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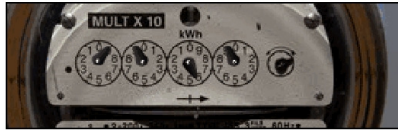
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Moving 101: Cut Relocation Stress by Planning

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
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The average person moves 11 times in their lives, and each time it's a chore, whether moving down the block or cross country. But it doesn't have to be all be hassles and headaches. A little planning can save your sanity on moving day and avoid any unpleasant surprises when you unpack.

The heavy lifting, if not literally so, starts months before the move. Figuring out how to move, who needs to know about your move, and, of course, packing shouldn't happen the week before the big day.

"Give yourself plenty of time," says Bob Wesson, a vice president at U-Haul International.

Allow two to three weeks to pack, Wesson says, and up to two months for reserving equipment or moving companies and tying up other loose ends like newspaper delivery and change of address notifications.

-- How to move:

First, figure out if you're hiring a mover or doing it yourself.

The average cost of a 1,225-mile interstate move is \$4,200 for a heavily furnished two-bedroom home, according to the American Moving and Storage Association.

For a do-it-yourselfer, an in-town move from a one- or two-bedroom house to a similar home can cost as little as \$400 -- even less if you borrow a friend's truck. An out-of-town move around 700 miles can run about \$600 or more.

If you're doing the move yourself, enlist a group of reliable friends to help. Reserve moving equipment including a van, dollies, handcarts and furniture pads at least a month before the move.

If you're hiring a mover, ask family, friends and colleagues for recommendations or check the American Moving and Storage Association's directory at www.moving.org for a list of moving companies in your area. Get a few estimates before deciding on a company. When you choose one, get a copy of the mover's insurance and check the extent of the policy. Most times, movers won't insure items that you pack yourself. Verify that your [homeowner's insurance](#) covers "goods in transit."

--Get the word out:

Make sure everyone knows when and where you're moving to. Fill out a post office change of address online at www.usps.com/moversguide. Notify credit card companies, other companies that bill you, magazines, the DMV, friends and family of your new address.

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Locate local doctors, dentists, vets, pharmacies and schools in your new neighborhood and send the appropriate records there at least a month in advance. Also, make any hotel, transportation and kennel reservations for the move.

Set up accounts with local utilities and schedule utility shut off at your old home at least six weeks before your move. The American Moving and Storage Association recommends having the utilities turned on two weeks before the move, so you won't be taking cold showers in the dark.

Last, a week before you leave, call to cancel delivery of local newspaper for the day of your move.

PURGE, THEN PACK.

"Don't pay someone to move something so you can throw it away later," says Mark Spiehler, a senior vice president at Atlas Van Lines.

Two months before the move, clean out closets, the basement and attic and determine what you'll be taking and what you will throw away, donate or sell. Hold a garage sale at least a month before your move.

Now, it's packing time.

For a two-bedroom house, buy or salvage 12-15 small boxes, 15-20 medium boxes, 8-10 large boxes, 8-10 extra large boxes, 4-6 wardrobe boxes and an assortment of specialty boxes for artwork, sports equipment and mirrors. If you get used boxes, make sure they're sturdy.

Pack heavier items like books in smaller boxes and bulky but lighter items like pillows and blankets in the larger boxes.

Consider buying special inserts for dishes and bubble wrap or packing peanuts to protect breakables. If you want to be thrifty, save up several weeks' worth of newspapers for wrapping.

Mark the boxes as you pack. Identify the contents, the room they came out of and the room they're going into. If you're using professional movers, put your first and last name on the box in case one goes missing. Keep a list of all your packed items and photograph or videotape the condition of valuable items in case something gets damaged during the move. If you packed the items yourself, it may be harder to get the moving company to pay your claim.

Store all boxes in the garage for easier loading on moving day. Keep in mind that movers won't transport anything flammable or combustible, including bleach, paints, aerosol cans, gas for your lawnmower and charcoal starter. Also, most companies won't move live plants and perishable foods unless the move meets strict requirements.

"Pack a survival box," Spiehler says, "that contains anything you need the minute you move in."

This could include identification documents other than a driver's license, your children's favorite toys, pet food and water bowl, medication, toiletries and the numbers for the local utility companies. Don't forget to pack a suitcase with clothes for those first few days.

--Moving day:

Walk the movers through your house and show them what goes and what stays. Then, stay out of their way. But make sure you're available for any questions.

Before they drive off, get their cell phone numbers and give them yours. Also, get a copy of the contract, inventory of items loaded onto the van and any additional services you've signed for.

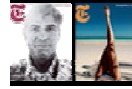
When the movers arrive at your new home, make sure you or a representative is there to take the shipment. Check off everything unloaded from the van and compare it to your inventory sheet. Also, have a good idea where you want furniture to be placed. Movers typically will rearrange furniture only once.

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If something is missing or damaged, make a list and report it right away to the movers who are present. Don't throw away damaged boxes or items. Take a picture for your records.

Tip each mover between \$10-\$15 for a half-day of work, \$20-\$25 for a full day of work.

If you're moving yourself, make sure to pick up your van early. Load heaviest items to the front of the trailer or van for greatest stability.

Use dollies, handcarts and rollers to move furniture. Invest in a back brace to help avoid injury. Make sure there's plenty of water and some food for you and your friends.

--After the move:

File claims for any missing or damaged items with your moving company. Find out if your moving company or moving rental company accepts used boxes. Otherwise, try giving them away on [Craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org).

Have new appliances and furniture delivered within the first week. Call your local newspaper to begin a subscription and make sure your bills arrive at the new address over the next month.

Costs:

---- \$20-\$30 plus \$1 a mile to rent a 17-foot cargo truck for a day for an in-town move,
OR

---- \$260-\$300 to rent the same truck for 4 days for a 700-mile out-of-town move

---- \$200 for 15 small boxes, 20 medium boxes, 10 large boxes, 10 extra large boxes, four wardrobe boxes and an assortment of specialty boxes

---- \$48 for bubble wrap, two 55-yard rolls of tape, one tape dispenser, two permanent markers and 75 white sticker labels.

---- \$12 to rent a dozen furniture pads

---- \$25 for two furniture dollies

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On the Net:

American Moving & Storage Association

<http://www.moving.org/>

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

<http://www.protectyourmove.gov/>

U-Haul International

<http://www.uhaul.com/>

Ryder

<http://www.ryder.com/>

Atlas Van Lines

<http://www.atlasworldgroup.com/>

Mayflower Transit

<http://www.mayflower.com/moving/>

[Movers.com](http://www.movers.com)

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