

# Separation and Deployment



Discuss the inevitable separations Marine families experience and provide suggestions on how to successfully balance the additional responsibilities when your Marine is away.

- Corresponding with Your Marine's Leadership
- Deployment Emergency Contact Sheet
- Deployment Checklist
- Operational Security (OPSEC)
- Care Packages
- MotoMail
- Activities for Children
- Return, Reunion, and Re-Integration

## **Corresponding with Your Marine's Leadership**

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Prior to your Marine's deployment, it is important to review the following resources and tips that will aid you, as well as your Marine through the deployment. It is important to know your Marine's command and point of contact information prior to their separation/deployment.

**The Unit Family Readiness Program** - Provides support to the Marines and their spouses, children, and extended family members in the form of official communication, information and referral, and Marine and family readiness and deployment support. Each unit program is led by the Family Readiness Command Team which includes the Commanding Officer (CO), Executive Officer (XO), Sergeant Major, Chaplain, Family Readiness Officer (FRO), CO and SgtMaj spouses, Family Readiness Advisor(s), and Family Readiness Assistant(s), and Morale Support Volunteers. Each unit is equipped with a full time FRO who's primary responsibility is to communicate with the family members, answering their questions and keeping them informed about the unit's activities, whether they are deployed or not.

**Privacy Release** - Before the FRO can provide information to the family of a Marine (i.e. parent), the Marine **must authorize** the contact, in writing, and must designate, by name, each individual with whom contact is authorized (contact is automatically authorized to the spouse of a Marine.) This is a privacy protection required by law for the protection of the Marine. Your Marine's unit FRO has the **Parent/Extended Family Member Contact Authorization** form and completing it only takes a few minutes of your Marine's time.

**Websites and Recorded Messages** - Units also have informative websites and toll-free numbers where you can call and hear frequently-updated messages from the unit's leaders regarding the unit's activities and well-being.

**Newsletters** - Some units may create a separate newsletter to send to the parents of Marines.  
*NOTE: The Marine must authorize the release of the newsletter to anyone other than his or her spouse.*

## Deployment Emergency Contact Sheet

	Name	Phone/cell phone	Address	Email
<b>Your Marine/rank</b>		<b>Unit:</b>	<b>Unit:</b>	
			<b>Unit/Deployed:</b>	
<b>Family Readiness Officer*</b>				
<b>Other Family Members (contact in case of emergency)</b>				
<b>Police</b>				
<b>Fire/Rescue</b>				
<b>Hospital</b>				
<b>Nearest Military Installation</b>				
<b>Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society</b>				
<b>American Red Cross</b>				
<b>Chaplain</b>				
<b>Neighbor (contact in case of emergency)</b>				
<b>Friend (contact in case of emergency)</b>				

**Before the Family Readiness Officer is allowed to contact parents or extended family, the Marine must authorize the contact, in writing, in advance, by name.**

## Deployment Checklist

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- Record of Emergency Data (RED) is current in Service Record Book (SRB).
- Marine's family receives FRO and unit contact information.
- Children or other dependents are registered in DEERS and ID cards are current and will not expire while your Marine is away.
- If a child will turn 10 while Military Member is gone, make sure all paperwork for ID is ready.
- Wills are current and safeguarded.
- Family Care Plan is current and safeguarded; ensure location of document is known.
- In loco parentis* document is current and copies provided to designated caregivers. General or Special Power of Attorney is initiated if necessary.
- Parents and extended family have the Marine's mailing address.
- Parents and extended family members are aware of the unit's website. This is a secure resource for finding additional and updated information on the unit.
- Instructions are clear on pending family business. Potential problems are identified and potential solutions agreed upon.
- Checking/savings accounts are in order.
- Comprehensive budget is prepared.
- Plans are made for filing federal, state, and local taxes.
- Auto inspections and base vehicle decal are up-to-date or instructions are left for updating them.
- Insurance policies are up to date and safeguarded.
- Keep vehicle insurance, but look into lowering premiums while they are gone.
- Discuss the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society **pre-authorization** form. This form establishes the maximum authorized amount of emergency financial assistance that may be made available to you per NMCRS policy. Should you have a financial emergency, contact NMCRS for an appointment.
- Extra car and house keys are made and in a safe, accessible place.

## Operational Security (OPSEC)

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- OPSEC involves keeping potential adversaries from discovering our critical information. It protects our operations – planned, in progress, and those completed.
- Critical information deals with the specific facts about military intentions, capabilities, operations, or activities.
- Examples of critical information include, but are not limited to, flight schedules, troop/ship movements, temporary duty locations, and installation activities.

### **Four Primary Things to Remember about OPSEC:**

- Where and how you discuss this information is just as important as with whom you discuss it. Places like internet blogs and chat rooms are not the place to reveal any unit separation/deployment information; you can never be certain who is on the other end receiving this information.
- Determined individuals can easily collect data from cordless and cellular phones and even baby monitors using readily available and inexpensive receivers.
- Personal conversations conducted in public may be easily overheard.
- If anyone, especially a foreign national, persistently seeks information, notify your spouse or FRO. They will contact the Security Manager of the unit.

*Note: It is extremely important to practice good OPSEC at ALL times. Sensitive and critical information is handled throughout a Marine's career, not just during a deployment.*

## Care Packages

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A Care Package is a little bit of home that says, ***“I Love You ... I’m Thinking About You”***. With just a little planning, they can be a great link over the distance. Care packages are also morale builders during the deployment. Speculation and excitement run throughout an entire ship when just one package arrives. Below are some helpful hints to ensure your care package arrives in good condition.

### **How to Send Care Packages:**

Keep the packages small (no larger than a shoe box). Larger packages take longer to be delivered and are more cumbersome for your Marine to haul around. Smaller, more frequent packages are likely your better option. The U.S. Postal Service offers FREE boxes for Priority Mail. You can also order free boxes from the USPS online store (for use with Priority Mail shipping ONLY). The Recommended size is the #4 or #7 box.

### **Packaging Tips:**

Use plastic bags with zip-style closures for everything. They keep out sand and rain. Resourceful Marines are re-using them for all sorts of things. The quart size is great to keep their wallets and personal photos with them, in one of their many pockets, and they stay dry. If you' are shipping a liquid (shampoo, eye drops), or items that are likely to melt or drip (Chapstick, deodorants, chocolate) be sure to pop it into a tightly sealed plastic bag first. That will help keep the rest of the items from getting gooey or ruined, just in case.

**The following is a list of highly desirable items for deployed Marines.** It is recommend that you keep the boxes small, about the size of shoe box or a Postal Service Express mailing box for easy transportation. **Suggested items:**

Books	Moist Wipes	Sheets of stationery
Cameras (disposable)	Music CDs	Snacks (cookies, granola bars)
Camper style foods	Nerf toys (small footballs, etc.)	Tea bags
Candy	Odor Eaters (for boots)	Toiletries (travel sizes)
Cards	Pencils	Toothbrushes
Chapstick	Pens	Toothpaste
Dental floss	Personal message	Travel games
Facial tissues	Phone cards	Travel mugs
Fast food Hot Sauce packets	Playing cards	Tuna snack kits
Flashlights	Postage	Valentines or other cards to celebrate your special occasion
Girl Scout cookies	Powdered drink mix	
Gum	Razors	
Magazines	Sardines	

**The following items are prohibited:** Illegal substances, Alcoholic beverages, Explosives - including fireworks. Offensive or obscene materials, including photos, drawings or any other material which may have the potential to offend members of the opposite sex, members of another race, background, etc.

# MotoMail

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MotoMail is an additional way of sending mail and corresponding with deployed Marines. This FREE system augments USPS letter mail by providing a discreet and secure way of sending a letter via the internet. This letter is then hand delivered to the Marine, usually within 24 hours.



## **How to use MotoMail:**

1. Sender logs onto [www.motomail.us](http://www.motomail.us) and creates a letter. Senders who do not have computer access, or have letters from children, can take their handwritten letters to a scanning location.

*Note: Scanning locations for handwritten letters include: Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center 29 Palms, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, and Marine Corps Base Quantico.*

2. The letter is sent to the MotoMail server.
3. The USMC Post Office serving the recipient's location downloads the letter to a special machine, which prints, folds, and seals it.
4. The letter is delivered through the unit mail call.
5. The Marine reads, and then may re-read the letter.

MotoMail is now offering two-way service communication. Marine's can now send letters home by MotoMail as well. Also, senders may also attach photos with their letters. For more information log on to [www.motomail.us](http://www.motomail.us).

## Activities for Children

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Many parents and/or extended family members may need to care for their Marine's child(ren) while they are deployed. Below are ideas and activities to do with children while their parent is away.

- Have the child trace their hand or foot on colorful paper. They can use the paper to write a letter on. Send extra colored paper with the letter and ask for a return hand tracing.
- Have the child make a cassette tape, perhaps reading a favorite book.
- Draw pictures to send. Ask for "artwork" in return.
- Make bookmarks and place in their favorite children's book at their favorite pages. Send a book with a cassette tape and ask for those pages to be read on the tape for return.
- Write a story and send.
- Write a note on the back of a photo. Make a puzzle from the photo to send.
- Take a photo of each child with the parent who is deploying. Scrapbooks of photos, letters, and mementoes can be fun for children to make during this separation.
- Send letters, photos, drawings, and taped cassette messages from the children about family events, outings, ball games, class plays, etc. Ask deployed parent to respond to children also.
- Participate in command video tape recordings. These will be sent to the command for the holidays. It is a sure way of bringing joy and happiness.
- Buy or plan presents for birthdays or holidays in advance. Attach special messages. Kids especially love to get gifts through the mail (T-shirts from various ports or items to share at school).
- Keep a map showing places that will be visited. Use map pins to mark each place. This lets the children see where their parent has been and know that each pin means homecoming day is closer.
- Make a blanket or pillow out of deployed parent's clothes. Pictures can be made into pillows as well.
- Notify the child's teacher and school since they often have special programs for children with deployed parents. Occasionally surprise the parent - send some of the child's schoolwork.
- Make a calendar with the kids while your Marine is gone. Write down special things they have done.
- Have the deployed parent take a letter of the alphabet each day and use that letter to describe/identify what they are seeing or doing that day. (Example – Today I saw an Alligator, ate an Apple, and flew in an Airplane.)
- Make a deployment countdown chain before the parent leaves. Remove one link for each day until reunion day. (In the event of a lengthened deployment, you may have to add a couple of extra links.)

## Return, Reunion, and Integration

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Although Marines and families spend a great deal of time on pre-deployment preparations, returning from deployment can be just as stressful, if not more. Whether you are the mother, father, significant other or friend of a Marine, more than likely you are anxiously anticipating their return. Prior to deployment, most family members were required to make adjustments. Now it is time to consider adjustments that may be necessary upon return.

It is important to remember, not only do you have some transitions to make, as a family member you need to help your Marine smoothly transition back into their home, work, and social life.

### **Below are some Homecoming Considerations:**

- Every deployed person and their family members will experience a feeling of anticipation as the end of the deployment approaches. This may take the form of eagerness for reunion and/or dread of a return to a problem situation.
- Due to anticipation, few get much sleep the night before homecoming. These feelings may result in the family members, as well as the Marine, being concerned and exhausted when the family is finally reunited.
- It may take a while for the Marine to get adjusted to the local time zone, home cooking, lack of continual noise, etc. Some difficulty sleeping through the night is typical.
- Remember to keep expectations **reasonable** and **flexible**! It is not unusual to experience a homecoming let down. For example, single Marines may wish to spend more time with their friends, girlfriend, boyfriend, etc. as opposed to visiting parents or immediate family members.
- The Marine may want to stay home and rest while the parents or family members may expect them to go out and socialize with other family members and/or friends of the family. Skillful compromise and reasonable give-and-take will be needed if arguments and hurt feelings are to be avoided.
- Again, keep expectations reasonable. Special welcome efforts of the family members and friends, as well as gifts the deployed members may bring home, may not result in the expected reaction from either side.
- If promises were made, through letters or phone calls, during the deployment, the person to whom the promises were made will probably remember and expect the promises to be kept.
- The Marine will have experienced great change during his or her time away. Families are encouraged to refrain from making any major changes.
- Remember that stress may increase the likelihood of substance abuse. This type of abuse may manifest itself in the form of illicit or prescription drug or alcohol use. There are alternatives to problems that may lead Marines to substance abuse. If you recognize unhealthy behaviors in your Marine, please seek assistance.

*NOTE: Counseling services for Marines are available on installations for one on one counseling, victim advocacy, and group support sessions with licensed, professional counselors. Services can be reached by calling the local installation MCCS Marine and Family Services. Additionally, Military OneSource offers advice, support, and practical solutions by master's level consultants. This service is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day by calling 1-800-342-9647 or online at [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com).*