they know exactly what to expect and what will happen. Simple reminders to your children about what is going on and what will happen will help them feel less afraid or overwhelmed. With smaller children, use simple phrases such as "we're moving today" or "lets drive to our new home!" Even if your younger children or infants don't understand, they will still be comforted through this kind communication and your tone of voice. It can be helpful to play out the move with your younger child using dolls, boxes, and a toy truck to help them get a feel for moving before the actual event. If you are having someone look after your children for the day, make sure your child knows where they are going, who they are going to, how long they will be there for and what to expect when they arrive at their new home.



*"It would help to include them as much as possible in the planning stage, make everything as predictable as possible, make sure they know the timing and logistics of things well in advance and if possible make them part of the planning by incorporating their ideas and thoughts."*

Dr. Katherine Edward DClInPsych, Ph.D., MA, AFBPsS. Chartered & Clinical Psychologist (dredward.co.uk)



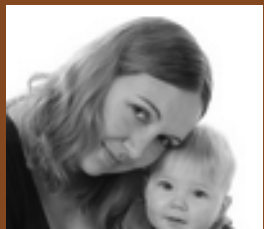


## Provide Continuity

For babies and younger children, the stress of moving is likely to be directly related to the disruption in routine; therefore, your main aim should be to try to keep your little one's routine as normal as possible. Make sure you keep familiar objects, toys, and bedding on hand. This is not the time to change cots or wash familiar smells away. It is also important that mealtimes do not vary from what your baby or child is used to.

## Keeping Your Children Safe

If you are moving with a baby, you may want to arrange a babysitter, preferably someone that your baby knows well to look after them during the chaos. With all the upheaval and your attention distracted, mobile little ones can be at risk on moving day. You may want to find someone to look after them during the critical hours of the move, keeping them amused and out of the way while the moving vans are filled up and unloaded. If you are keeping them with you, a playpen filled with interesting toys can keep your toddler safe and out of mischief if you have to momentarily divert your attention elsewhere. You will be offered a lot of advice, often conflicting as to whether you should keep your children with you on moving day or arrange childcare. Keep in mind that you are the best judge of what's right for your kids.

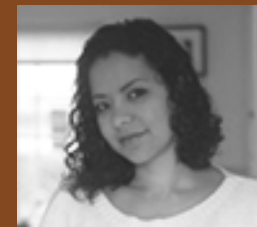


*"On the big day we arranged for our daughter to be at nursery (although a day with family or friends would have worked just as well) so that we could concentrate on moving boxes and dealing with estate agents without a toddler running amok."*

Emma Button ([mellowmummy.co.uk](http://mellowmummy.co.uk))

## Preparing Your Pets For The Move

We know that pets are important members of the family and we wouldn't dream of missing them out. Smaller pets find the transition and transportation much easier. The best thing to do with smaller pets is to keep them in a quiet space before they have to be moved and make sure whatever you are carrying them in is stable and secure. It is also a good idea to drape a towel or cloth over cases, cages or carry holders to minimise stress or agitation. When transporting your pets, be careful to avoid loud music or sudden noises which may startle your pets. For larger pets such as cats or dogs, you may want to keep them in a quiet room or completely out of harms way on moving day. Always make sure you update the address of your pet's microchip prior to the move.



*"The most sensible thing we did was to put our cats in a cattery for a few days while we moved, sorted, and cleaned. It just meant we weren't worried about them going missing and when they came to the new house we were able to give them our full attention. It helped masses with settling them in."*

Adele Jarrett-Kerr (Circus Queen) – ([circusqueen.co.uk](http://circusqueen.co.uk))

## Take Time To Say Goodbye To Your Home

For toddlers and younger children who may not fully understand the move, it is a good idea to walk through each room of your house and say "good bye" to each. This may give them a better sense of what is happening and may even help them develop some sort of closure. Your teenagers might think it silly but this might also be a nice exercise for the rest of the family too, especially if you have shared happy memories in the house and have lived there a long time. Saying goodbye is an important way for your family to bring one story to a close before starting a new one.



## Get The Whole Family Involved

If you are keeping your children with you on the day of the move, keep your little ones amused and involved by giving them small tasks. For younger children, the move should be made into an exciting adventure, because it is one! Some children may be really excited by all the chaos and won't want to be left out of the fun. The big removal van could be the most exciting thing to your child so allow them any joy or fun you can on moving day. Whether it is creating games and forts from your moving boxes or letting them decorate their own moving boxes, involve your child wherever there is fun to be had.



*"Children cope better when they are part of doing something, rather than feeling it is being done to them."*

Dr. Katherine Edward DClInPsych, Ph.D., MA, AFBPsS. Chartered & Clinical Psychologist (dredward.co.uk)

## 4. Settling Into Your New Home

**HOME**  
— SWEET —  
**HOME**

You've made it! Now it's time for you and your family to get to know your new home. You should always look around your new home first before letting the kids loose. Walk around and check the utilities and look around to see if there is anything that needs repair or your special attention. It is essential to remove or identify any dangerous situations to your children or pets and get child proofing straight away.



## Tackle Your Children's Bedrooms First

It's a good idea to tackle your child's bedroom first so they have a safe haven full of comforts to retreat to. Sorting out your child's room and filling it with familiar things can start to help them feel more secure when surrounded by unfamiliarity. If your child is older, you may want to get them involved in unpacking their things and let them help decide where things could go.



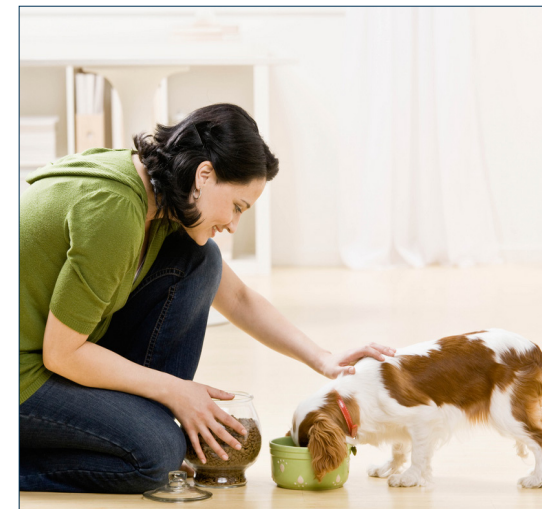
*"We made sure that the first things we had ready at the new house were our daughter's cot and a few familiar toys ready for her arrival - I can still remember the look of confusion, yet happiness when she arrived at the new house and saw her bedroom for the first time."*

Emma Button (mellowmummy.co.uk)



*"Make a plan of organisation when you enter the new home. Mine was - 1. Prepare beds for the kids so they are ready, 2. Prepare our bed. 3. Sort essentials in kitchen 4. Make sure TV is working to keep the kids amused in case of bad weather."*

Marianne Whooley (marisworld.co.uk)



## Introduce Your Pets To The New Space

Cats and dogs can feel incredibly anxious in unfamiliar surroundings so make sure you keep an eye on your pets during this time. Always make sure your pet has access to their food and water and that when they arrive at your new home they are left to settle in a quiet and safe place. It is a good idea to keep your pet indoors for a while to let them adjust to their new home and be wary of confused pets making a dash for it and getting lost.





## Maintain Normality And Traditions

While a little chaos is to be expected, re-establishing your families' normal daily routines is really important in making the whole family feel more settled in your new home. Ensure you stick to your families' normal routines for sleeping and eating to increase feelings of stability and normality. This sense of continuity is especially important for your younger children or baby. Your little ones might not settle as easily, especially at night so surround them with familiar things as much as you can and reassure them that you are close by.



## Make It Feel Like Home

Just as you said goodbye to your old home it is time to say hello to your new one. Once you have arrived and carried out your safety checks in your new home, take your children and introduce them to each room, explaining to them what they are. If you normally hang your children's art work up, make sure you take them with you and put them up instantly to show your younger children that this can be home too. To reinforce a sense of family belonging, try and get the whole family involved and interested in helping to arrange or decorate your new home.

## Setting Down New Rules

Although you want to maintain family norms, there will be new rules and boundaries that have to be made in your new home. This is especially important if your new home presents new dangers to your children such as a busy road. Younger children may find learning new rules difficult but try to reinforce new boundaries early to keep everybody safe.

### HOUSE RULES

1. BE KIND
2. BE GRATEFUL
3. BE HONEST
4. BE RESPECTFUL
5. BE RESPONSIBLE

## Be Supportive Of Important Relationships

If it is possible, it is a good idea to let your children have a friend round to share the experience with and make it feel a little more like home. Encourage your children to stay in touch with their close friends and loved ones being left behind. This will be especially important to your older children and teenagers who will have established important relationships. They may want to spend hours online talking to friends and as long as they are being safe, try to accept this as a means of coping. Making new friends takes time; try not to rush your children and allow them to use the support from their existing relationships until they are ready to make new ones.



## Try To Be The Best Role Model You Can Be

Show your kids that you are also making an effort to make the most of your new home and surroundings. Introducing yourself to neighbours can also give you an idea of the other children living locally. Set small goals for yourself to achieve, such as introducing yourself to a new neighbour, and your child might feel more confident in making some goal for themselves. Scope out which activities or groups your children could get involved in to help them feel part of their new community and make some new friends.





## Enjoy Your New Surroundings

Once a little more settled, you could sit down with your family and plan fun family outings in your new area. Try and encourage every member of your family to come up with suggestions and you can discover together what your new area has to offer. It is important to engage your kids and show them all that your new hometown has to offer. If your children have met some new friends in your neighbourhood, encourage friends to come along too.



However your family handles the move, it is so important to let them know that you are always there for them to talk to. Encourage them to express their feelings and concerns. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to listen to them and take their worries and feelings seriously. It is important to be in contact with your child's school and other areas where they may be involved to get a sense of how they are handling things. Quality family time is really important during this period of transition. Adjustment takes time and your family will need extra special cherishing during this time.

We wish you and your family happiness, success and the very best with your move!

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