



- ★ COMMUNITY
- ★ GUIDANCE
- ★ SUPPORT

PREPARING FOR BEING APART

Sometimes a separation will happen with little advance notice, but often you and your loved ones will have days, weeks, or even months before a planned separation is scheduled to take place. The activities that follow will help you to prepare better for any upcoming separations.


Becoming more self-reliant and self-assured are important steps in helping you and your loved ones to better handle being apart. Whether you are the one who is leaving or the one who is left behind, becoming more emotionally self-sufficient is going to help you through each and every separation, whether it's for a few hours, days, weeks, or as long as a year.

There are, as well, the practical matters of everyday life to deal with when you are apart from your loved one. The more prepared you are to handle those day-to-day challenges, like paying the bills or getting children to school, the more energy and emotion you will have to deal with the feelings that separation usually brings up.

Getting ready for separation

If you are the one who is going to be left behind, you can prepare yourself for the responsibilities that you may now have to shoulder on your own. For example, if your spouse is about to go away for nine months and usually takes care of paying the bills, take over bill paying as soon as possible rather than waiting till the separation starts. And instead of waiting till you are apart, gather all the information you need for people, on or off the military base, who can help when your family member is away. With that information handy, you're less likely to find yourself wondering what to do when you have to get two children to two different places at the same time and the family member you depended on is not around to help out.

Remember that you may also hire someone to help you out, such as an accountant for financial matters or a handyman to deal with repairs around the house. If you have budget constraints, consider exchanging services: perhaps you could babysit for a friend's children once a week and your friend could take care of your dog when you visit your parents for the weekend. Keep in mind that you do not automatically have to take on all of the duties of the person who will be away. For example, your teenager could take over putting out the garbage, and you could ask your employer to pay you through direct deposit to cut down on weekly trips to the bank.

 Write down who currently takes care of each responsibility and who is going to take care of it during the separation.

	Now	During the separation
Finances		
Depositing paychecks	_____	_____
Paying bills	_____	_____
Legal concerns		
Will	_____	_____
Other legal documents	_____	_____

Household chores

Preparing meals _____

Laundry _____

Cleaning _____

Trash _____

Car maintenance _____


Childcare _____

Eldercare _____

Other _____

Technology to the rescue

Fortunately, today's technology can offer a lot more help to those who are separated as long as phone or Internet communication is allowed and safe. (In some combat situations, as you probably know, it is not possible to either call or e-mail.) When it is possible to make contact, technology offers tools for staying connected that were considered the stuff of science fiction not that long ago. By getting this technology in place before the separation, you will be better prepared to use it as soon as it's feasible.

 Look over the following list of technological tools that can help you through separation. Check off any you already have; make a note of others you want to get. If you have budgetary issues, you might ask family members or friends to let you borrow their equipment. You may also be able to find an Internet café with a webcam you can use for a reasonable fee.

	Have on hand	Need to get
Webcams so you can see each other when you talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skype or another free or low-cost Internet service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cell phone with international coverage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cell phone with Internet and picture capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recordings on an iPhone, iPod, or another cell phone or recording device (MP3 player or traditional tape recorder) that you can replay while you are apart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Membership in free or low-cost social networking sites (for example, Facebook, Twitter, Plaxo) that allow for communicating over the Internet and posting photos or videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>