

## Ten tips for a kid-friendly move

By Erin K. Witt

With a new home, new school, new friends—and little control over any of it—moving can be a frustrating and sad for the 10 million school age American kids who move each year. But involving your child early is the key to a successful move. The more control he has over the process, the more he can enjoy the adventure of it all. Here are some ideas from *Family Fun* magazine to help ease your child's transition between your old and new homes.

**Tip #1: Fill up a new home box.** Collect all the information you can for your kids ahead of time, including maps, pictures of their new home and local brochures. The more children know about the place they're moving to, the more easily they can imagine living there. Take this idea one step further by having your child make a new-home box, a cardboard box decorated with drawings or stickers. To fill it, he can write for information from the chamber of commerce, new school or other local spots.

**Tip #2: Keep a journal.** For some kids, a move—or any big transition in their lives—can be the right time to write. Older kids will probably want their own, highly private journal, while younger kids may be more comfortable dictating their thoughts to a parent or making a scrapbook-style collection of drawings and pictures.

**Tip #3: Map it out.** Maps can help make an unknown place seem more real—and less mysterious—to kids. Once you know where you're going to be moving, hang a map of your new town on the wall and highlight key places, like your street, the school and the library. A floor plan of your new house is another good idea. Together, you and your child can study it and talk about what will go where, focusing especially on his room. You might even enlarge that floor plan on a copier and let your child draw in furniture.

**Tip #4: Make a friendship shirt.** Buy a cotton T-shirt and fabric paints or markers. Place newspaper inside the shirt to prevent colors from bleeding through. Then allow your child's friends to add their names, messages or even handprints. Allow the designs to set for at least 24 hours before washing.

**Tip #5: Send yourself some mail.** Invite your child to write his own letter welcoming you to the new home. Mail it for him a few days before you move, and slip in a special treat, such as a voucher for pizza or a movie.

**Tip #6: Read all about it.** Books that help kids see how other people handle moving may ease the process. Some good choices for little ones are Boomer's Big Day, a dog's-eye view of moving written by Constance W. McGeorge, and Goodbye House, by Frank Asch, about a little bear who says good-bye to his favorite places. Older kids may enjoy Amber House is Not Brown by Paula Danziger, an easy-reader novel about a girl who learns to cope after her best friend moves away, and Anastasia Again, a book by Lois Lowry about a girl who moves from the city to the suburbs.

**Tip #7: Assign special jobs.** For very young kids, the best place on moving day is away from the chaos with a sitter. But for older kids, having a special job—like helping haul boxes to the truck—can provide a sense of control over the move. Other ways your child can help include sweeping empty rooms, entertaining younger siblings, walking the dog or making signs for the new home (i.e. playroom, dining room) so the movers know which boxes go where.

**Tip #8: Decorate boxes.** Demystify what will happen to your child's belongings by letting him pack up and label a few boxes with his name. Even toddlers can decorate already-packed boxes of their belongings with stickers or drawings—a simple way to reassure them that their prized possessions will not be forgotten.

**Tip #8: Make your child the photographer.** On the big day, give your child a single-use camera and let him record what's going on around him. This allows him to be in control and focus on what's important to him. When you get to your new house, he can do the same, photographing his new room, the backyard swing or whatever catches his eye. Later, he can put all the photos, with captions, in a Moving Day scrapbook.

**Tip #10: Celebrate your arrival.** As soon as you step over the threshold of your new home, do something to mark this momentous occasion. Make a toast with sparkling cider or put on some music and dance around. In other words, help your kids see this as the beginning of a great adventure.