



Moving every few years is hard enough for your children—adjusting to new schools, making new friends, leaving others behind—but moving overseas throws a whole new dynamic into the mix.

Children and teens alike will wonder what their new environment will be like, if they will be able to understand people in their new home, if they will be accepted—along with all the other typical worries and concerns that come with a move. It is especially important to involve your children in the process of getting ready for the move overseas.

A Whole New World

By Bennett Leigh

Explain to your children that the students at their new school will likely be just like the students at their old one—most military dependents living overseas attend schools for American students, so that will probably be pretty consistent. And the students at their new school will all have been in the same boat at one time or another, so your child won't feel so alone.

One helpful resource to consider is the military's youth sponsorship program. Every base should have one; just check with the Youth Director on your current installation, and they will be able to put you in touch with the person in charge of the program at your new installation. The program pairs the new child with a student at their school—somewhat like a buddy system. The buddy can help your child feel more comfortable in their new environment—telling them what kids are wearing, doing and even what the teachers are like in their school.

Photo by Daniel Bosworth, courtesy britainonview



Whether your child is four or 14, saying goodbye to friends is never easy. Make or buy your child an address book to record all their friend's contact information—including e-mail. Help them take pictures of their friends for a scrapbook you can help them make once things settle down again. Technology these days makes the world seem a little smaller and more accessible, which can be comforting to your child.

Many young children worry that they will be leaving all their “stuff” behind in a move—reassure them that all the important things will be going with you, and will just be in a different house. And make sure to keep any special toys or comfort objects in a separate closet or room the packers and movers are instructed not to touch—finding out that your daughter's blanket she has to have to go to sleep is now packed away in one of 847 boxes would not be good.

And finally, talk about the things you'd like to do in your new community and all the new and exotic things that will be available for your child to do there. Imagine eating Italian food in Rome (where they just consider it “food”), or touring a Medieval castle. Or skiing in the Alps. Create some excitement about your arrival, and the journey will be more fun than work (at least where your children are concerned).

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For more information and tips on moving with children, visit

<http://www.defenselink.mil/mtom/k2.htm>

www.militarystudent.org

www.myarmylifetoo.org