



Military Moving Tips



- 1. Start planning ...but not too soon.** Some of us hear the words “orders” and start planning about a move months and months before we even know where we are going. However, most moving chores aren’t really accomplished until a couple of months before the actual move.
- 2. Create a moving binder.** During a move you are going to need paperwork more often than you ever dreamed possible. Put together a brightly colored binder with sleeve protectors that contain copies of your orders, birth certificates, social security cards, mortgage documents, rental agreements etc. It will make you feel even more organized than you already are.
- 3. Put your house on a diet.** Every house gains weight between moves. Ask yourself: *Who are we now? How much of this stuff do I want to unpack again??* Then adopt a decluttering technique like going through the house and getting rid of 10 items every day. Throw things away that are broken or used up. Collect items and have a yard sale. Make a drop off at the base thrift store or local collecting bin once a week. Think EBay, Etsy, Craigslist.
- 4. Put your washer on overdrive.** One of the nice things about a move is that you get a fresh start. It is so much nicer to start over with things that are clean. A month before you move, start washing (or taking to the cleaners) curtains, slipcovers, pillow covers. Make a staging area of your house where the newly cleaned items stay until the packers arrive.
- 5. Inventory by camera.** You could inventory everything you own—27 forks, 12, knives, 6 spoons, 182 sippy cups. Or you could fling open your cabinets and take pictures of what you own. You can do the whole house in about an hour. If you need to make a claim, a photo is hard to dispute.

6. Giant Ziplocks are your new best friend. Packers have a habit of grabbing whatever small items are in a drawer and haphazardly putting them in boxes. When you get to your new place, you have to resort everything as well as unpack it. Save yourself some time by dumping anything small and already sorted into giant ziplocks. Think silverware, spices, kitchen utensils, markers, pencils, toy bins.

7. Little Ziplocks are an even better friend. Nothing gets lost quicker than the hardware that keeps beds together. Use little ziplocks to tape hardware from beds to bedframes so they all arrive together. This works for cords and curtain rings, too. Use a Sharpie to note what the items are and where they go.

8. Take a picture of the back of your TV. Remembering how everything gets plugged in to the TV is a hassle—and you will forget which cord goes with which device. Take a picture and eliminate the mystery.

9. Go liquid free. Once the packers arrive, a giant stack of liquid items will appear in your kitchen. Liquids and chemicals don't move. You know that. But it still hurts to see hundreds of dollars in liquids get thrown away. In the months before you leave, don't buy a new bottle of vanilla, a pricey shampoo, a gallon of fabric softener. Instead, make it a game to make do with what you have. Also, switch to the powder form of detergents.

10. Don't move boxes from your previous move. The number rule tip professional organizers like to give is: if you haven't used an item in two years, you don't need it anymore. Since military families move every 2.5 years, this means that if you haven't used an item in your current house, you are probably not going to need it in your next house. This especially applies to those brown cardboard boxes of stuff from the past four duty stations that you never unpacked. Let 'em go. (Unless you are moving away from Okinawa or Hawaii or Florida—then you really are going to need your winter coats.)

11. Beg for a playdate. You are much more likely to have friends offer to keep your kids when you are moving out than when you are moving in. Not only should you say yes to any offers of help with your kids, but you should actively ask for help on moving days. People are willing.

12. Packers are more important than movers. Most people focus their efforts on the movers. Movers can be picked up off the street on the day of a move. Packers are the experienced professional. They can make sure your breakable stuff has the best chance of arriving unbroken. Learn their names. Offer to run out and get them a lunch. Praise the nice job that they are doing—and they typically do a nicer job.

13. Remember you can “fire” your movers. If something seems to be going very, very wrong on your move (movers are fighting, things are getting damaged, movers are doing crack in your bathroom) call the transportation office. They will send a representative over to sort things out.

14. Throw out your toilet brush. Some items just aren’t as much a part of the family when you get to the new place as they were at the old place. The toilet brush is one of those. Old mops and brooms that have become, well, less that their former selves need to be used one last time at the old place.

15. Don’t let your “First Day” box go on the truck. Civilians pack a box for the first day of the move. It is supposed to contain all the things they will need immediately at the new house. That’s nice if you control what goes on and off the truck and when. We don’t. So think through that first day and make a list of the things you are going to buy before you arrive at your new house: toilet paper, papertowels, handsoap, cleaners, toilet brush, broom, mop, drinks and snacks. Then pack an extra bag (not a box, boxes are a struggle during the move) with sheets and towels. Forget pots, pans and dishes. This is a time for takeout. Or peanut butter.

16. Divide the kids and the cleaning. After the move, your house has to be cleaned. This is nearly impossible with kids and pets underfoot. Kids are anxious and needy during a move—just like their parents. So have one partner take the kids and pets to the hotel and put the other partner in charge of the final cleaning. Consider hiring a local cleaner because they often understand the requirements of the housing office better than you do.

17. Play CSI with your new place. Take photos of your new empty house before you move in. It is easier to document the damage to the carpet if you take your pictures now. This can be a good job for a preteen or teen.

18. Take time to preclean the new bathroom and kitchen. Yes, yes, the previous tenants were supposed to remove all physical evidence that they ever lived in your new place. They never do. Allow enough time to clean before the movers arrive with all your stuff. It makes the unpacking go easier.

19. Only open one box at a time. It is easy to open a box, decide you have no idea where all that stuff is going, and then move on to the next box. That’s a good way to end up with half unpacked boxes everywhere and a nervous breakdown like you have never seen before. Resolve that once you open a box, you will empty it completely then break down the box.

20. How many boxes per hour? Boxes can get overwhelming. Race yourself to see how many boxes you can unpack in an hour. Or tell your kids that you are going to work together to unpack these four boxes then go to the new park. Keep moving forward.

21. Find five reasons that this is a positive move. Human beings do not like change, we get that. You have to make yourself focus on what is good about this move. Is it a promotion for your service member? Are you moving to a better house? Are you glad to be rid of the neighbor who leaves his ratty car parked in front of your house? Find something to love.

And remember, WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE. For the sacrifices that your families make and for all that is involved with your military career. Our network goes beyond the clients we have served or the agents we have worked with and it includes our communities and service organizations that are all comprised of people who support and would help our military! If you need something during the process of your next move – even if not using us as your Realtor, please reach out to us so that we can put you in contact with the appropriate person / company / organization.

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