

Kids with two homes.....

Some helpful hints By Michael Grose

Keep a communication book

The first rule of shared parenting is to continue to communicate. Try keeping a communications book that your children take with them as they move between households. Both parents should list things such as homework, a visit to the doctor or any other important matters the other parent should know.

Establish Routines

Routines remove the guesswork from children's lives, enabling them to focus on playing, learning and meeting with friends. They like to know what to expect when they return to their original home. Perhaps you can serve a meal, play a game or just give them time to themselves to make the transition easier.

Make moving easy for kids

Duplicate important items, some clothes and even stuffed toys so kids feel comfortable in both places. Develop a checklist for kids and ensure they use it every time they move.

Give them a space of their own

If you can't provide them with a bedroom of their own, they should have their own cupboard to store clothes and special items.

Be rational, not emotional, when saying goodbye

Parental attitudes impact on how well kids settle into new routines. Avoid hugging your child as he leaves as if you'll never see him again. It's important that he or she doesn't bring excess emotional baggage to their other home.

Work with the other parent to have similar routines

Try to agree to basic routines and rules such as bedtime, mealtimes and TV time. This makes life easier for kids and stops them playing one parent off against the other.

Let them experience life as normal in both homes

It is common for one parent to manage the routine parenting matters, while the other provides a great deal of the fun for kids. The aim for both parents should be to balance enjoyable relationship-building activities.

Living in two households is a challenge for many kids, but one they can meet. It's easier when both parents communicate to their children that they want this arrangement to succeed, and keep the best interests of their child as their main focus.