

## Moving with Kids

### Ken Ryerson

You've found the home of your dreams. You've spent months searching for it, made the deal, arranged the financing, and completed the paperwork. Now there's just one thing left to do: move.

For most people, moving is a hassle. It's the last step in the long process of acquiring a new home. Whether you pack yourself or employ a moving company, it's a lot of work. Adding children to the mix can make the move more complicated.

Yet moving with kids does not have to be an ordeal. Just following a few of the following recommendations from realtors, families, and child experts can make your move much smoother.

#### *Before You Move*

For starters, think about your children when looking for your new house. Try to find features that are similar to those in your current residence. If your old place has a large yard, for example, try to get at least some kind of yard for the kids



instead of a deck. Of course some things, like that favorite tire swing that your husband hung from the oak tree, may not be able to be duplicated. But you can help your children work through this loss by pointing out new features that the old house didn't have.

You also can help your kids adjust by exciting them about your new community long before moving day arrives. "As soon as we knew where we were moving, I used the internet to research the area, in particular the activities my kids were interested in," says Terry Garcia, who relocated to Moraga from New Jersey with two grade-school girls and a toddler. "You can look up the new school, the local sports programs, the park and recreation programs, the local church or synagogue, and those sites often have links to other great sites."

Garcia gathered the information she discovered in a big binder. She took it with her and found the information valuable in helping her family settle in after the move as well.

#### *When to Move*

If your timing is flexible, try to move in June or July, a few months before school starts. This makes the transition easier, because the children have time to get to know other kids in your new neighborhood.

"We moved in the summer, but the school office was open so we arranged for a brief school tour," says Garcia. "That was a big help to our girls. After seeing

the school, which was very different from the East Coast-style school they attended previously, they had a concrete mental picture of just where they'd be going in September."

#### *How to Move*

On moving day, keep very young kids out of the way. This will make it easier for them and for you. You won't have to worry about how the little ones will interact with the furniture and the movers. And small kids won't have to experience the confusion and chaos of moving when they're too young to understand what's going on. If possible have a grandparent or friend take them for the day and deliver them to the new house once the worst of the move is done.

If young children need to be with you on moving day, excite them with something new or special. This might be a trip to a favorite park, a new stuffed toy, or a special party. Keeping them entertained and excited about change can help distract them from worries about the move.

Considerations are different for older kids, of course. They should be encouraged to help with moving as much as possible. Involvement in the process helps give them a sense of ownership in the new house and neighborhood. Some kind of small reward may also help to motivate them.

#### *After the Move*

As you start to unpack in the new house, set up the children's rooms first. The idea is to keep things as familiar as possible for them.

For example, if your kids are used to sleeping in the same room, let them continue to do so for a time to get used to the new space, even if they have separate bedrooms in the new house. Such a simple step provides children with a safe, familiar space from which to begin exploring their new world.

#### *Helping Children Adjust*

Finally, once you're unpacked, explore the new neighborhood with your children. Make it an exciting adventure to check out new stores and hiking trails. Help them get to know the community and encourage them take initiative so they will learn to adapt to the new place.

Garcia says, "While it was hard to leave good friends and familiar places behind, I kept my girls focused on the positives of our new neighborhood rather than what we missed in our old community. It sounds



Ken Ryerson

silly, but if you dwell on what was better 'back there', it is hard to move forward and make a great life 'here.'"

To help the transition, as soon as practicable get your kids involved in activities they enjoy such as swim clubs, dance classes, baseball, music, whatever they are used to. Joining a church or similar community can be a great way for kids to acclimate to a new area and meet new friends.

#### *Moving With Kids Can Be Fun*

Don't worry too much about moving with kids. Although a move can be stressful and upsetting, children usually adapt faster than the adults. The younger the better, it seems. Most of my clients have a much harder time with adjustment than do their young children. I've heard from friends that it can be hard to move pre-teen or teenage girls, who often have intricate networks of friends, but by the end of the first week of school, most young kids have several new friends. It seems that, in general, adult friendships take much longer to develop.

But having kids can help adults adjust to the new community. Get involved in your kids' social networks and invite their friends over to your home. This helps cement new friendships for your kids, and is also an excellent way to meet their parents, who may become your friends. Organize play dates, and invite the kids' new friends along on family outings. Before long, your children will be right at home in their new home and neighborhood—and so will you.

**Ken Ryerson** is a local realtor with Pacific Union Real Estate in Orinda. He is the father of a 8 year daughter and 5 year old son (both attending Los Perales Elementary in Moraga) and is thankful to have found a home that he and family will be able to live in for many years to come. If you have any questions, you can reach him at [Ken@RyersonRealty.com](mailto:Ken@RyersonRealty.com) or at 925-878-9685.