



Making a Military Move More Stress Free (Really)

Resource

Version 1.0

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Permanent change of station (PCS), military-speak for it's time to pack up your household goods and move. Just those three little letters can strike fear, loathing, dread, and even depression in the hearts of the heartiest military spouses. It is, after all, a colossal undertaking to manage all the things that come with moving a family from one place to the next: from researching new neighborhoods and good schools to figuring out travel plans and arranging the countless steps needed to make the transition successful—all while balancing the everyday life events that don't come to a halt just because the military has decided it's time for you to move. If you're looking for a great resource to help you plan and execute a smooth PCS, we highly encourage you to check out Powerhouse's free [PCS/Move Binder](#). Several of our freelancers have used it and say it's made the process so much easier. Here, however, we're sticking strictly to tips to make the actual "move" part of your PCS work a little easier and maybe, just maybe, a little less stressful.

With many of our Powerhouse freelancers being military spouses (we probably have close to 100 PCSes under our collective belts), we decided to ask them what some of their favorite PCS tips are. One thing we know for sure? The military isn't going to stop moving its families anytime soon. So, why not browse through these tips and find some that will work the next time you receive PCS orders?

Pre-Pack-Out Day(s)

Before the movers arrive, try these tips:

- Bag all your linens in a trash bag and put a dryer sheet in the bag. The movers will just place those bags in boxes, which keeps your linens clean and smelling fresh on the other side.
- Bag all your silverware. Movers typically won't do so, but having your silverware in a bag makes it so much easier when you're unpacking.
- Bag all the clothes in your dresser and label the bags to indicate where you will put them back. Again, this step keeps your clothes protected and eliminates a little time on the other side.
- Take photos/video of all TVs, computers, and gaming systems with the units on to show proof they worked prior to your move. If anything should happen during transport, taking this precaution will make it easier when it's time to file a claim.
- Put zip-up vinyl covers on your mattresses.
- Pack items you'll need during your move in rolling suitcases, making it easier to get in and out of hotels. Consider packing one suitcase for toiletries/clothes and one for any pets you might have traveling with you.
- Roll jewelry in pillowcases to avoid tangles. Make sure to pack jewelry and firearms prior to the movers arriving. Label the box "Do Not Pack/Move" or consider placing it in a location the movers won't access.
- Pack all medications and vitamins and place them in a location the movers won't access.
- Purge! This is probably our freelancer's favorite tip. What better excuse to spend a little time each week for the months prior to a PCS going through and getting rid of all those things your family doesn't use anymore?
- Get all your family's medical appointments done for the year prior to moving. This will give you plenty of time on the other side to research and find good doctors, dentists, etc. Additionally, wait times to get in to see new providers can be lengthy, and you don't want to be without meds if you need them!
- Make a list of doctors, dentists, etc. at your current location with all their contact information and place the list in your PCS binder so you can easily locate the information whenever you need it at your next location. It's good to have a hard copy in case of technological glitches.
- Arrange for your pets to be somewhere else on pack-out day. It's stressful for our four-legged family members to experience all that chaos, and it keeps them out of the way as well.
- Invest in sturdy storage containers (even color code them based on the items they contain). Let's face it, we move a lot. It's less for the movers to pack, less for you to unpack, and just plain practical for moving important/fragile items or seasonal/category items that you want to keep together.
- Finally, designate a room or closet to keep your last-minute items. Close the door and label the space "DO NOT PACK" before the movers arrive.

Pack-Out Day

- Know that your high-value items list can be as long as you want. Add whatever and as much as you wish. Our freelancers have seen everything from wedding dresses to a kid's huge Lego stash included as high-value items!
- Identify one person to show the movers around and explain what's what. Consider labeling each room as you'd like it to be labeled on your boxes (e.g., "Kitchen," "Boys' Room," "Craft Closet"). Be sure you make a list of what you called each room and put it in your PCS binder.
- Use color! One of our freelancers goes through each room as it's packed up and uses color tape/labels on those boxes. Then, she can easily glance at a box on the other end and tell the movers what room it goes into. Be sure to write down your "color key" so you can refresh your memory whenever you receive your household goods.
- After each room is packed, face the boxes so you can see the labels and take a photo.
- Ask the movers to give you all furniture hardware (bed bolts, table bolts, etc.). Bag and label the hardware and take it with you. One of the most misplaced items in a move is furniture hardware. This way you can ensure you'll be able to sleep in your own bed the first night after receiving your goods.
- Ask the movers for a book box and fill it with trash bags, hand sanitizer, plasticware, paper plates, toilet paper, paper towels, can opener, wine opener, laundry pods, paper, pen/pencil, coffee tumblers, regular cups, etc. Label the box "DO NOT MOVE" and "OPEN FIRST" and bring it with you for those first days in your new place.
- Make sure your PCS binder is secure and out of the movers' sight so they don't pack it up. You'll want to have it at your fingertips during the move, and it's a great place to keep track of receipts on a DIY move.

Receiving Your Household Goods (HHG)

Congratulations, you've successfully made it to your next duty station! Now the fun begins. As you know, it may have been weeks or even months since you've seen your stuff. Here are some tips to make your reunion day even better:

- Have your PCS binder close (or have pre-programmed contact info in your phone) for your military PCS liaison. If you have any issues on the day you receive your HHG, you'll want this information handy.
- If possible, arrange for any pets to be gone. Because you might not trust anyone in the area yet, this might mean keeping them in a fenced backyard, in a travel kennel, or on a leash by your side.
- Label each room with the same name as your previous house (wherever possible). It'll make it easier for the movers to know which rooms to put things in.
- Identify one person to check off box numbers as the movers unload each box, one or two people to show movers where rooms are as they first start unloading (this is a perfect job for upper elementary and older kids), and one person who can roam the house as a supervisor/answer guru.

- Have water bottles, sports drinks, and/or sodas available for your movers. It's not necessary, but offering a little hospitality can go a long way toward making a hard day a little easier.
- Have movers unpack at least some of your boxes. Did you know that in a military move your movers actually have to unpack every box if you request it? While we don't necessarily advocate for every box being unpacked, consider having your movers unpack kitchen boxes and/or wardrobe boxes. They won't place items in cabinets (though most will haphazardly hang clothes still on hangers in your closet) but having your kitchen items unpacked makes organizing and putting away your kitchen go so much faster. Plus, they'll take whatever boxes they unpack with them, freeing up a little more space as you unpack your house.

Other PCS-Related Tips

- Consider a DIY or partial DIY move. They aren't as scary as some think, and they give you more control over your timeline. Often you can get settled on the other end more quickly.
- If you opt for a partial DIY, or just want more space to load things you want to take with you, reserve your moving truck early. PCS season is a madhouse in military towns, so ensure you have your reservation locked in.
- Load any rental trucks or personal trailers prior to movers showing up to make it less likely that mistakes will be made in what the movers are taking versus what you want with you.
- Try to have fun with the process. We know, PCS fun? But with a sense of humor, a lot of patience, and a just-go-with-it attitude, it can be kind of fun ending one adventure and starting the next!

**Looking for even more military spouse tips and resources?
Check out our [“Empowering the Homefront” e-magazine!](#)**