

The PCS Checklist

51 steps, from the day orders drop to the travel voucher · Updated September 2026

The day orders drop

Or the day you get the RIP or assignment notification

- ☐ Read the orders line by line. Confirm the report-no-later-than date (RNLTLD), the duty station, whether dependents are authorized, and what kind of move is funded.
Errors in orders are common and every downstream entitlement is calculated from them.
- ☐ Contact the Personal Property Office at your current installation. They are also called TMO or PPSO.
As of 2026 household goods moves run through the Personal Property Activity and your installation office. The HomeSafe contract was terminated in 2025 and the replacement software is years out, so confirm the current booking process with the office rather than with an article.
- ☐ Ask the gaining installation for a sponsor.
- ☐ Look up BAH at the new station for your grade.
This number sets the ceiling on every housing decision that follows.
- ☐ Make the buy versus rent call using time on station and the local market.
If you want to buy, get in touch with a realtor before you move. You only get 10 days of house hunting when you arrive.
- ☐ Join the on-base housing wait list if you are considering it. Most lists let you join with orders in hand.
Some lists run months deep, so joining early costs nothing and preserves the option.
- ☐ Start a PCS binder or folder: orders and all amendments, medical and dental records, school records, pet vaccination records, insurance policies, and every receipt from here forward.

Money and entitlements

Start as soon as orders are in hand, finish before you move

- ☐ Learn which entitlements apply to your move: Dislocation Allowance (DLA), Temporary Lodging Expense (TLE) for moves inside the United States, Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA) for overseas, per diem for travel days, and mileage.
- ☐ Find your weight allowance. It is set by pay grade and whether you have dependents.
Going over the allowance means paying the overage out of pocket.
- ☐ Identify professional books, papers and equipment. Pro-gear is weighed separately and does not count against your allowance.
It has to be declared and inventoried as pro-gear at pack-out, not claimed afterwards.
- ☐ Decide between a government-arranged household goods move and a Personally Procured Move (PPM), where you move yourself and are reimbursed.
A PPM can pay out if you move light and cheap. It also puts the work and the risk on you.
- ☐ Ask finance about advance pay and advance DLA if you can't cover moving costs before the reimbursement comes in.
Advance pay is a loan against future paychecks, not extra money.
- ☐ Set up a way to capture receipts from day one. Lodging, tolls, fuel, meals on travel days, pet fees, boarding.

90 to 60 days out

Compress this if you got short notice

- ☐ Complete the transportation counseling briefing and book your move date.
Summer is peak season. Dates in June and July go first.

- ☐ Research neighborhoods against commute time, schools, and your BAH ceiling.
- ☐ If buying: pull your Certificate of Eligibility and get lender pre-approval.
Both are remote, cost nothing, and take days rather than weeks.
- ☐ If buying: find an agent who closes VA loans regularly at that station. Ask how many they closed in the last twelve months.
- ☐ If renting: start watching listings so you know what the market actually does, not what it looks like in one week.
- ☐ Give notice on your current lease. Check the military clause and what notice it requires.
- ☐ Declutter. Everything you get rid of is weight you are not charged for and a box you do not unpack.
- ☐ Arrange storage if there is a gap between move-out and move-in.
- ☐ Request school records and ask the new district what it needs for enrollment.
- ☐ Book the vet for pet health certificates if you are flying or going overseas. Airlines and foreign countries have their own deadlines and some are strict.

60 to 30 days out

- ☐ Confirm your pack-out and pickup dates in writing.
- ☐ Lock housing at the new station, or lock temporary lodging and a firm date to decide.
- ☐ Schedule final medical and dental appointments and request record copies.
- ☐ Renew anything close to expiring: ID cards, driver licenses, passports, vehicle registration.
Overseas moves need passports well in advance, and official passports are a separate process from tourist ones.
- ☐ Arrange vehicle shipment if your move authorizes it.
- ☐ Handle utilities: schedule shutoff at the old place and startup at the new one.
- ☐ File a change of address with USPS, your bank, insurers, and the finance office.

Two weeks out

- ☐ Photograph and video every room, every serial number, and anything valuable or already damaged.
This is the evidence a damage claim is built on. Take more than you think you need.
- ☐ Separate everything the movers must not take: orders, records, medications, passports, jewelry, laptops, tax documents, car titles.
Put it in one room or one vehicle and tell the crew that room is off limits.
- ☐ Pack a first-night bag for each person: clothes, toiletries, chargers, medications, bedding.
- ☐ Confirm travel: flights, hotels that take government rates, and pet-friendly stops if you are driving.
- ☐ Empty and defrost the freezer. Use up or give away anything that cannot travel.

Pack-out and moving week

- ☐ Be present for pack-out. Someone with authority to sign has to be there the whole time.
- ☐ Read the inventory before you sign it. Check the condition codes the crew writes down.
Signing an inventory that says an item was already scratched is what loses a claim later.
- ☐ Keep your own copy of the inventory and the bill of lading.
- ☐ Confirm the delivery address and a phone number the carrier can actually reach.
- ☐ Do a final walkthrough of the empty house. Check closets, the attic, the garage, and behind doors.
- ☐ Complete the housing move-out inspection and get it in writing.

Arrival

- ☐ Sign in at the new unit and complete in-processing.
- ☐ Update your address in the pay system so BAH pays at the correct rate.
BAH follows your duty station, and a wrong address is a pay problem that takes months to unwind.
- ☐ Enroll in local medical and dental care and transfer prescriptions.
- ☐ Enroll children in school and hand over the records you requested.
- ☐ Register vehicles and update licenses if the state requires it.
- ☐ Inspect household goods as they come off the truck. Note damage on the delivery paperwork before the crew leaves.

After the move

The part people skip, and it is the part with money in it

- ☐ File your travel voucher. This is DD Form 1351-2, submitted with receipts.
There is a filing deadline and reimbursement does not happen without it.
- ☐ File loss and damage claims. Notify the carrier first, within their window, then file the claim itself.
The notification deadline and the claim deadline are two different clocks and missing the first one can end the claim.
- ☐ Reconcile what you were paid against what you spent.
- ☐ Keep the whole binder. Unreimbursed moving costs can matter at tax time, and the next PCS goes faster with the last one on file.