

Moving Guide

May 2025

Studies have suggested that moving is one of the most stressful events in life. In order to keep stress at a minimum, give yourself enough time to plan and execute a move effectively. The information in our Moving Guide should help you accomplish this goal.

If you are affiliated with Columbia University, contact the Office of Work/Life, Housing Information and Referral Service, Alice Lesman, at al2775@columbia.edu for referrals, as well as general advice and information.

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Movers

One of the first steps is to find the right moving company. We have all heard horror stories about moving companies – everything from companies losing or breaking valuable items to being rude, adding extra fees at the last minute, or being scam artists. That said, there are many honest and reliable ones too. The following tips can help you find one that works for you.

Referrals, Reviews and Websites

- **Ask for referrals** from everyone you know that has moved recently. Then look on sites like Yelp, Angie’s List or the Better Business Bureau for reviews. Make sure your moving company has a large number of positive reviews.
- Moving companies that display the **American Moving and Storage Association (AMSA)** “ProMover” logo on their website had to meet certain quality requirements. You can check the AMSA website at <https://www.moving.org/> for information.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation provides information about **ways to plan a successful move**, as well as information about movers, a glossary of terms, and FAQs. There is also a searchable database for you to check if your mover is properly registered and any complaints have been filed against it. If you are making an out-of-state move, make sure your mover has been issued a U.S. DOT number by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). Since licensing requirements vary for in-state moves, check the website to confirm licensing requirements with the appropriate local agency. <https://www.protectyourmove.gov/consumer/awareness/rights/rights.htm>
- If **moving internationally**, check the mover’s licensing on the [FIDI website](#).
- **Check the mover’s website** to gather as much information about the company as possible.
- **Shop** for movers early.
- Look for **red flags that can indicate illegitimate movers**. These include:
 - Mover requires a cash deposit or a very large deposit prior to the move.
 - Truck appears to be a rental truck rather than a truck legitimately owned by a business.
 - The website has no insurance or licensing information, and no physical address listed.
 - Telephone line isn’t answered in a professional fashion or isn’t answered with the name of the moving company.
 - Office or warehouse looks dirty, sparse or unprofessional.
 - Estimate offered over the phone without seeing an inventory list of your items or without performing an in-home estimate.

Estimates and Pricing

- Make sure to **get estimates in writing** for your move and from at least three different moving companies. You should not use any company that refuses to give you a written estimate.
- **Find out how and when pick-up and delivery** of your household goods will occur.
- **Most domestic moves involve a van line.** If your move does not fill the entire truck, then the driver will have other pick-ups and deliveries to make, which might make an exact delivery date impossible. Additionally, full unpacking is usually not included. If full unpacking is required, then you can request a price for maid service, or you can hire someone separately to help you with the unpacking of your goods.
- Ask the mover **how they can be contacted** before, during and after the move.
- **Ask for references** and check them.
- **A fixed price from a mover is usually a better choice** than an hourly rate. Also remember that price, while important, isn't everything.
- In many cases, **movers will quote an estimated weight.** The exact weight is determined by the truck being weighed on a certified scale when it's empty and then weighed again once it is fully loaded with your shipment. The difference between the two figures establishes the weight of the shipment. You should receive receipts for the two weights.
- The **actual cost of the move will depend upon several factors:** distance of the move; need for packing supplies and services; size/weight of the household goods; and using professional movers or doing-it-yourself.
- **Moving cost components** include:
 - packing (labor and materials)
 - transportation charges
 - servicing electric appliances
 - special handling of antiques, art, pianos, glass tops, mirrors, etc.
 - additional insurance while in transit or storage
 - storage charges
 - additional charges for stairs, difficult entry, etc.
- Most estimates include **three pricing options: binding, non-binding, and not-to-exceed pricing.** The estimate should include any special packing requirements for glass tops, mirrors, packaging for flat-screen TVs, artwork, pianos, etc.
 - **A binding estimate** means the customer is obligated to pay the price set forth regardless of whether the shipment weighs more or less than the estimated amount.
 - **A non-binding estimate** approximates the cost based on the mover's survey of the items to be moved, with the final cost determined after the shipment is weighed and any additional services have been provided. The mover cannot require the customer to pay more than 10 percent of the estimate at the time

the shipment is delivered, which should be stated in the estimate. If the customer requested additional services after the non-binding estimate was signed, then these charges are also additional. The mover will invoice for any remaining charges with payment due within 30 days.

- **A not-to-exceed estimate** is also called a guaranteed price or price protection estimate. These estimates are based on a binding estimate or an actual cost, and the customer pays either the amount of the estimate or the actual cost, whichever is lower.

Other considerations

After the move is over, movers should have provided:

- A written estimate
- An Order of Service (written confirmation of estimate and services, including pick-up and delivery dates)
- A descriptive inventory (a complete list of all furniture, boxes and items loaded into the truck)
- A Bill of Lading (receipt for the goods)

Since **summertime is the busiest time for movers**, they are less able and willing to negotiate pricing and scheduling, so, if possible, plan to move during other times of the year. Otherwise, reserve the dates as early as possible.

Moving an Automobile

If you are **having an automobile shipped**, you should:

- Keep the fuel level at no more than half a tank.
- Give the driver a set of keys and keep one with you.
- Do not pack anything in the vehicle and wash it prior to shipment.
- Assess the current condition and compare your findings with the driver's inventory to eliminate any possible discrepancies.

Moving Internationally

If you are moving to the US from another country before your household goods carrier can load your goods onto the ship (usually in a 20' or 40' container), you **must have a visa and a US address**. The mover can pack your goods if you need to move out of your current home, but until you have a visa and a U.S. address your goods cannot be shipped.

International moves of household goods into the U.S. will require **customs clearance**. Confirm with your mover any required customs clearance requirements and that these requirements are included in the services and pricing. You can obtain additional information regarding U.S. customs requirements at <https://www.cbp.gov/>.

International moves can be quoted by weight, but what really matters is whether everything will **fit into a container**. It is the actual cubic volume and amount of space your shipment occupies that really matters.

Sea container sizes are:

- 20' container: 1,165cft, 5,000-6,500 lbs., 19'5" x 7'6" x 7'9.5"
- 40' container: 2,377cft, 12,000-14,000 lbs., 39'6.5" x 7'6" x 7'9.5"

Most insurance companies will **only insure your international shipment if it is professionally packed by the mover** or its agent. Marine insurance policies, which cover loss or damage during transit, are usually provided by third parties, not your mover.

Insurance

Moving can be even more stressful if you are worried about what might happen if your belongings get damaged or lost by your movers. Fortunately, there are **several insurance options** you can choose from to cover your move. Depending on whether you are moving in-state, out-of-state or internationally, the options are limited liability valuation, full replacement coverage, or co-insurance.

Limited Liability Valuation

- The most basic type of insurance is Limited Liability Valuation. This is not technically considered insurance since your mover is **required to provide it to you free of charge**. Depending on the moving company you use, Limited Liability Valuation insurance will cover \$0.10 to \$0.60 per pound per damaged item.
- For example, if your moving company offers coverage of \$0.30 per pound per damaged item valuation, this means that if you have a 20-pound stereo system that gets damaged during transport, you will only get \$6.00 in compensation. Obviously, this level of coverage will not fully reimburse you for expensive items. However, if you don't have any extra money to spend on insurance, you know that at least **you will get some amount of money** if any of your items are damaged or destroyed.
- If you are moving within the same state, your moving company is not required to offer you any type of insurance other than Limited Liability Valuation insurance. **If you want more coverage you will need to purchase moving insurance from a third party** but check with your homeowner's insurance and credit cards to see if you have any other existing coverage. If you have, or if you can purchase, third party insurance in addition to the already-included Limited Liability Valuation insurance provided by your moving company and your items are damaged, you will receive coverage from either the third party insurance or the Limited Liability insurance; you cannot receive payments from both.

Full Replacement Insurance

- Full replacement coverage will provide you with **full compensation for damaged or destroyed items**. This type of coverage generally provides insurance for individual damaged or destroyed items or a lump sum for the entire shipment. For example, if you would like \$30,000 of full replacement coverage for all your belongings, you can expect to pay between \$300 (with a \$1500 deductible) and \$450 (with a \$250 deductible) depending on the insurance company and policy specifics you choose.

- If you choose full replacement coverage, sometimes there is an option to add **stipulations to the policy** such as: **electrical and mechanical derangement policy and a pair and sets policy**. If you get extra electrical and mechanical derangement coverage and pair and sets coverage (see below for details), you will need to specifically list any items covered under these policies in your “household goods valued inventory”. The electrical and mechanical derangement policy will cover internal damage to electronic and mechanical devices, such as stereos. A pair and sets policy will cover the cost of an entire set in the instance that one item in the set is damaged or destroyed, affecting the value of the entire set. An example: a vanity set comprised of a mirror and dresser which can only be purchased together. If either the mirror or the dresser is damaged or destroyed, you will be compensated for the price of both pieces together (not just the damaged or destroyed piece).
- You will most likely need to fill out a detailed “**household goods valued inventory**” form in which you describe each item you are having transported and its value. If you get extra electrical and mechanical derangement coverage and pair and sets coverage (see below for details), you will need to specifically list any items covered under these policies in your “household goods valued inventory”.
- If you end up needing to claim any money for a damaged or destroyed item, you might need to **provide a receipt or appraisal of the item**, especially if it is very expensive. Sometimes you also need to **provide proof of ownership**, such as photos you have taken of the item prior to the move. These photos can also be useful for showing an item’s condition prior to the move. If the item is very expensive or you’re worried about it getting damaged, you should take photos of it from all angles.

Do-It-Yourself Moving

If you have decided that you want to move yourself, there are several important steps involved in the process.

- When renting a truck, you have to **determine the size of the truck** that you will need. Truck rental companies will provide you with a general guide as to how many items or rooms will fit in each type of truck. Depending on the distance you're traveling, the size of the truck, and the date of your travel, you can pay between \$150 and \$250 per day. If you have a vehicle that you need to bring with you on your move, some rental trucks have towing capabilities so that you can tow your vehicle behind you, though this will increase the cost.
- There are some **extra charges to be aware of when renting a moving truck**. You can add daily insurance, but you may already have insurance that covers this, so **check with your insurance companies and credit card companies** (which may offer travel coverage). In addition, while **mileage charges** are normally included in your rental price, sometimes there is a limit to the number of included miles; be prepared to pay overage charges if you are driving for a longer distance than what is included in your price. You can also purchase **additional rental days** for your trailers and trucks. You will receive the truck with a full tank of gas, but you will also have to return it with a full tank; including the gas you buy during your drive, you could end up spending several hundred dollars. Your rental company will likely provide you with a number of free furniture pads to use for packing, but you should be prepared to **rent at least 30 pads** for a 4-bedroom house. You will also **need a dolly** to help transport your belongings to and from the truck.
- Be sure to **book your truck well in advance**, especially if you are moving between the end of May and the end of September, which is peak season. You will also be charged extra for truck rentals during this time of year. You may want to set up a rental agreement as early as one to two months in advance.
- You may want to **consider having someone help you load your furniture** onto the truck at your current location, and unload it at your new location. Some do-it-yourself moving companies offer labor services for an additional fee and will help you find labor. You can also contact full service moving companies in your current and new locations and ask for movers to simply load and unload your truck. The most cost-effective option is always to ask family and friends for help.
- Once you are on the road, **your rental truck might be a target** for thieves. If you must park it overnight, try and find a secure, well-lit area or a guarded parking lot. Use a steering wheel lock and a secure padlock on the back door.

National Truck Rental Companies

Budget: <https://www.budgettruck.com/>

Enterprise: https://www.enterprisetricks.com/truckrental/en_US.html

Penske: <https://www.pensketruckrental.com/>

Ryder: <https://ryder.com/>

U-Haul: <https://www.uhaul.com/>

U-Pack: <https://www.upack.com/>

Local Truck Rental Company

CC Rental: <https://www.ccrentalnyc.com/>

Packing Tips

- Some **supplies you might need** are: boxes; package tape; newspaper; bubble wrap; sandwich/plastic bags to keep hardware, screws and other loose parts; tool kit which should include a hammer, wrench, screwdrivers, etc.; plastic tarps; large roll of construction paper to protect floors; painter's tape to tape down paper; extra cardboard; and a first aid kit.
- Consider purchasing **plastic mattress bags** to protect your mattress and box spring from dirt, dust, and water.
- **Pack boxes** as tightly as possible.
- Boxes should **not weigh more than 20 to 30 pounds** each.
- **Heavier items go on the bottom** to maintain balance.
- **Separate fragile items** from unbreakable items.
- **Label every box clearly "fragile"**, if necessary, on each side.
- **Label each box with the room or contents**, such as "Kitchen" or "Pots & Pans".
- **Take an inventory** of your boxes and furniture. Take photographs of anything of value.
- **Use bubble wrap or newspaper** to protect fragile items.
- **Package tape** is the strongest and sturdiest tape.
- **Reinforce the bottoms** of the boxes with extra tape.
- **Always keep your valuables**, such as jewelry and passports, with you at all times.
- **Wrap furniture with blankets** or bubble wrap. Avoid placing tape directly on furniture.

- **When packing lamps**, remove the bulbs and pack the shades separately.
- **Have one box**, or several boxes, **of essentials** that you kept using right up until your move. Examples of these items are a toothbrush and toothpaste, medicine, a hairbrush, toilet paper, several daytime outfits and nighttime sleepwear, shoes, some dishes and silverware, and some essential cooking utensils. Label these boxes “Last Box Packed / First Box Unpacked”.

Storage

How to Choose a Storage Facility

Storage might be needed in either your old or new location. To find a good storage facility, begin with a basic online search for local storage facilities. Sites like Yelp and the Better Business Bureau will provide ratings of these companies and detail whether the companies maintain sound business practices.

- **Most movers have their own facilities** for either short or long-term storage. If you would like access to your goods or would prefer self-storage, following are some options in, or close to, Manhattan:

Chelsea Mini-Storage: <http://www.chelsea-mini-storage.com>

Extra Space Storage: <https://www.extraspace.com>

Life Storage: <https://www.lifestorage.com/storage-units/new-york/new-york/>

Manhattan Mini-Storage: <https://www.storage-mart.com/manhattan-mini>

Moishe Self Storage: <https://www.moishesselfstorage.com/>

Public Storage: <https://www.publicstorage.com/>

Storage Deluxe: <https://www.storagedeluxe.com/>

U-Haul Moving and Storage: <https://www.uhaul.com/>

- Once you have selected a couple of companies to consider, you will need to decide **whether you need just short-term storage** for a month or less, or whether you **will need long term storage** of several months or more.
- Most storage facilities will have **a range of unit sizes** and a guide on their website as to how many belongings you can fit in each type of unit. Otherwise you can contact someone at their facility who will guide you as to how many belongings can fit in each unit.

For example, let's say you have the following items that you need to store for two months:

- 13 medium and large boxes full of belongings
- suitcase
- reclining chair
- set of golf clubs
- mattress
- loveseat
- floor lamp
- 2 dining room chairs
- 2 side tables
- rug
- tall bureau

- bookshelf
- desk chair

For these items, a 5' by 10' storage room would be sufficient.

Price Quotes

- In order to get a price quote, you will have to **know the start date**, your address and then select **the unit size** you want. Generally, storage companies will rent units on a month-to-month basis and allow you to cancel at any time (you may receive some kind of discount for long-term storage, like rent for 12 months and get a 13th month free). You may have to pay an initial administrative fee, and potentially a cancellation fee. You may also have to pay an annual fee.
- You will also need to account for the **cost of furniture pads** and plastic to cover furniture, rope to secure furniture, and **a dolly to transport items** into the storage facility, as well as any **optional insurance** to cover damage to your items.
- Be sure to **inspect the storage facility's physical location** and **read all the fine print** of their rental contract.

Unpacking

- **Having a plan** will make unpacking the entire contents of your home or apartment after a move much easier. The order in which you unpack your belongings will be based on what items you will need immediately versus those which you can wait to use. If you have an inventory list handy, you may want to reference this as you unpack to make sure that you are not missing anything. When you packed your belongings at your old home or apartment, you should have packed a box of essentials and labeled it **“Last Box Packed / First Box Unpacked”**.
- Next, you want to **unpack important kitchen items**. Make sure to put away your dishware, glasses, silverware, and cooking utensils. If you have many kitchen items that are not used for daily meals, such as decorative dishware, gourmet utensils, etc., you can wait to unpack these at a leisurely rate. You want to make sure that you have what you need on a daily basis first.
- You should **unpack your bedroom items next** while it’s still early in the day, nobody wants to save this job until last and realize late in the evening that they have to put together beds and make the beds up with linens. Put together your bedframes and place the mattresses on them (if your movers did not already do this for you), and make the beds up with sheets, blankets, pillows and pillowcases. If you have bedroom furniture that needs assembly, this can wait. As long as you have access to the boxes with your clothing and shoes in them, you can assemble furniture at your leisure.
- Next, **unpack your bathroom items** (if you have multiple bathrooms at your new home, unpacking one bathroom for now will suffice). Make sure you unpack hand soap, body soap, shampoo, conditioner, facial wash, medicines, toilet paper, shower curtains, towels, and anything else you use every day. Again, once you have the essentials in place, you can unpack the rest at a more comfortable pace.
- Now you want to **make a plan as to where you would like your large furniture to be placed**. Once you know for sure where each large item should go, assemble it in the actual space in which you intend to put it. One of the first items you should put together is your kitchen or dining room table so that you will have a place to eat. Other large items like television stands, china cabinets, hutches, armoires, and writing desks may be able to wait, and you can assemble them at your own pace once you have made your initial plan where to put everything.

Rental Furniture

If you **need to furnish your home quickly**, Columbia University students, staff, and faculty are eligible to receive a \$50 VISA gift card for any new Student Package lease of 6 months or longer from Cort Furniture Rental. Follow the link for more information.

<https://www.cort.com/columbia>

Moving with Children

Moving to a new home is stressful for both parents and children. Even if the move or relocation is for a positive reason, **the transition to a new house and to a new school takes time and patience.** Here are some ways to ease the transition.

Tips for Moving with Children

It's certainly easier to complete most tasks in the absence of children, but as tempting as it might be to send them off to a sitter or friend while dealing with the details of moving, reconsider. **Children gain greater control over their fear and anxiety by directly participating in moving-related activities.**

So, depending on the age of your child:

- **Take your child with you** to look at potential neighborhoods, houses or apartments, and schools.
- If your child can't join you, **take a camera or video recorder with you** when you go to visit the new area. Take pictures of possible homes, the school, a local park, mall, or of anything that may interest your child.
- **Share the packets of information** you get from real estate agents or the Chamber of Commerce.
- **Check out your new town online.**
- **Use a map** to help your child understand the new area and the route you will take to get there.
- If possible, let your child **visit the new home before moving day** and point out where everyone will sleep, eat, and play.
- Have your children **draw a picture** of how they will arrange their new room.
- On moving day, **let your child pack and label a box of his favorite things** that he can open immediately upon arriving in your new home.
- If possible, **set up your child's bedroom first** so she will be surrounded by familiar things.
- **Give your child a camera to document your move.** Once you arrive and are settled in, make time together to create the "moving" chapter of your family photo album.

- **Read children's books about moving.** Ask your local librarian or check out the following:
 - *Moving House*, by Anne Civardi and Michelle Bates, illustrated by Stephen Cartwright
 - *We're Moving*, by Heather Maisner, illustrated by Kristina Stephenson
 - *I'm Not Moving, Mama*, by Nancy White Carlstrom, illustrated by Thor Wickstrom
 - *Big Ernie's New Home: A Story for Young Children Who are Moving*, by Teresa Martin and Whitney Martin
 - *Boomer's Big Day*, by Constance McGeorge, illustrated by Mary Whyte
 - *The Moving Book: A Kid's Survival Guide*, by Gabriel Davis, illustrated by Sue Dennen
 - *The Berenstain Bears' Moving Day*, by Stan and Jan Bernstein
 - *Saying Good-bye, Saying Hello...*, by Michaelene Mundy, illustrated by R.W. Alley

Helping Children Say Goodbye and Stay Connected to Friends After a Move

Sometimes we think that if we don't make a big deal about moving neither will our children. But for children, **a move involves leaving friends, schools, and favorite local activities behind.** Helping your children say goodbye to friends and setting up ways to stay connected can help them begin to accept and deal with the changes in their lives.

- **Host a goodbye party** for friends and classmates. Emphasize how easy it is to keep in touch through email, Skype, and the telephone.
- **Take photographs** of "favorite places and people" and have each friend create a goodbye page to make a "Goodbye Memory Book."
- **Encourage your child to keep in touch** with old friends.
- **Plan a trip back** to the old hometown to visit friends.

Helping Kids Adjust to a Move

When we're busy moving, it's hard to find time with our children. Maintaining a familiar routine and helping them transition starting the first day will make settling in easier.

- If possible, **time the move to happen before the start of a new school year or term** so children have an opportunity to meet new friends before school begins.
- **Contact teachers, coaches, and club advisors at the new school** and ask them to assist your child with the transition.
- **Ask the school if they have a buddy or new friend system** to help guide your child through school for the first few weeks.
- **Ask the school to do a careful assessment** of your child's previous schoolwork to make sure your child is prepared academically for the new school.
- **Have a picnic** in your new home after you arrive.

- Remember to **give your child hugs** and say, "I love you." Your child may feel everything has changed but it can give your child a good feeling to know your love has not changed.
- Help your child **find children to play with** in the new neighborhood. New friends can make a place feel fun and they will probably go to school with children who live nearby.
- Get back to the status quo. When you are settled in your new home, **resume familiar routines** as soon as possible. Try to keep things such as mealtime, bedtime, and family time the same as much as possible.

Everyone in the family will get used to the move in his or her own way. **Some children like the adventure of a new home** right from the start. **For other children, it can take longer.** The good thing to remember about moving is that most children are pretty resilient and adapt well to a move within two or three months. Finally, don't take it personally if your children blame you for the difficulty of a move. No matter how well you've prepared them, expect them to be a little upset and allow them some time to adjust to the move.

Moving with Pets

Arrangements have been made with the movers. You have a plan for closing up your old house and getting into a new one, but now you need to consider your pets. The first step before any move with a pet is **a trip to the vet. Gather records and immunization histories and refill any needed prescriptions.** Make sure your pet is wearing proper identification prior to moving. Find a vet in your new location and make contact prior to the move. Then figure out your travel plan.

Following are some options plus a few tips to make each option easier on you and your pet.

Drive the pet yourself. This is probably the simplest and definitely the most cost-effective option. Still, it can be a complicated and difficult drive.

- **Plan your route and overnight stops,** if travelling long distance. Make sure you have reservations at a pet-friendly hotel and are prepared to stop every couple of hours at areas with grassy spaces so you can walk your dog. It's best to transport cats in a crate with a litter box.
- **Have at least one other person travel with you.** You never want to leave your pet alone in a locked car. Take turns visiting the restroom and grabbing food.
- Bring more than enough **food and water in the car.** If you're delayed, you don't want to have to feed your pet something unfamiliar. The move is plenty of change for one day.

Fly the pet on a commercial flight (either as a carry-on or in cargo, depending on the size). While air travel for pets can be risky and expensive, there are a few things you can do to prevent trouble.

- Do your research. **Each airline has a different and very specific policy on pets.** Many small dogs and cats can fit under the seat in front of you, but larger pets must be checked in cargo. There are regulations on everything from crate sizes to your pet's health.
- **Allow yourself more than enough time for check in.** Getting your bags checked and your family through airport security is difficult enough, but with a pet it is that much more complicated. Arrive well ahead of your scheduled departure time.
- **Travel when the weather is mild.** Airlines regulate when a pet can be transported in the cargo bay. This is for your pet's safety, so it's best to avoid flying at any time of the year when the weather could be extremely hot or cold on your flight route.

Hire a pet transportation company to take care of moving your pet. While this can be an expensive option, hiring a reputable company to move your pet means you can focus on moving yourself. These companies can provide peace of mind as long as you do your part.

- **Check a company's credentials.** Make sure it is legitimate and hold the proper certifications. Ask other friends who've moved pets for recommendations or ask your moving company. They should be able to assist you in hiring an experienced pet relocation company.
- If possible, **try to meet the person who will be responsible for your pet on moving day.** It is important that you feel comfortable with the person and confident in the person's ability.
- **Give the person any and all information about your pet** and its behavior, including anything your pet finds particularly soothing.

If moving is stressful for you, imagine how it must seem to your pet, who has no clue what's going on. Do all that you can to ease the transition, and hopefully these tips will lead to a painless relocation for both of you.

Taxes

If the move is due to a new job or relocation, then **some of your moving expenses may be tax-deductible, so hold on to every receipt** related to the move. You might want to keep a detailed log of all move-related expenses as many things, including a pre-move trip to scope out your new home to long-distance phone calls, may be tax-deductible. Always consult a tax expert regarding IRS rules relating to moving, as well as the IRS website - <https://www.irs.gov/>.

Moving Checklist

With some planning, you will have a smoother move. Below is a timeline and checklist that might help you through the process. Though the timeline starts at 12 months, if you are not able to start that early then all of the suggested steps can be compressed into a much shorter time period.

12 Months Before

- If you are moving with children, **start investigating child care and schooling options**. New Columbia faculty and employees can contact the Office of Work/Life's School and Child Care Search Service for information about early education, child care, and schooling options in the metropolitan New York area.
<https://worklife.columbia.edu/content/school-and-child-care-search-service>
- If you own your home, **speak with real estate agents in your current and future areas** to coordinate the proper timing for the sale and purchase of property, if applicable.

3 - 6 Months Before

- **If moving internationally, have your children's immunization records and transcripts** translated into English.
- If you are **responsible for the care of an elderly relative**, look into options for their continued care in your absence.
- Start the process of **selling your current home and the purchasing of your new home**, if applicable.
- **Start cleaning out closets, garages and attics**. You will get a more accurate quote from your mover if most of the items you intend to discard or give away are not in your home when the mover surveys it.
- Decide **what type of moving service you need**, research average moving costs for that type of service, and plan your budget to make sure you can afford it. Do you want the moving company to pack everything for you and transport it for you or do you want to pack the items yourself and then have the moving company transport them? How many miles are you moving? How many rooms are in your house?
- **Take an inventory** of your belongings.

- **Create a folder to store everything related to your move**, including invoices, lists, contact information, etc. Keeping the invoices in this folder will make it easy for you to file for a moving tax deduction later on if you decide to do so.
- **Ask for three estimates in writing from moving companies** that specialize in the type of move you will have – local, domestic or international.

2 – 3 Months Before

- **Go to the dentist and doctor.** Standards of dental and medical care can vary widely. A dental and medical checkup before you leave might prevent an emergency and will also allow you more time to research dentists and physicians at your new home. Additionally, request copies of your dental and medical records to take with you.
- **Order an advance supply of six months or more of any prescriptions** you or a family member takes regularly. Keep copies of the prescription and any records for the pharmacist.
- **Get a copy of your corrective lens prescription.** Consider ordering a spare pair of eyeglasses, and any special solutions or eye medications that you might need.
- **Get copies of your pet's medical and immunization records** from the veterinarian. If your pet takes any medication, be sure you will have enough of a supply to last at least a month after you have moved.
- **If moving internationally, ask your physician or pharmacist to write down the generic names for your medications.** Brand names of medications can vary dramatically from country to country and doing this will allow a pharmacy in your new country to make the appropriate match. This may also be a good time to obtain any necessary paperwork your new country requires regarding your medications, and to order a medical bracelet with information in the destination country's language, if needed.
- **If moving internationally, check expiration dates of passports** for all family members and obtain new passports or renewals as appropriate.
- **If moving internationally, review visa or work permit requirements.**
- **If moving internationally, get extra passport photos.** Passport photos are useful for much more than passports. Many countries use them for permits, licenses, bank account applications, and academic files. By having passport photos already available in advance, you can cut a sometimes frustrating and tedious step out of various registration processes.
- **If moving internationally, complete any recommended shot or immunizations** for you and the family.
- If you have not already chosen a moving company, be sure to do this now. **Set a moving date with the company and review the terms of your agreement** with them.

- **Make sure your belongings are adequately insured**, either by the mover or your homeowner's/renter's insurance.
- **Make travel arrangements.**
- **Make arrangements for temporary accommodations**, if necessary.
- If renting your current home, **let your landlord know you will be moving out**. If you are breaking your lease, have a written agreement with your landlord about the arrangements.
- If you are planning to rent in your new location, **plan a trip to find a new property at least 30 days prior to your arrival**. The advance time required will vary depending on location.
- **Make arrangements to sell any automobiles**, if necessary.

1 Month Before

- **Double-check that the terms of payment set out in your moving agreement have been met** or that you have the money to meet them on the specified due date. You may need to make an initial deposit and then pay the rest of the cost on the day of your move.
- If necessary, **you may need to arrange for extra storage** at your new location. Contact storage companies in your new area to find out how their storage process works and what it will cost to store your items. If you decide you need storage and want your movers to deliver things there on moving day, be sure to contact your moving company and let them know; there will most likely be an extra charge for this.
- **Reserve the rental truck** if you are moving yourself.
- If you are packing yourself, **order packing supplies and start packing** your belongings into boxes. Be sure to check which items moving companies are not allowed to move (most moving companies should be able to provide you with this information). These items include hazardous materials. If you have items that the company is not able to move, you will either have to properly dispose of them, or find your own means of transporting them safely.
- **Pack the least frequently used items first**. Set aside important papers to keep with you on moving day. If possible, pack one room at a time to minimize stress. Label each box with the room it will go into in your new home and a detailed summary of its contents.
- **Contact your telephone, cable and utility companies to request disconnection** on the night of your moving day, and to have final bills sent to your new address. Arrange to have services connected in your new place one day before you move-in.
- **Discontinue newspaper or magazine subscriptions**, if still receiving hard copies, or have them forwarded to your new address.

- **Discontinue other home deliveries** or services (i.e. garbage pick-up, etc.).
- If necessary, **arrange for off-site child care** the day of the move and the delivery day.
- **Get all school records** and, if possible, have one last meeting with your child's teachers. Have relevant records translated into English, if necessary.
- **Back-up all files on your computer** and self-transport the backed-up files.
- If you know where you are moving, try to **get a floor plan of the property**. Think about the location of each piece of furniture. If there are items that will not fit or you cannot use, consider disposing of them by either donating or selling them.
- If anything you are moving requires a special service, **make arrangements with the required specialist** (i.e. disconnection of ice makers, hard-wired light fixtures, etc.).
- If you are moving in or out of an apartment building, you may need to **reserve the elevator, loading dock, or a parking** space for the moving van. Additionally, many buildings require a Certificate of Insurance from the mover.
- **Hold a garage sale or donate items** you will not bring with you.

1 – 2 Weeks Before

- **Take photos** of everything you are moving.
- **Pack a suitcase** for each member of the family with one to two weeks of clothing and essential supplies that each person uses every day. Then pack some boxes of larger essentials that you use every day (such as plates and cooking utensils) and label these boxes clearly; you will unpack these first at your new location.
- Make sure that your **moving company has your new address** and the floor plan you designed so that they know where to place large pieces of furniture at your new home. You may want to confirm the details of your move with the moving company again, making them aware of any changes to your inventory or move plan (for instance, if you need to add an additional stop to pick up/deliver furniture from/to a storage facility).
- Send out **change-of-address notifications**. Give the post office your information at either a local post office or online at <https://moversguide.usps.com>.
- **Give away any live plants** if you are not able to move them yourself. Usually movers will not be responsible for them.
- **Lawn care, snow removal, and other gasoline-powered machines** must be emptied of gasoline and oil prior to the move. Wash out all gasoline cans to eliminate fumes.
- **Dispose of any items the mover cannot take** (i.e. aerosol containers, explosives, cleaning fluids, flammable liquids, etc.).

- **Take out all items from your safe deposit box.**
- **Collect any dry cleaning, laundry, items at the repair shop,** items borrowed by friends or family, etc.
- **Notify medical insurance, homeowner's or renter's insurance and automobile insurance** companies of new address.
- **Make any local transportation arrangements** from old home to airport and airport to new home.

1 Day Before

- Make sure that you **set aside your suitcases and your "Last Box Packed / First Box Unpacked" boxes** in an easy-to-access place in case you need to use items from them (such as medications and tools) up until the morning of the move.
- **Separate all the items you plan to take with you** prior to the moving crew's arrival. This could include cell phones, chargers, prescription medicine, car keys, clothing, etc. – anything you'll need while the majority of your belongings are on a truck. Label these items so the crew knows not to pack them.
- **Do not ship sentimental or important documents** such as birth certificates, insurance papers, deeds, medical records, passports or anything that may be required when purchasing or renting a new home, such as bank statements. Add these to that "do not pack" pile.
- **Check to make sure all walkways and driveways are clear** of any obstruction, including snow or ice if moving in winter.
- **Have enough cash to tip your movers** (generally you can give the tip money to the foreman, and it will be distributed evenly to the movers) and/or to pay the balance of moving fees when the movers get to the new location (if this is set out in your moving agreement).
- **Empty and defrost refrigerators and freezers.**
- **Remove toner and ink cartridges from all printers.**
- **Disconnect and label all cables and wires to TVs, stereos, DVD players, video game consoles, etc. for easy set-up at destination.** This will prevent you from trying to solve a complicated puzzle on a hectic day.
- **Take photos of any item that will be disassembled.** The photos might help in reassembly.

Moving Day

- **Accompany your movers as they walk around** and inspect your belongings and double-check your inventory.
- **Be present to answer questions** and give directions to the movers. Stay until they finish.
- **Give the driver directions** to your new home and be sure the movers have a cell phone number to reach you at any point up to delivery. Make sure you keep your charger with you.
- **Before you sign, carefully read** the information on the Estimate, Order for Service, Bill of Lading, Inventory, and any other completed documents given to you by the mover. Keep all documents until your goods have been delivered, the charges are paid, and any claims have been settled.
- Make sure **all boxes are labeled** with your last name and the room from which the items came. This will help with delivery.
- If the movers disassemble any furniture, **place all screws and hardware in a plastic bag and clearly label it**. Keep any moving invoices in a safe place and later add them to your moving folder.
- **Walk through all of the rooms and outdoor areas** (including the garage, if applicable) and double-check that nothing is left behind.
- **Hydrate and feed the movers** – you will get better service from them!
- **Plan to be available** for all of the days you have set aside for your move – do not schedule travel the same day as unexpected events can occur.
- **Perform a complete walk** through prior to the van operator leaving your home to ensure all items have been packed. Open and check all cabinets, closets and drawers; look outside, on patios and in the garage. Has everything been packed and placed on the truck? That overlooked cabinet of dishes probably won't fit in your car or your carry-on luggage.
- **Tip the movers** the amount you are comfortable with, but \$20 per mover for a full day is recommended.
- **Do any last minute cleaning**. Lock all windows and doors as you leave.

Delivery Day (May be the same as Moving Day, if moving locally)

- **Make sure all pathways and corridors are free of obstructions**, so movers have easy access into the property.
- **Be present to answer any questions and give directions**. Supervise unloading and unpacking of your goods.

- **Note on the inventory list all boxes or other items that are damaged** before you sign any documents.
- **Pay the driver** according to the terms of your agreement.
- The State of New York **allows movers to charge a 1% fuel surcharge fee** under certain circumstances.
- **Hydrate and feed the movers.**
- **Tip the movers** the amount you are comfortable with, but \$20 per mover for a full day is recommended.
- **Have a printed layout of the new residence** so you can quickly advise the movers where to place items. This will help you avoid rearranging furniture and minimize your heavy lifting.
- **Do not plan delivery of your household goods on the same day as closing on the purchase of a new home.** No matter how early your appointment is or how late the van operator plans to arrive, plans change. You don't want your shipment to have to go into storage unplanned.
- **If anything is missing or damaged, make a note of it** on the inventory list and any other pertinent documents prior to signing.
- Check to see that all **appliances are working properly** in your new residence.
- Check to see that **gas and electricity are working properly** in all parts of the home.

Post-Move

- Apply for a **new state or country's driver's license**.
- Apply for a **new pet license** for your dog or cat.
- **Register your automobile.**
- **Register your children for school**, if you were not able to do so prior to your move.
- **Find new doctors and other specialists**, as required.

Resources

Mover Organizations and Information

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

<https://www.protectyourmove.gov/consumer/awareness/rights/rights.htm>

<https://www.fidi.org/>

Rental Furniture

<https://www.cort.com/columbia>

Rental Trucks

National Truck Rental Companies

<https://www.budgettruck.com/>

https://www.enterprisetucks.com/truckrental/en_US.html

<https://www.pensketruckrental.com/>

<https://ryder.com/>

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

<https://www.upack.com/>

Local Truck Rental Company

<https://www.ccrentalnyc.com/>

Storage Facilities

<http://www.chelsea-mini-storage.com>

<https://www.extraspace.com>

<https://www.lifestorage.com/storage-units/new-york/new-york/>

<https://www.storage-mart.com/manhattan-mini>

<https://www.moishesselfstorage.com/>

<https://www.publicstorage.com/>

<https://www.storagedeluxe.com/>

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

Taxes

<https://www.irs.gov/>

US Customs

<https://www.cbp.gov/>

Sources

Allen, Stewart Lee, Jennifer Cecil, Jack Finnegan, and Belden Merims. Newcomer's Handbook for Moving To and Living In New York City. Portland: First Books, 2009.

Arpin International
<https://www.arpinintl.com/>

Bright Horizons
<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources>

Continuum International Relocation Services
<http://www.continuumrelo.com>

Employee Relocation Council
<https://www.worldwideerc.org/>

Living Abroad LLC
<http://www.livingabroad.com>

Street Easy
<https://streeteasy.com/>

Suddath International
<https://suddath.com/>

U.S. Department of Transportation
<https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/protect-your-move>

Columbia University
Office of Work/Life
Housing Information and Referral Service
al2775@columbia.edu
<https://worklife.columbia.edu/>

Please see [website](#) for office locations and additional contact information.

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