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BOOKS

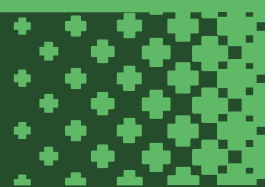


PCS CHECKLISTS

The Military Life Handbook

Smart Hacks for Service Members & Families

By Mike Sanders



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Movers

Before Movers Arrive

- ☐ Have orders, PCS binder, and inventory sheet ready.
- ☐ Set aside high-value items, passports, medications, and anything you'll hand-carry.
- ☐ Unplug, defrost, and clean the fridge/freezer at least 24 hours prior.
- ☐ Empty and clean trash cans, laundry, and dishwasher, movers will pack it as-is!
- ☐ Remove batteries from remotes, clocks, and toys if possible.
- ☐ Arrange for kids and pets to be elsewhere during the move-out.
- ☐ Walk through your home to double-check for hidden or fragile items.

While Movers Are Packing

- ☐ Be present and stay visible throughout the day.
- ☐ Point out fragile or high-value items and confirm they're marked properly.
- ☐ Watch that inventory tags match your items and note the condition.
- ☐ Ensure prohibited items (cleaning supplies, liquids, perishables) are not packed.
- ☐ Take photos of electronics, furniture, and anything valuable before it is packed.
- ☐ Keep drinks and light snacks available for movers to keep things moving smoothly.

After the Truck Is Loaded

- ☐ Do a final walkthrough with the moving crew to check all rooms, closets, and the attic.
- ☐ Verify all boxes and furniture are accounted for on the inventory sheet.
- ☐ Take photos of the packed truck and license plate for reference.
- ☐ Keep your copy of the signed inventory sheet in your PCS binder.
- ☐ Lock up and turn off lights, water, and AC/heat when leaving the house.

Vehicle Readiness

Maintenance Must-Dos

- ☐ Get a full oil change and fluid top-off (coolant, brake, transmission, windshield washer)
- ☐ Check tire tread and pressure, including the spare
- ☐ Inspect brakes for wear or noise—replace if needed
- ☐ Test your battery, especially in extreme climates (hot/cold)
- ☐ Top off or replace wiper blades, make sure the washer works
- ☐ Check headlights, brake lights, and turn signals

Emergency Kit Essentials

- ☐ Jumper cables or jump starter
- ☐ Tire repair kit or Fix-a-Flat (and a working **spare tire + jack**)
- ☐ Flashlight with fresh batteries
- ☐ First-aid kit
- ☐ Emergency blanket or poncho
- ☐ Multi-tool or small toolkit
- ☐ Duct tape and bungee cords (for quick fixes)

Packing & Prep Tips

- ☐ Balance the vehicle load for stability and fuel efficiency
- ☐ Secure large or heavy items so they don't shift or cause injury
- ☐ Keep documents easily accessible: registration, insurance, ID, PCS orders
- ☐ Print directions or use a GPS with offline capability
- ☐ Fill up with gas the night before departure

Optional but Smart

- ☐ Consider a roadside assistance membership (USAA, AAA, OnStar)
- ☐ Download the GasBuddy or Waze app for fuel and traffic info
- ☐ Take your car for a pre-trip inspection at a trusted mechanic
- ☐ Note down mechanics or dealerships along your route just in case

What to Have Ready When You Call the CTO

- ☐ **Your Official Orders**
Have a clear, legible copy of your orders available (digital and/or printed). They will need details from it to book.
- ☐ **Full Names as They Appear on ID**
For yourself and any authorized dependents traveling with you.
- ☐ **Social Security Number or DoD ID Number**
Many systems require it to confirm your travel authorization.
- ☐ **Preferred Travel Dates**
Know your report date and preferred travel day(s), plus a backup in case flights are limited.
- ☐ **Preferred Airports**
Identify your departure and destination airports (note that multiple nearby airports serve some bases).
- ☐ **Special Requests**
Note if you have specific needs:
- ☐ **Minimal connections**
- ☐ **No overnight layovers**
- ☐ **Early or late flights**
- ☐ **Traveling with pets or medical equipment**
- ☐ **Contact Information**
Provide your best phone number and email for confirmation and updates.
- ☐ **Government Travel Card (if applicable)**
Have it on hand for incidental charges if required.
- ☐ **Family Members (if applicable)**
Clarify if you're booking family on your orders or if they'll be traveling on personal expense.

International Travel Tips for Kids & Pets

For Kids

- ☐ Pack a small backpack with their favorite toys, books, and a tablet loaded with games or shows.
- ☐ Bring snacks they like. Airport food is expensive and limited.
- ☐ Include a change of clothes in case of spills or accidents.
- ☐ Pack comfort items, such as a blanket or stuffed animal.
- ☐ Encourage walking around during layovers to burn energy.
- ☐ For babies/toddlers: nurse, bottle-feed, or offer a pacifier during takeoff and landing to help with ear pressure.

Hack:

Wrap a small “surprise” toy or book to give them mid-flight when boredom kicks in.

For Pets

- ☐ Book your pet space early if flying on Patriot Express or a commercial airline, as spots are limited.
- ☐ Use an airline-approved carrier that’s well-ventilated & labeled with your info.
- ☐ Bring a small supply of food, water, and a collapsible bowl.
- ☐ Line the carrier with an absorbent pad & bring extras.
- ☐ Exercise pets before leaving for the airport to reduce anxiety.
- ☐ Keep their paperwork (health certificate, vaccination records) in your carry-on.