

## **Moving Up To Accommodate Your Growing Family**

*By J. Lennox Scott*

One of the most common reasons that people buy a new home is to accommodate their growing family. In fact, a recent study by the National Association of Home Builders said that 64 percent of respondents wished that their home was larger. Those looking for larger homes are usually couples who are starting a new family—or the family with children who are getting older and need more space. Whatever the reason, there are several factors you should take into consideration when looking for a home that will accommodate the needs of your growing family.

**Neighborhood:** Selecting which neighborhood your family will live in is one of the most important decisions when buying a home. It's helpful to drive around and tour prospective neighborhoods. It should be a neighborhood that you're comfortable living in and it should offer the amenities that are important to you, such as parks and shopping. Although you might have young children right now, your toddlers will soon be riding their bicycles around the neighborhood, so you want to ensure it's a place you feel comfortable.

**Schools:** One of the most important factors to homebuyers with children is schools. The school district alone will cause some buyers to select one neighborhood over another because it's important that their children receive a quality education. It's helpful to visit the schools in the neighborhoods you're considering; talk to the principal, teachers, and parents. You can also ask for the school's standardized test scores or look them up online. Your Realtor can also help with gathering information about local schools.

**Crime:** Another factor you should consider when buying a new home for your family is crime rates. Online sources like [www.access.wa.gov](http://www.access.wa.gov) offer information about crime statistics throughout the state. The other thing you can do is talk to residents in the neighborhoods you're considering to get their opinion on local crime. You could also stop by the nearest police station to discuss neighborhood safety first hand with local law enforcement. These resources, as well as your Realtor, can assist in determining which neighborhoods are deemed the safest for you and your family.

**Bedroom space:** If you're just starting your family, you'll want to take into consideration the number of bedrooms a home has and whether every child will have their own room or if they'll share. You might also want to consider a home with an additional bedroom that can be used for your children's study area.

**Play area:** If you have young children it's helpful to have a room where they can play, as well as a place where you can store all their toys. For your growing children, it's nice to have a separate space where they can get away with friends.

**Study areas:** As your children reach school age and need more time and space for homework, you'll want to consider where that space will be. You may decide you want a home with a separate den or one with large enough bedrooms to accommodate desks. You can also utilize an unused bedroom as a place for kids to study. Regardless, you'll want to make sure that the space is large enough for one or more desks and computer equipment.

**Bathrooms:** Your kids may not spend much time in the bathroom now, but that will change as they grow older. Make sure you consider the number of bathrooms a home has and who will be using which bathrooms in the years ahead.

**Yard:** A yard is essential when you have children, but if your next home is limited on outdoor space, try to find one near by to parks and other outdoor recreational areas. This will at least provide your family with alternative places to play outdoors.

Some of these factors are out of your control when you're looking for a new home because of budget constraints or housing availability, but it's still important to develop a list of priorities so that you're able to find a home that has what you need to accommodate your growing family.

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