

How to Pack Like a Pro

Box Basics

When moving, it pays to use the right packing materials and boxes. Your belongings are more likely to arrive safely when wrapped well and placed in appropriately sized and shaped boxes.

Whenever possible, pack items like small appliances, stereo equipment, and electronics in their original packaging.

For other household items, use sturdy boxes in a variety of sizes and shapes. To learn more about the types of boxes that are available, see *Selecting the Right Moving Boxes* below.

Other Supplies to Consider

Make a trip to your local home improvement center, moving provider, or storage facility for all your packing necessities. Having these items readily at hand when you need them is on our list of essential packing tips. Here's what you'll want to purchase:

- Packing materials:
 - For most items, use packing paper (clean, unprinted newsprint).
 - For delicate items, use bubble wrap, tissue paper, or paper towels.
 - For filling empty spaces in boxes, use packing peanuts, wadded-up newspaper, old pillows, towels, or blankets.
- Rolls of PVC tape (not masking tape or cellophane tape)
- Tape dispenser
- Broad-tipped, water-resistant markers for labeling
- Box cutter or knife for cutting cartons
- Notebook and pen or pencil for listing contents of cartons as they are packed
- Labels or stickers for identifying boxes

Wrapping How-To's

Before packing boxes, you'll need to wrap most items to protect them from scratching and breakage. There are a variety of materials available, including bubble wrap, tissue paper, or paper towels, but most professionals use bundles of clean, unprinted newsprint.

Start by placing a small stack of paper on a flat, uncluttered table or countertop. Round glasses and jars can be rolled up in two or three sheets of paper; always begin from a corner of the sheet and fold the sides in as you roll. Large or odd-shaped items require a similar technique. Place them in the center of the sheet and bring the corners together. (It may be necessary to flip the item over and wrap it again from the other side.) If in doubt, use more paper! Where the corners come together, secure them with tape.

Before packing each box, line the bottom with a few inches of packing peanuts, wadded-up newspaper, old pillows, towels, or blankets for padding. Then place large, heavier items on the bottom and lighter, more fragile items on the top. For extra heavy items, use small boxes.

As each layer is completed, fill in empty spaces firmly with wadded-up newspaper; then add more newspaper to make a level base for the next layer, or use sheets of cardboard cut from cartons as dividers. The more fragile the item, the more cushioning needed. Be sure no sharp points, edges, or rims are left uncovered.

Don't overload boxes; limit carton weight to about 50 pounds. Strive for a firm pack that will prevent items from shifting. The cover should close easily without force, but should not bend inward. Tape boxes securely to avoid shifting while en route and label the outside of the box.

Note: If you are hiring professional movers, do not tape up cartons containing items that must be left open for the van operator's inspection.

Labeling Hints

Imagine a truckload of boxes scattered around your new home. How can you tell what box goes where? By labeling them correctly, you can avoid any confusion and find exactly what you are looking for.

Use a broad-tipped, water-resistant marker. Clearly mark each box with:

- Your name
- General description of the contents (like “Pots & Pans” or “Books”)
- Room in which the box belongs
- Separate, unique number that corresponds with a numbered list detailing its specific contents. (On moving day, you can use this list to check boxes off as they are unloaded from the truck.)

You may also choose to label the outside of boxes with additional information, where applicable:

- Write “FRAGILE” and “THIS END UP” where appropriate.
- Put a special mark (like the number 1 or the letter A) on cartons you want to unpack first at your destination.
- If you will put some boxes in storage, pack according to the season; clearly mark boxes that are going to storage.
- If available, include your bill of lading (or invoice) number on every box.

Selecting the Right Moving Boxes

- Dish pack (or china barrel) - Extra sturdy corrugated carton of double-wall construction for all breakables such as china, dishes, crystal, and glassware. You may also want to use cellular dividers inside the carton as an extra measure of protection
- Small (book carton/1.5 cu. ft.) - small, easy-to-handle carton designed for heavy items such as books and records
- Medium (3 cu. ft.) - medium utility box often used for pots and pans, toys, non-perishable food, and small appliances
- Large (square/4.5 cu. ft.) – larger carton designed for bulky items such as linens, towels, toys, or lampshades
- Large (rectangular/6.0 cu. ft.) – larger carton designed for lightweight bulky articles such as pillows, blankets, and large lampshades
- Wardrobe - Large carton with hanger bar to accommodate clothes from your closet or draperies
- Mirror - telescoping cartons for almost any size of framed artwork, mirror, or glass
- Mattress - Cartons available in king, queen, double, single (twin), and crib sizes; one needed for each box spring and every mattress

More Moving/Packing Tips

To get a jump start on packing, a month or two before moving, pack out-of-season items. A few weeks before moving, pack things that you use infrequently. At the last minute, pack the items that you will need until moving day.

Here are some more helpful moving/packing tips:

- Pack similar items together. For example, do not pack a delicate china figurine in the same carton with cast-iron frying pans.
- Keep all parts or pairs of things together. For example, curtain rod hangers, mirror bolts, and other small hardware items should be placed in plastic bags and taped or tied securely to the article to which they belong.
- Wind electrical cords, fastening them so they do not dangle.
- Use newspapers for cushioning only. The ink can rub off and embed itself onto fine china.
- Plates, books, and things of a similar shape should be loaded vertically to utilize their own maximum structural strength.
- Pack small, fragile, individually-wrapped items in their own boxes, or place a few together in a small box, cushioning with crushed or shredded paper. Place these small boxes in a single large box, filling in spaces with wadded-up paper.
- Have the kids pack a box of their “special” items, things that they’ll want to have nearby as soon as you arrive at your new home. Make sure this box is one of the first to be unloaded.

What Not to Pack

Obviously, not everything will fit into a box. As a general rule, furniture should be wrapped and padded by a moving professional. For moving major appliances, see *Tips for Moving Appliances* below.

Items requiring professional disassembly and/or crating (such as slate pool tables, chandeliers, or large glass table tops) are best left to the professionals.

- **Items that Require Professional Disassembly or Special Packaging** (such as slate pool tables, chandeliers, or large glass table tops) – Leave them for the movers.
- **Heat-Sensitive Items** (such as candles, records, audio and video tapes, and computer disks) - If you must take these items to your new home, bring them with you in your climate-controlled car or truck.
- **Irreplaceable Papers and Objects** - Whether these items have significant monetary value, are financial/personal in nature, or have sentimental value, keep these items with you or have them shipped by trackable shipping service:
 - Address books
 - Cameras
 - Car keys
 - Cash
 - Computer software and disks
 - Family heirlooms
 - Financial papers
 - Jewelry
 - Letters, personal papers, and diaries
 - Medical records
 - Other important documents
 - Photos and photo albums
- **Hazardous, Flammable, and Spillable Items** – Do not put anyone in danger. Leave hazardous items behind when you move. Ask your neighbors if they can use these items; otherwise, dispose of them properly with assistance from your recycling company or the EPA. Plan to purchase new items once you arrive at your new home.
 - Flammable, corrosive, or explosive items
 - Lamp oil
 - Aerosols
 - Motor oil
 - Ammonia
 - Oil-based paints / paint thinner
 - Nail polish remover
 - Car batteries
 - Paints
 - Charcoal
 - Pesticides
 - Charcoal lighter fluid
 - Poisons
 - Cleaning solvents
 - Pool chemicals
 - Fertilizer
 - Gasoline
 - Sterno
 - Kerosene
 - Weed killer
 - Propane tanks
 - Loaded guns

Packing Difficult Items

- **Small Appliances**

- Whenever possible, pack small appliances in their original packaging.
- If you do not have the original box, place items in a cushioned box for added protection. For cushioning, you can use packing peanuts, wadded-up newspaper, old pillows, towels, or blankets.
- If your appliance has pieces that may fall off in the move, secure them with tape.

- **Large Appliances**

- Check the owner's manual for special instructions before you start to pack. See also *Tips for Moving Appliances* below.
- Tape down any parts that could come loose, including electrical cords.
- Wrap the appliance with furniture blankets and tie securely with twine or strapping.

- **Electronic Equipment**

- Pack stereo equipment and electronics in their original packaging whenever possible.
- If you do not have the original packaging saved, wrap the equipment in plastic bags and bubble wrap.
- Place wrapped items in a cushioned box for added protection. For cushioning, you can use packing peanuts, wadded-up newspaper, old pillows, towels, or blankets.

- **Furniture**

- Wrap exposed legs in bubble wrap.
- Tape drawers shut, whenever necessary.
- Place all nuts, bolts, and screws in a sealable bag and tape directly to furniture.
- Wrap the item in a furniture blanket and tie it securely with twine or strapping.

- **Kitchenware**

- Wrap breakable items in packing paper (clean, unprinted newsprint) or bubble wrap.
- Place a bubble wrap sheet between each plate or bowl.
- Place wrapped items in box that is well cushioned.
- Load plates vertically to utilize their own maximum structural strength.
- Dish kits and glass kits are recommended to keep every item safe and in place.
- Mark the boxes as "FRAGILE".

- **Mirror and Framed Art**

- Tape an X of masking tape across mirrors and framed art with glass.
- Wrap each item in bubble wrap.
- Label each item "FRAGILE".

Tips for Moving Appliances

• Dishwasher

- Clean and dry thoroughly, leaving the door open for a few days before moving.
- Disconnect and drain hoses.
- Wrap dry hoses in towels and packing paper, and place inside the dishwasher.

• Washing Machine

- Clean and dry thoroughly.
- Disconnect and drain hoses.
- Wrap metal connector ends of hoses in a towel, and place inside washer before moving.
- Secure the tub following the manufacturer's guidelines to prevent swaying. Note: If you don't have the manufacturer's guidelines, you can purchase a washer kit with a manual that provides instructions on how to secure the tub by tightening down the tub screws. If you prefer not to do it yourself, there are many third party service providers, including some moving companies.
- Upon arrival in your new home, have the washer installed by a qualified installer.

• Clothes Dryer

- Clean and dry thoroughly, including the lint screen.
- Prior to plugging in your electric dryer at your new residence, have your power supply checked for the correct electrical requirements.
- If you are moving a gas dryer, hire a qualified technician to disconnect and cap off the gas line at your "old" residence and to check the gas supply, connect the gas line, seal any openings, light the pilot, and handle any other hook-up requirements at your "new" residence. The movers are not qualified to perform this service.

• Stove Top/Range/Oven

- Clean thoroughly.
- Detach all removable parts, and pack safely in a box, clearly marked with the contents.
- If you are moving a gas range, hire a qualified technician to disconnect and cap off the gas line at your "old" residence and to check the gas supply, connect the gas line, seal any openings, light the pilot, and handle any other hook-up requirements at your "new" residence. The movers are not qualified to perform this service.
- If you have an electric range, generally no servicing at your present residence is required.

• Refrigerator

- Dispose of all perishables.
- Unplug the power cord, wash all removable parts, and dry thoroughly.
- Allow time for all parts, including the interior of the refrigerator and freezer, to dry thoroughly prior to moving.
- Pack all loose parts including bins and shelves in a secured, approved container for moving.
- Vacuum the condenser or compressor.
- Empty and clean the evaporator pan; allow time for it to dry.
- Before moving, turn off the water, and disconnect the water line if you have a cold water dispenser or automatic icemaker.
- Empty the water reservoir.
- If your refrigerator or freezer is an older model, you may have to have the compressor or motor bolted down while moving.
- When arriving at your new residence, have the icemaker and water dispenser connected to water line by a qualified technician.
- To hook up your refrigerator at your residence, you may need to purchase copper tubing, a shut-off valve, or new fittings.
- At your new residence, allow 24 hours before operating the refrigerator. This will allow time for the oil to settle preventing damage to the compressor.