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Our Complete Guide to Real Estate with Kids

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A Note From Allison

My name is Allison and I am one of the lead agents on The Goodhart Group. As a Realtor and mom of two little boys, I've pretty much seen it all in regards to what to look for in a house when you have or are expecting to have children in the near future. Many of the articles in this guide were written by me at different stages of motherhood, from navigating the raw early days with a newborn, to having a toddler while being pregnant, and then as a mom of two.

At each phase, I have re-evaluated the things that are important to me and shared them here for your consideration. For the stages I have not yet gone through, I've enlisted the help of my business partner (and also my mom and grandmother to my kids!), Sue, as well as another mom on our team.

Please keep in mind that these insights are from our own personal experiences, coupled with the experiences our clients have had as they've had kids and bought and sold houses. We've had clients buy homes thinking they want one thing, soon to find their priorities shift dramatically once they have a baby (or additional children). We've heard a million reasons why homes work or don't work for families. We're here to help you avoid the most common pitfalls we see when families move.

However, please remember a few things as you read through this compilation. No two experiences are the same. We all have different priorities and values. But, there are many shared experiences and similarities we've heard throughout the years. This guide outlines these experiences with you to consider as you make the decisions about what will be best for YOU, your family and your children as they grow.

If you have any questions at all about what is (or isn't) covered in this guide, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at allison@thegoodhartgroup.com. I'd also encourage you to look at our blog at thegoodhartgroup.com/our-blog/ for articles on local daycares, family friendly restaurants, parks and playgrounds and more.

Best,

Allison



Buying with a Baby

By Sue Goodhart

If you're expecting, here's how to make sure your new home is ready for the baby!

Buying a new home is an enormous and stressful decision at any time. But, if you're buying with a baby, young kids or have plans for children soon, it's a whole new ball game!

You still have the four basic considerations – location, size, condition, and price – but you need to consider a few more factors for your short term and long term plans.

Whether you are a first-time buyer or move-up buyer, keeping the following in mind BEFORE you buy will keep you from losing (even more!) sleep:

10 CRUCIAL THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING WITH A BABY

SPACE.

Babies need SPACE. Well, not so much the baby, but the baby STUFF. Lots of space! If the baby is not in your arms or their crib, where will that adorable baby be? Is there room for them to learn to crawl or walk or is all of the space in use?

Think about how much space each item take up. Where will the highchair or playpen be placed? Where will the stroller be stored when not in use? I have lots of buyers with babies or planning for babies in love with neighborhoods like Old Town, Del Ray, Logan Circle, and Capitol Hill (among others) so space is a very

important issue. The charming historic homes in those areas were not designed with the modern family in mind.

LAUNDRY AND BATHROOMS.

Bathrooms are one of the key things buyers overlook. Two things to consider here. 1) You want a bathroom on the main living level of your home as you work on potty training. 2) You will be giving baths, so even though the walk-in showers with glass doors are all the rage, make sure there's at least one tub!

VISITORS.

Will grandparents come to visit once the baby is born? Many times, helpful parents will come visit. Will you want them to stay longer? A baby can be incredibly exhausting. Having a third bedroom or space for a pull-out couch for a helpful grandparent or aunt might be helpful. Think about future childcare as well. Will you eventually need a room for a nanny or au pair?

FUTURE WORK AND FAMILY PLANS.

That extra bedroom or "bonus room" can also come in handy if you are planning to have another child in the near future. Until then, it can also be nice office space if you are planning to work from home more often while your kids are young.

PARKING.

With a baby and small children, consider what you will do if there is no dedicated parking at your new home. If you are grocery

shopping and come home laden with bags and your baby, will you have to worry about where to park? Will dedicated parking give you peace of mind? How far away is the dedicated parking? It's definitely something to consider.

STAIRS.

Similarly, consider the entry to your house or condo building. Is it stroller friendly? Or, do you need to climb 10 steps to get in? Believe me, you do not want to be carrying the baby, diaper bag, stroller, and other items up and down the stairs multiple times each day.

OUTDOOR SPACE.

Think past the first year and to when your baby has learned how to walk (and run!). What about going outside when the toddler has "wheels" and their little feet are constantly moving? Would you rather open the door to the backyard for them to play or pack up to go to the park? Will you someday want a playset in your backyard or room for pickup soccer games? Or would you prefer going to the neighborhood park with others?

COMMUTE.

Consider your commute now that you have a baby. More time in the car or on the Metro means less time with your family. Or perhaps moving further out to gain more space and a yard is more important than your commute right now. Either option is valid. Think about what works for you and your family.

SAFETY.

With babies and small children, any and all safety concerns should remain top of mind. Is your dream house on the busy road worth it? Would you consider a home with a pool? Can you live in a house with your child's bedroom on a different level?

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS.

Then there is the school issue – public or private? Will your child walk to school or take the bus? Maybe you will drive them or want a neighborhood with lots of kids in their future school so you can carpool. Do your homework now on all of the school options; those elementary school years will be here before you know it.

AS YOUR BABY GROWS...

Little kids grow up and so do their friends. They will take up more physical space in the home. So be sure the home you choose has the family-friendly floor plan you seek and room to grow – at least for the next several years.



Life with a Newborn: What You Need in Your Home

By Allison Goodhart

Before bringing a newborn home, there are so many things to consider! Chief among them is housing. Is it time to buy your first home? Should you leave the city and go to the suburbs? How much space do you really need with a baby? Do you need to move-up or can you make do in your current living situation? The answer depends on so many factors. The truth is – although your life is completely different once your little bundle of joy arrives, there isn't too much that needs to change in the first few months with a baby. Based on my experience as a mom to a toddler and as a Realtor who has helped many clients through this life transition, I've outlined my suggestions for things to consider when making this decision.

BABY'S NURSERY – AND YOUR BEDROOM SET UP

When you're expecting your first child, one of the most fun things to do is it plan and set up your baby's nursery. We had ours ready months in advance. However, looking back the nursery really isn't necessary until you move your baby out of your room. The AAP now recommends that you keep your baby in your room "ideally for a year, but at least for six months to reduce the risk of SIDS". Of course, I know people who never kept their baby in their room and others who kept their babies with them for years!

We kept Brooks (pictured below) in our room with us for four months, which worked well. For Wesley, who is now two, we had a changing station for diapers and a chair to rock him in



our bedroom (as well as in the nursery) to make things easier for us in the middle of the night.

How long you keep your baby in your bedroom with you is an incredibly personal choice, but it's important to consider when thinking about your housing decisions. You certainly could live in a 1BR apartment with your baby for quite some time (as long as other conditions discussed below are met), so never feel that you need to move and have everything done well before the baby is born if there are other factors that make it more appealing for you to stay put.

Housing Takeaway: Make sure there is space in your bedroom for a bassinet as pediatricians recommend babies sleep in their parents' room at first. A dedicated nursery is nice, but not needed immediately. When you do move your baby to their own room, you will want it to be convenient to yours (ideally on the same level) as you will more than likely be making frequent nighttime visits to your baby's room! SAY GOODBYE TO FIDO (FOR NOW)

YOUR RECOVERY SPACE

After 24 hours of labor, an emergency C-Section, and four days in the hospital, my husband Doug and I brought our baby home from the hospital to our historic townhouse in Old Town, Alexandria. I was tired just looking at the steep stairs leading to our front door! Needless to say, the newborn days with my son Brooks were some of the most exciting and most exhausting of my life. The days seemed both incredibly long and incredibly

short all at once since everything is so new.

One thing I would recommend to every new mom (and dad) is to have a "recovery space" with a comfortable couch or chair for you to hang out with your baby (and any visitors), watch TV and relax, that is convenient to both the kitchen and a bathroom. You will also probably want to set up a little area where you can quickly change diapers in this space as well. Just a basket with the supplies (or even having the diaper bag nearby) and a place to dispose of the diapers will do!

Housing Takeaway: You want a space to set up where you can spend most of the day those first few weeks without going up and down the steps, especially if you have a C-section. A bathroom and a kitchen on the same level is key.

THE BABY STUFF

One thing many new parents underestimate is all of the STUFF that they acquire with a newborn. From rock 'n play's (lifesavers), to baby bouncers, baby bjorns, dock a tots (highly recommend), and strollers, there is a lot to store! Make sure you carefully consider if you have room to use these items and also where you will store them when they aren't in use.

If you are planning to stay put in a small space while you have a newborn, I recommend having a plan of when you hope to move to your larger space. Many of the "accessories" aren't used in the first 3-6 months, so if you are planning on making a move quickly, you can definitely make do.

The biggest thing to consider is where you will store your stroller. Is there space to bring it inside? Will it stay outside? How will you protect it from the rain? Do you need to haul it up and downstairs while carrying your baby?

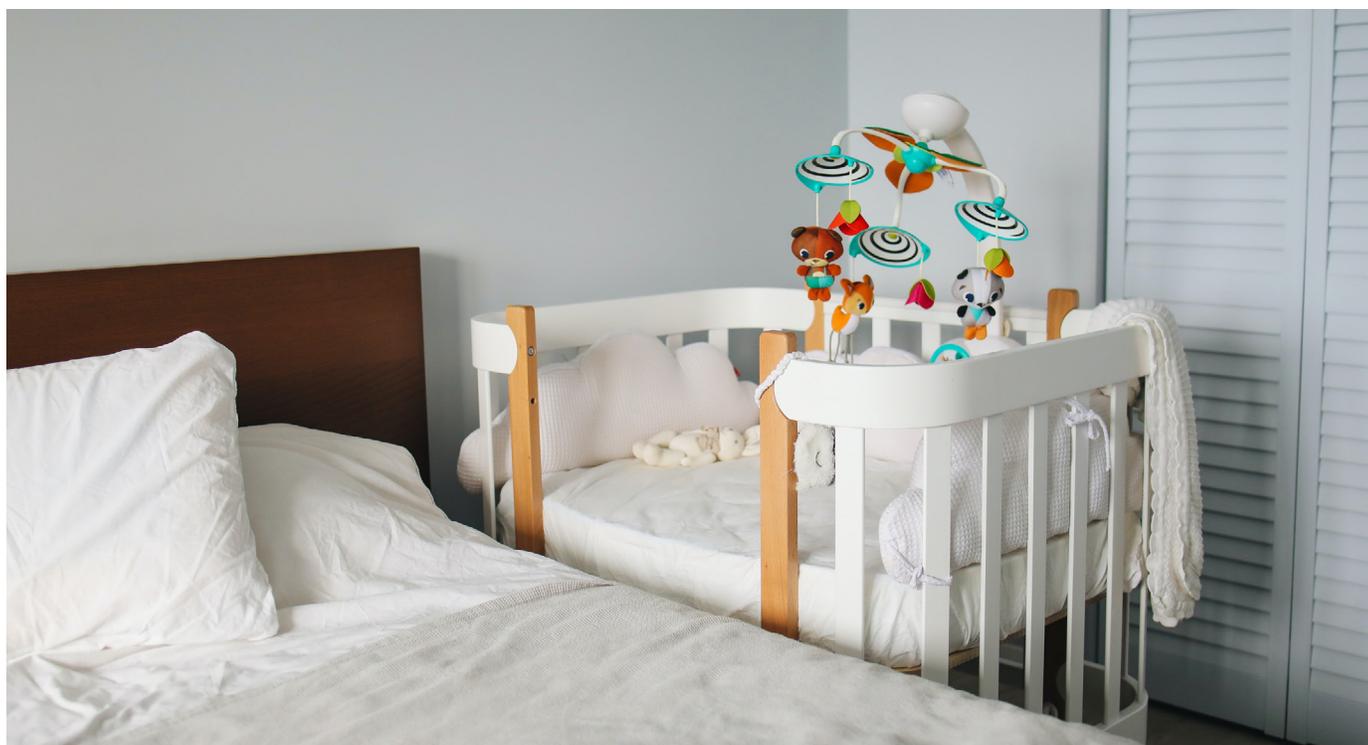
Housing Takeaway: While you don't need to indulge in all of the baby accessories on the market, having some of them will make your life easier. Make sure you have room to store these items, especially your stroller! You will also not want to haul your stroller up and down flights of stairs which makes walk-up condos a challenge for most newborn parents.

YOUR WELL BEING

In order to be a good parent, you need to make sure you're taking care of yourself. Consider what makes you happy in your

house or neighborhood. Are you willing to sacrifice on space and baby accessories in order to be able to have a walkable lifestyle? Would you rather have a 5BR home to allow for guests and some peace and quiet? Do you want room for in-laws and friends to stay with you when they visit, or would you prefer them to be in a nearby hotel?

For me, being in a walkable neighborhood where I could easily get out and about was key to my happiness. I loved being able to go on daily walks with my baby when I was home on maternity leave. We often went out to lunch together or we popped into the office for some adult conversation when I was feeling lonely. This was especially important to me since I had a C-section and was not cleared to drive for 6 weeks, so we happily walked everywhere during that time! I was willing to sacrifice not having a lot of extra space for visitors to stay with us or to have all of the latest and greatest baby accessories.



Housing Takeaway: Weigh the importance of space and walkability. This is a personal decision – which is more important to you?

PARKING

Once I was able to drive, I realized how much nicer it would have been to have dedicated parking. Often, I would have to put on my flashers to drop off groceries or other items at my front door, get back in the car and drive a couple of blocks to park the car, then walk back to the house carrying the baby in his heavy car seat. This would have been more difficult if we lived on a busier street, in a condo where I couldn't put the items I dropped off inside, or if I was concerned about theft.

Housing Takeaway: Dedicated parking is something that will make your life a lot easier!

NOISE

Though I loved being in an urban location with a newborn, I will point out a major negative – the noise factor. If you live in a condo building, in close quarters to others, or in a location where you often hear sirens, planes or other outside noise, know that if you or your baby sleeps lightly, this could become an issue for you. Sleep in those first few months is so elusive – you want to be sure when you can sleep – you stay asleep! This also goes both ways – consider whether or not your neighbors will be able to hear your crying baby in the middle of the night

Housing Takeaway: Note that noise from neighbors or your neighborhood can also be a concern with a newborn.

APPLIANCES

You will have many loads of laundry with a newborn baby, so I highly recommend having your own washer and dryer that is easy to access. The last thing you will want to do is go to a basement communal laundry room when you have a newborn! If you will eventually transition to feeding your baby bottles, I would also recommend having a dishwasher that has a sterilization mode on it. Sure, you can get a countertop appliance that will do this as well, but with all of the other “stuff” the baby will require, this is an easier and cleaner looking option if you are already planning to replace yours!



Housing Takeaway: A washer and dryer is critical. A dishwasher with sterilization mode is nice to have as well if you're in the market for an upgrade.

All in all, not much needs to change with a newborn. Most people can make their current living situation work. For the first six or so months, your baby will not be very mobile so will not need a lot of room to roam around and childproofing is not yet a concern. Your baby will also not need his or her own dedicated nursery for several months either. However, considering the following recommendations for your living situation will make your life a heck of a lot easier.

1. Extra space in your bedroom for a bassinet and a changing station. Once your baby leaves your room, nursery on the same level as your room.
2. A hangout space on the same level (and convenient to) the kitchen and a bathroom.
3. Storage for baby items – especially the stroller (and you will not want to lug the stroller up and down a lot of stairs)
4. A washer and dryer is important. A dishwasher with sterilization mode is a “nice to have” as well.
5. If you will need extra help, it's also nice to have space for in-laws or friends to visit, or

for a night nurse.

6. Being able to walk somewhere from your house might be helpful for your well-being, especially if you have a c-section and cannot drive for several weeks. A neighborhood with sidewalks is preferred!

7. Dedicated parking is always a plus.

8. Consider if outside noise is an issue.

Again, not all of these items are critical, but will make your life easier. The more complicated stage where you may need to make a housing adjustment is when your baby becomes mobile.





Life with a Toddler: What You Need in Your Home

By Allison Goodhart

As your newborn turns into a toddler, your life and your housing needs get a little more complicated! He or she will become a lot more mobile and start taking up more space in your house. Many of the items discussed in our newborn blog will still apply while others become less important. For example, noise becomes less of a concern as your baby starts sleeping longer and deeper (yay!). Having a convenient washer/dryer will remain critical throughout your baby's life – there's no going back now! However, the below considerations do change a bit as your child grows.

BEDROOMS: HOW MANY YOU NEED & WHERE THEY SHOULD BE

In the newborn article, we discussed that having a nursery right away isn't critical since the baby starts out in your room. As your baby gets older, however, it becomes less important to have extra space in your room for a bassinet and more important for you to have a dedicated nursery for your baby.

Nurseries don't need to be large – a crib, a changing table, and a chair are the only necessities. However, as your baby becomes a toddler, having space in your nursery for your child to play – or for you to store some toys – is a definite plus.

When your baby becomes mobile, it also becomes harder to multi-task as all of your attention is on making sure they don't hurt themselves! If you try to work from home but don't have a dedicated office space, now is the time to consider one. The ideal scenario is

having a bedroom or den that can serve as an office which is away from your children's play area, but even a dedicated desk area within another room will help. When I try to work from my laptop in our family room, my toddler Brooks now climbs onto the couch and closes the screen or tries to type away on his own. Having my own office has been a lifesaver for me, especially since my workday doesn't end at 5 pm!

The other thing to consider is an in-law or au-pair suite. As their babies grow older, we've had many clients decide to get a live-in nanny for extra help. Others have grandparents, aunts and uncles wanting to visit more often as the babies become more fun to play with at this stage as well! We've also seen a recent trend of grandparents relocating into the area or buying a second home here so they can see their grandchild more frequently or even act as the child's nanny. PS – If you have family moving into the area, we're happy to help them too!

You should also consider your plans for more children in the future when deciding how many bedrooms you will need in your next home or how long you can stay in your current one.

Lastly, consider the locations of each of your bedrooms. Are you okay with having one (or more) child on another level from you or at the end of a long hallway? Would you prefer it? Are the bedrooms too close to the living space if they are on the same floor? Will you wake them up? Think through the pros and cons of each arrangement.

BATHROOMS: THINK TUB & LOCATION (POTTY TRAINING IS ON THE HORIZON!)

Two main things to consider here. The first is a tub. Before the toddler phase, you may have been able to get away with bathing your baby in the sink or in a baby tub. Once they hit a certain size though, you need to make sure your home has a bathroom with a tub. While this may seem obvious, the recent trend of glass-encased showers has meant many people getting rid of all the tubs in their homes – so don't forget to make this a priority.

The second thing to consider is potty training. Most children are ready for potty training around 18-24 months. When your child is ready for this stage, you will definitely want to have a bathroom on each level of your home so they can easily get to the bathroom when it's time to go! You may also want to make sure your primary bathrooms have enough room for a mini potty training toilet if you decide you want to use one.

MORE (AND SAFER) HANGOUT SPACE FOR EXPLORING TODDLERS & THEIR STUFF!

The actual proximity of your primary hangout space (living or family room) to the kitchen and the bathroom is still important at this stage. Around a year old, your baby may be walking or at least exploring a lot, so you will need a lot more space than you did at the newborn phase. They are also more difficult to entertain, so a space where you can have or store a variety of toys is critical. A basement or

an open room off the kitchen is ideal. Bonus if there is built-in storage! As I mentioned above, around eighteen months to two years your baby will be ready to start potty training and a bathroom on the level where you spend the most time is going to be super important.

Sidenote on storage – make sure there is somewhere in your house to store your child’s stroller and keep it safe from the rain, cold temperatures and bugs/animals. While many of these tips are already top of mind for many parents, this is one we see people forget time and time again since private garages are so rare in our area! That being said, if a garage is an option, go for it! Having a garage or a mudroom will be so helpful as your child grows up.

Related to the hangout space is baby-proofing! Wherever you spend the most time should be completely baby-proofed for your own sanity so you don’t need to be constantly running after your child. This means removing or securing anything breakable or items that are likely to fall on your baby, putting plugs in electrical outlets, ideally hiding any electrical wires (they love to pull them and try to eat them!), securing any cabinets, protecting your fireplace (probably removing the fireplace tools) and blocking off any staircases. This was actually a lot more difficult at our Old Town townhouse than I anticipated – turned out Brooks was able to get himself into everything! Of course, if your toddler is able to open doors, this also means childproofing those exterior doors so they don’t get out into the street or into a pool if you have one.



OUTDOOR SPACE: CRITICAL TO BOTH TODDLER & PARENT SANITY!

Speaking of the outdoors and outdoor space – you will want some! Your child will have a lot of energy in this phase and being able to let him or her run around outside and burn off steam before bedtime or naptime is fabulous. While they may or may not be ready to enjoy a swing set (some may be), they all love to run around and play. Ideally, your outside space would not be right on a busy road and would be fully fenced to keep your child as safe as possible. If you are a condo person and outside space isn’t an option, consider moving somewhere within a quick walk to the park.

Outside space is not just for your toddler's benefit – it's also for yours! You will love having outdoor space as well & here's why (aside from the obvious). In the newborn phase, it's much easier to bring your little one with you and let them sleep in their car seat at or under your dinner table. If you're like my husband and I and love to go out to eat or get out of the house, I have bad news for your future toddler phase. Toddlers typically go to bed fairly early and are too large for the portable car seat, which means you are locked down at home from 7 pm on! In the warm weather months, it's nice to be able to BBQ outside or have friends over once your little one is sound asleep. I've never been much for sitting around at home so having some outdoor space to hang out in has been invaluable!

MEAL TIMES: MAKE ROOM FOR THE HIGH CHAIR!

Think carefully about how you and your family spend meal times. Do you go out to eat for every meal? Do you eat in front of the TV in your family room? Do you envision yourselves around a kitchen island? Do you prefer a cozy breakfast nook or a formal dining room table? Our friends and clients all have different expectations for how mealtimes will be spent. Think about your priorities and make sure there is a natural space for the high chair (and the rest of the family) in that environment.

You'll also want to think about who will be present for your child's meal times once your baby transitions to three meals a day. Will you all eat together as a family for breakfast and dinner when your child is young or will only one parent or a nanny be feeding your toddler before you eat your meal? Remember that toddlers go to sleep early so while you may have envisioned family meals together at this age, one or both parents might not yet be back from work at your child's dinner time. Think all of this through before determining what the best set-up is in your home or future home.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: THE THREE THINGS TO CONSIDER

To me, those three words are key. They ultimately decide (along with your budget) the type of property you will be living in. Location determines if you will be able to walk to restaurants, grocery stores or daycare/



school* or if you will have off-street parking. It dictates how long your commute or the commute of your spouse will be. So, how important are these things when you have a toddler?

WALKABILITY: While everyone's priorities are different, my takeaway is that walkability is much more important at the newborn phase than at the toddler phase because newborns are much more portable than toddlers. When Brooks was a newborn, we took him out to dinner with us almost every night. He slept quietly in his stroller or carseat near the table. Once he became a toddler – forget it! We still take him out to eat on occasion, but we have to come prepared with lots of distractions for him to keep him in his high chair playing nicely. We also now have to go out much earlier so he is back home to bed at a reasonable time.

PARKING: I will argue that parking is always important with a child. There's nothing like being able to pull up to your house or condo building and know exactly where you will park. When we lived in Old Town we didn't have off-street parking and circling the block with a crying child and then trying to carry him and my groceries (or even just my purse and diaper bag) several blocks was never pleasant! However, I was willing to sacrifice this at the time for walkability.

COMMUTE: Commute also becomes more important as your newborn transitions into toddler-hood. They have a set schedule and go to bed early, so we've found that most of our clients try to get home by 5 or 6 pm so they have 30 minutes to an hour with their

child before putting them to sleep. The further away you work, the less time you will get to spend with your baby. Or, perhaps moving further out to gain more space and a yard is more important than your commute right now. Either option is valid. Think about what works for you and your family.

* Note: Think about how long you will be in your next home. Will public schools be a factor? If so – just elementary or will you need to consider middle or high school as well? . What you will want to consider now though is your childcare costs – will you be spending more money soon for pre-school? Factor all of these costs into your decisions on how much you can afford.

IN SUMMARY, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO LIFESTYLE

Where you decide to call home ultimately comes down to lifestyle choices.

Do you want a larger home to make your life at home easier? Or do you prefer to be close to the action with a smaller place and spend more time at parks and restaurants and less time at home?

Will you be walking everywhere with your toddler or do you need dedicated parking?

Are you happy with a nearby park or do you want to open the door to let your child roam?

Do you have future plans for an au-pair, live in in-laws or multiple children? Build that into your planning.

When thinking about where to live with a toddler, there is so much to consider and it all depends on your own personal situation. There is no right or wrong answer, but following the tips above can definitely help make life easier!



Selling a Home Where Kids Still Roam: Our Top Tips

By Allison Goodhart

Selling a home always creates a fair amount of stress for our clients. Even the smoothest of transactions can cause anxious moments. Throw children into the equation and look out! Having gone through this process recently, we thought we would share our best tips for selling a home when kids are underfoot.

Prepping Your Home for Sale

- Long before your home goes on the market, take these important steps for successfully selling a home where children have clearly lived.
- PURGE! Now is the time to give away, donate, or sell toys and clothes your kids have outgrown.
- Pare down to just the necessary toys and books for everyday use. Put the rest in storage.
- Try to keep kids' things in only one room of the house, ideally a basement room or dedicated playroom.
- Paint kids' rooms a neutral color. Potential buyers won't want to see your adorable murals or stenciling.
- Take down your family photos. As cute as your kids may be, potential buyers need to picture themselves in your home, not your family. Replace your photos with generic artwork and make sure family photos are not visible online.
- Store outdoor toys in the garage or at a neighbor's house. Be sure to round up any balls and toys laying around the yard.



- Clean, clean, clean! Stock up on Mr. Clean Magic Erasers, Goo Gone, and Kids 'N' Pets carpet cleaner. Invest in a professional deep cleaning - it's worth every penny.

Showings with Kids

Now that your home is on the market, you need to prepare for showings and open houses. Not easy with kids! Below are our best tips for preparing for showings to sell a home when kids are underfoot.

- Invest in bins into which you can quickly throw clothes, toys, books, art supplies, etc. before showings. Store these bins in your car, under beds, and in closets.
- Plan to be out of the house the first weekend your home is on the market, which is when most of the showings will occur. It's much easier to leave your home for a stretch in show-ready condition than to remain in the house where you'll have to keep it spotless for several days. Use the opportunity to visit friends or family, or travel to a destination you've always wanted to see.
- Make a showing schedule. For example, pick two nights when your family has an activity (say, soccer practice or ballet) and plan to go out to dinner those nights so you're out of the house for several hours. Let your Realtor know those are the best nights for showings.
- For all other showings, request two

hours' notice (any longer is off-putting to potential buyers).

- When a showing is scheduled, keep the kids in one room while you prepare the house, then go to the park, grocery store, or friend's house until the showing is over.
- Be flexible with nap times...babies may have to nap in the car!

The Bottom Line

Selling a home when you must deal with kids is not easy, but it can be done! With some preparation, patience, and flexibility, you can quickly and easily sell your home for top dollar.



Moving with Kids

By Susan Doyle

When I moved with my (then) 3 year old and 10 month old eleven years ago, I swore I would never do it again! While they were awfully cute back then, moving with them at those ages caused me to just about lose my mind. As I relayed my experience in passing at the office, we all agreed our clients and friends could benefit from my mistakes and misadventures of moving with kids. So, here it goes!

Soon after our daughter was born, we realized that our children could not share their tiny bedroom for long. We also knew we had to start thinking about elementary school options, which was quickly approaching. So we made a local move from our starter townhouse in a commuter neighborhood to a single family home in a very family-friendly neighborhood. While we only moved 20 minutes away, it was quite the ordeal. Here are some tips and lessons learned to make your time moving with kids just a little bit easier...

BEFORE THE MOVE

- Document and celebrate the home you are leaving. While my husband and I have many fond memories of our first home, our kids don't really have any. So be sure to take pictures of the home (inside and out) that you are leaving, especially

if your children are very young. Consider having some sort of farewell party leading up to the move, so the kids (and parents!) can say a proper goodbye to the house, neighborhood, and cherished friends.

- Try to introduce your children to their new house and neighborhood well in advance of your actual move. Take some trips to the new place and scope out local shops, parks, and kid-friendly destinations. When we moved, the whole family went to the home inspection (don't worry - the kids didn't stay long). While my husband toured the home with the inspector, I took the kids to the neighborhood playground, where I got talking to another mom, with



kids almost the exact same ages as mine. Turns out, our three year olds were signed up for same preschool class! This lovely, welcoming woman soon became one of my closest neighborhood friends.

- Assign age-appropriate moving chores/tasks to your children. Younger children can pack up their toys and stuffed animals. Elementary school aged kids can label boxes. Have older children get online and research options for their sports and activities near your new home.
- When packing, use different colors (use each child's favorite color for all of their items/boxes), labels, and even picture labels This way, the little ones can stay organized and perhaps even put things away themselves, which will in turn take a bit of the stress off the parents.
- Help your children become invested in their new home. Allow them to choose their bedrooms (well, maybe) and paint colors (within reason!). If you need a playset for your new yard or perhaps you finally have space for that trampoline or air hockey table, allow them to help you shop for them. Involve your kids in setting up their playroom or space.
- When packing, make sure all boxes are clearly labeled -- especially the kids' items and clothes, as those items

will be the first boxes you will want once in the your new home. Use this packing time as an opportunity to PURGE. Moving is a fabulous time to say goodbye to any outgrown toys and clothes. Donate any duplicate household items and/or things that do not have a place in your new home. If your child is close to outgrowing a big item like an exersaucer or changing table,



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use the move as an opportunity to give it away.

- Pack a small travel bag for each child as if you are going away for a weekend. Ensure you have everything you need for two full days (think diapers, favorite toys, sippy cups, cherished books, go-to outfits/PJs/shoes and any needed formula or medicines). With this bag, you won't need to hunt through countless boxes for what you need right away.

THE ACTUAL MOVE

- Rule #1 - ENLIST HELP! If you have local family members, ask them to help you at least the day of the actual move. If possible, secure help for other days before and after moving day for the (un)packing process. If you don't have family nearby that can help, ask some close friends to pitch in. Barter childcare if need be! My mother came up from Florida to help during our move and I am eternally grateful to her. She was a tremendous help in keeping the kids occupied and entertained while my husband and I hauled boxes and unpacked.



- If at all possible, spread out your move over a few days. As soon as you settle and have your keys, make some pre-move trips to the new house. Bring any items you can carry and live without for a few days. Perhaps aim to have one room completely set up before the move itself. It will make the actual moving day that much easier and quicker.
- Pack a cooler of cold drinks and healthy, kid-friendly snacks to help fortify the whole family throughout the day. You will not want to run to your new grocery store with kids in tow in the middle of all the chaos.
- Once you are in the new home and unpacked, save at least a few of your larger moving boxes. They make fabulous forts and spaceships to be played in during those early days in the new house. Allow your kids to decorate them with paint and markers to give you some quiet and/or unpacking time.
- One of the biggest hassles I recall from our move was transferring / setting up our utilities. Granted, our move was in the days before iPhones, so I had to make all of these calls from our chaotic new home with two small children. In hindsight, I should have delegated this task to my husband, who could have more easily handled all of the calls and emails from his office.

One of my fond memories of this move was when we were brought a pitcher of cold lemonade (much needed on a sweltering July day!) and some fresh bread by various new neighbors. We were so touched by the kind gestures; they seemed to make the pain of the move lessen significantly. We knew right away we had landed in the perfect neighborhood for us. The good news is that we feel just as strongly 11 years later.





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