

HOW TO

Pack Like a Pro

Plan ahead. Develop a master to-do list so you won't forget something critical heading into moving day. This will also help you create an estimate of moving time and costs.

Discard items you no longer want or need. Ask yourself how frequently you use an item and how you'd feel if you no longer had it. Sort unwanted items into "garage sale," "donate," and "recycle" piles.

Pack similar items together. It will make your life easier when it's time to unpack.

Decide what you want to move on your own. Precious items such as family photos, valuable breakables, or must-haves during the move should probably stay with you. Pack a moving day bag with a small first-aid kit, snacks, and other items you may need before unpacking your "Open First" box.

Know what your movers will take. Many movers won't take plants or liquids. Check with them about other items so you can plan to pack them yourself.

Put heavy items in small boxes. Try to keep the weight of each box under 50 pounds.

Don't overpack boxes. It increases the likelihood that items inside the box will break.

Wrap fragile items separately. Pad bottoms and sides of boxes and, if necessary, purchase bubble-wrap or other packing materials from moving stores. Secure plants in boxes with air holes.

Label every box on all sides. You never know how they'll be stacked. Also, use color-coded labels to indicate which room each box should go in, coordinating with a color-coded floor plan for the movers.

Keep moving documents together in a file, either in your moving day bag or online.

Include vital contact information, the driver's name, the van's license plate, and the company's number.

Print out a map and directions for movers and helpers. Make several copies, and highlight the route. Include your cell phone number on the map.

Back up computer files on the cloud. Alternatively, you can keep a physical backup on an external hard drive offsite.

Inspect each box and piece of furniture as soon as it arrives. Ahead of time, ensure your moving company has a relatively painless process for reporting damages.