

Moving

Guide to Moving Home

1. **Who's Moving You?** Are you going to hire the professionals or do it yourself? Be realistic about the amount of stuff you have to move. If you're hiring a van to move yourself, make sure it's the right size.
2. Prepare to create more rubbish than you thought possible. Whether you're moving from the smallest apartment or downsizing from a large family house, you'll be surprised/horrified by the amount of stuff you've accumulated. **Hire a skip** or get plenty of refuse sacks.
3. **Get all the moving gear and lots of it before you start**, e.g strong tape, thick markers to write contents on boxes, scissors (at least two pairs!), tissue paper, a razor knife, bubble wrap, newspaper and cardboard boxes. This is where we come in very handy.
4. **Pack wisely.** Label boxes clearly. List what's in each box and what room it belongs to. Pack room-by-room so it'll save time when you get to your new home. Think weight and adjust content accordingly so an oversized box full of books is going to be impossible to lift. Mix heavy objects with lighters ones.
5. **Moving day can be traumatic for children.** Make sure they're prepared well in advance for the move. Figure out an age-appropriate activity so a little one could pack some of his or her own toys, while an older child can be of real help. You know your own children best. If you feel they'd be in the way or be upset by the day, arrange a babysitter.
6. **Don't forget the attic.** Many people do and it's a big, time-consuming job if you only remember it at the last minute. You might want to deliberately forget all the household junk you've packed away up there but your sales contract will most likely require the house to be cleared and that includes the attic. (The same applies to the garden shed and the garage.) Don't be tempted to leave behind old beds and bits of furniture - you are obliged to clear them out.
7. If you have pets, consider asking a friend to pet-sit on moving day so all the activity will upset even the most placid dog or cat.
8. Check your **home insurance policy** (you may not have one in rented accommodation) and ensure that your contents are covered from the day you move into your new home. Also check you are covered for damage and breakages during the move.

9. Three weeks before moving is a good time to start notifying people of your new address, i.e. friends, banks, credit card companies, insurance companies, subscription suppliers, doctors, schools etc. NewAddress.ie is a free change-of-address service which saves considerable time and hassle. The service enables you to change your address details with companies such as Bank of Ireland, Bord Gais, eircom and more than 50 other companies. The service, which is part of the MyHome.ie group, is free for the mover (the partner companies such as Bord Gais etc pay for it). If you have already moved, don't worry - you can still use the service and change your details. It only takes about 10 minutes to start the process on www.NewAddress.ie.

10. **Clean the house or apartment** from top to bottom before you walk out the door for the last time. It's a nice gesture and hopefully the person you are buying from will have done the same for you. A note wishing your buyers luck in their new home also creates goodwill. On a more practical level, detailing when bin day is; your regular window cleaner/gardener/cleaner/babysitter; and any guarantees/manuals of appliances you are leaving behind.

Some Solid All-round Advice on Moving House

Here we've got some excellent, sound advice, grounded in common sense, gleaned from the experiences of two much-moved Researchers:

I have moved four times over the last 17 years. Each time we moved it was to a house as opposed to an apartment so some of my tips may be a little grand for those changing apartments but the psychology is the same. I must also note that these moves involved pets, four children, and up to the last move, a husband.

- **Boxes:** Getting boxes is the real commitment to moving. You may have signed a lease or mortgage, but until you get the boxes, you're not really moving. The best places for boxes are small clothing stores (deliveries are pretty regular, they are clean, and these retailers love to free up space delegated to recycling) and fruit and vegetable packers. For \$1 a piece you can get brand new strong boxes that are perfect for books, dishes and other heavy stuff.
- **Rubbish Removal:** Unless you are a very organised person or have a lot of time, don't kid yourself about the garage sale. If you have anything an antiques dealer might be interested in, call them and have them stop by. If one isn't interested, try another. If none are interested give the items away or put them at the curb with a sign, 'Inquire'. If no one inquires by the time the garbage men come, remove the sign and let it go. For those moving from a house, a small four-yard container (dumps) that is emptied at least once a week for a term of a month should work out nicely. These companies are less picky about what's in there. (More on this later.)
- **Initial Packing:** Start with books, records and video tapes. They pack nicely; usually make a nice, neat stack that you can be proud of, and it looks to others in the family like you have really got things going and they need to catch up. Remember not to seal the videos yet. You will want to watch them for company when you're packing alone later. In the kitchen, just plan to eat simply till you move and leave two pots, two pans and a few cooking utensils. If everyone works or attends school, pack the dishes, glassware and silverware. Invest in cheap plastic dishes, cups, and 'silverware' that you will discard after your last meal in that home. Get just enough for everyone to have one of everything (leaves counters free for packing).
- **Bedrooms:** Free style your own room, but get children packing early. Give them ample boxes and ask regularly if they have finished. When they say yes, or 'I'm down to necessities!', wait till they go to school and 'finish'. This usually requires many garbage bags. Quickly pick through for family heirlooms, baby pictures, etc, then toss the rest. Have it all tightly tied in black trash bags and in the dumpster before they get home.

- **Those Boxes You Never Unpacked from the Last Move:** One would think, just count them as packed. No. Unless you know it's Aunt Clara's china, open the boxes and see what's there. Truly, if you haven't touched it in five years, many things are outdated, broken, moldy, or you only humoured a family member by packing it the last time. You will probably reduce the number of boxes by half. (Remember all this stuff has to fit into a moving truck and you pay by the foot.) You can reuse some of the boxes by simply dumping the contents into the dumpster, and blacking out the previous notations.
- **The Moving Van:** Shop around for price and try to have it two or three days before the actual move if it is a big move. After lifting bedroom sets, books, sofas, weight sets and the like, you'll be amazed at how many things no longer needed to come. At this point many extras are at the curb with a 'free' sign, or surrounding that tiny dumpster. This is when you bribe the driver of the garbage truck to fit you in to his schedule everyday till you're gone and to overlook that many things were not actually in the dumpster. Keep a few boxes ready for last minute changes of heart in the other direction as well. If you don't use them you can leave them for the garbage man.

Remember to keep smiling, have plenty of refreshments on hand and the longer it takes you to get started is directly proportional to the amount of stuff you throw away.

Advice from the (Semi) Professional...

My husband used to say that the reason he married me was that I could pack a house in 24 hours - at the time we were living in a country where naughty expatriates were often given 24 hours to leave, so it was a consideration, although not, as it turned out, a foundation for a lasting marriage...

Anyway, in the last 30 years I have lived in 25 houses in 10 different countries. I have had professional packers twice in that time (the only two occasions on which anything got broken) and I have packed, or helped pack, for many friends in that time.

Get heaps more boxes (from the office, the grocer, etc) than you think you are going to need.

Two pairs of scissors, parcel tape and marking pens go in a small box out of reach of children.

Don't put more in a box than you can comfortably lift yourself - you're going to find a box of books in the kitchen that should be two flights of stairs further up, however careful your labelling.

Label everything in big letters. If you are going to another country, make three copies of packing lists. One goes inside the box. One is for customs and one for your file. These things should be remorselessly detailed (eg, 75 poetry books, one Chinese vase wrapped in eight pairs of tights - in fact, this Researcher has been known to list book titles, but, in her own words, that really *is* anal).

Do as much packing as you can while the kids are asleep. If you have a bossy friend, let them get on with it - you provide food and liquor over several evenings.

If children are under five years old, don't send them away to sleep. They will panic.

However, harden your heart and send pets away for a few days. Leave the children's things till last if they're little. Older children can pack their own stuff if it's not breakable.

Roll all clothes - fewer creases, so less ironing the other end.

Medicine goes on your person - in hand baggage (with a prescription if there's any danger of it being mistaken for hard drugs at the border).

Don't leave spaces for things to rattle into and break. Cram underwear, socks, tampons into every spare inch.

Wrap all liquids in at least two plastic bags with sticky tape round the necks of the bottles.

Moving Sale

Have a huge garage sale two weeks before you intend to move. Gather up every [tchotchke](#) and dust collector you own and put them on sale. Bring out all of the salvageable clothing from the 'skinny' end of your closet, pile up all of the magazines from the stacks, and dig out all of those queen-sized sheets that don't fit your new double bed.

Any gift you've never used goes here, as well as anything that you and your partner do not mutually love; CDs you never listen to, VCR tapes you haven't looked at in years, everything.

Organise your sale in an interesting display. You'd be surprised how many people will slam on the brakes and stop at the sight of a stack of National Geographic Magazines. Tell people that if they buy two items, they get one free. Sell clothing as 'complete outfits' for a fiver. Be creative! You will be pleasantly astonished at the amount of money you can make a nickel or a dime at a time.

When the sale is over, take everything of practical use to a charitable organisation, and get a deduction slip for tax purposes. Mercilessly discard everything else. In the case of magazines, timeless publications like the National Geographics always go to the local pokey for the people who have too much time on their hands. Home and garden publications always go to the local assisted-living facility. Try to find an appreciative audience for whatever you normally enjoy. Think about those situations where you would like to find something interesting to read, and carry them there.

Instead of using paper boxes for your belongings, consider investing in a collection of large plastic storage boxes with lids. They keep dust and moisture off your belongings, offer great temporary storage, and stack when not in use. These containers have saved this Researcher's 'stuff' on many occasions when hurricanes and floods threatened, and an immediate evacuation was ordered.

Things never to move: magazines and perishable food items. Magazines weigh a ton.

Most of us furnish to fit the space. If we have empty bookcases, we buy books to fill them up. Try to unload the same way. It is much better to enjoy the extra space in a new place because you edited well rather than try to shoehorn in everything that used to fit in the old space. It also helps to eliminate any feelings of depression or inadequacy you might feel over moving to a place with less storage or square footage.

Always let your mantra be, 'Move as little as possible to be comfortable.'

Witchy Tips

New houses are still full of the old tenants' vibes and life clutter, so, for a full fresh start, cleanse the house of all its old energies before you move your new stuff in. Some say the easiest way is an old feng shui tip; scatter salt over all the carpets and leave, for a few hours, or overnight. The salt will absorb the left over energy, and then you can Hoover it all up, throwing the bag away immediately. You could also place bowls of salt water in the centre of each room, which you then leave to do their work then pour away, and 'sweep' the old energies out with your broom. Always buy new mops and brooms for a new house, as this also symbolises a new start.

Stress and Sadness

Some people get so wrapped up in the physical necessities of moving (packing, paperwork, and so on) that they forget to watch out for *themselves*. If you're not moving in a horrible rush, though, it's a good idea to make time to do the following:

- Set aside extra time for packing. It's better to take things slower with occasional mental health breaks.
- Visit anything around your old home that you kept meaning to get to (restaurants, attractions, parks, etc).
- Gather email addresses of local friends, along with addresses and phone numbers if you don't have them.
- Research the new area through the Internet, including potential social groups or clubs similar to what you're in.

Once you get to the new place:

- Remember that you don't have to be fully unpacked immediately. The knick-knacks can wait.
- Take enough time off with the busy schedule to have fun. Read a book. Go swimming. Whatever.
- Locate the closest mall or shopping centre. Consider buying a decorative item for the new home.
- Don't forget to use the email addresses you collected earlier. Let your old friends know how you are.

Moving is always stressful. But if you remember to take as good care of yourself as you take care of the stuff you're packing, things will be much better for you. Remember - your stuff is only moving because you are.



As for the sadness part, when you're moving far away from a place you have got very attached to, it can be a nightmare. The worst is if you got to move in a rush, then you won't have enough time to get used to the thought. But if you have got a little time, you should research and try to make a list of positive things you will get there, which you couldn't get in your previous home, and then get much information on everything on the list.

It was really depressed when I heard we had to move. I've lived here in Eidsvoll, Norway since I was born. But I found one positive thing; I got to change school. (My last year on school has been a nightmare, and now, finally I could move away from it). I got several brochures from the schools in the area, found one, and now I can't wait!

Here's another very interesting viewpoint on the same subject:

I agree. The same steps taken for adults to ease their nerves should be taken for children too. I got very upset (rightly so) as a youngster when we were moving and my mother treated her glassware like children and me like unwanted baggage. My grades dropped in school until after the move, and she regretted her lack of attention to me later. Kids don't want to leave their local friends, and very young ones can develop rich nightmares about the place they are moving to. If it's possible, I recommend taking the little one to see their new home sometime before the move. You could even take your kids along to a park or mall near the new place where they can feel a little more comfortable. Most importantly, just ask them what their worries and fears are. Ask them what they would like to happen at their new home. And really listen. Most kids have very reasonable requests. They will appreciate being thought of.

And With Every Hello There's a Goodbye...

Make sure that you (and especially the kids) say goodbye properly to the house and area. We went through each room before we started packing and I explained that soon the things would go in boxes and that soon after that we would all put them in our new house. When the old place was empty we went round and said goodbye to each room individually, and told them (the rooms) how much fun they would have getting to know their new family.

When I started packing I let the children pack a small box of their own things (you can re-pack them after they go to sleep) and helped them seal them with tape. They drew 'their' picture (they can't write yet) on their boxes, and supervised that they went in their new rooms. We undid the tape and let them unpack themselves. That way they were out of the way when we were moving the big stuff.

For about a month before the move we read a little story, every day - often more than once, about some children moving house. It helps if there is something really nice about the new place, or a really good reason to move. Then you can stress that for the kids ('there is a bigger garden, the play park is nearby' etc).

We spent some time before the move going to the new place (this isn't always possible, but maybe looking at a local website or local papers and maps would help) and learning the new area.

But it's not only the kids who need to say goodbye to places. And through it all, hopefully you're moving for a positive reason, you should try to remember why you're moving. Even if the house is being repossessed, think on; at least you won't have mortgage payments to make.

Packing!

First things first; when you're packing, always put a kettle, jar of coffee, tea bags, sugar (if you want it), teaspoons, milk, and a couple of mugs in a separate box. And when you move, take this box with you (and not in the removal van). That way, you can be sure of getting a drink as soon as you get there.

Talking of drinking, liquor stores can come in very handy indeed when moving house, and not because you can buy loads of booze to ease your worried mind:

Repeat after me; 'Liquor stores are my best friend'. I kid you not. When you're packing, you need lots of boxes. Liquor stores throw out boxes daily when unpacking beer and wine. Most are a great size for packing books, movies, CDs, knick-knacks, and so forth. Packing stores charge outrageous amounts for these boxes, but all you have to do is drive behind your local liquor store to get them for free. And they're typically quite clean, too. After all, the cans and bottles inside were never opened. For that matter, any retail store will typically have an excess of boxes. So will caf terias. Even office supplies create needless boxes, especially bulk paper boxes. Think creatively before spending good money on boxes. Instead, use the money to buy pizza for yourself and anyone who helps you move. You'll be glad you did!

Some more top packing tips!

My tip is... don't throw away all your boxes when you've finished unpacking! I know it is very tempting to get rid of anything that seems superfluous and untidy when you're in your new place, but there will come a time very soon when you'll need to move things around, redecorate or whatever - and where do you put all your little bits and pieces then, eh? Flat pack a few of the boxes that survived the tender care of the removal men, store them in your loft - it saves having to search out new ones all over again. Choose an easily identified box and designate it the spill over box. When you're filling the 'kitchen gadgets' box or the 'videotapes' box, there's always one item that doesn't fit. Put it in the spill over box, you don't even have to think about it. When you're unpacking and you desperately need the can opener that's missing from the kitchen gadgets box, you'll know where it is. I have a metal footlocker I use as my spill over box. Easy to spot and provides excellent protection in case any of the items is fragile.

Documents!

One Researcher feels very strongly indeed about documents:

I cannot stress this strongly enough, for Zark's sake organise all documentation into box files long before the day! This is for 3 reasons:

- *So you actually know what you have lost before the move.*
- *So you know what you have lost during the move.*
- *To stop a lot of shouting and screaming about who put it away, and where on Earth they put it.*

This is based upon years of experience of seeing people move, and just dump a load of unsorted papers into a box marked 'Important!' when they move. And then still arguing three years later when they can't find a manual for their over complex hi-fi, or the guarantee for their PC, or whatever.

People, it's just not worth the human cost.

Intercontinental moves

Moving house is one thing; moving house *and* moving country is another! When asked what to leave and what to bring on an intercontinental move some experienced movers say, 'Don't bring anything!' At least you have to think this way.

When you are packed, see if there is any room for small and valuable things that you use frequently. Everything else is not important. Do a quick sum, like is it worth £50 per kilo? If it's heavy then you can buy it when you get there. (Obviously, the figure differs from person to person and personal objects are more important to some than others).

Don't bring books. Lets face it you read them already or you are never going to read them. You can probably buy new ones in your new country when you have some free time. That said, bring one to travel with because it can get very boring on long flights. When you get to the airport, if you have a direct flight then see what you can get away with. Bring some family and have them hang around till you finish checking-in.

Pack as much as you can and try not to look conspicuous (pack well). Then load about 25kg is one bag on to the check-in (do some weight training so you can lift it while keeping eye contact with the lady. Ask for some heavy (max 10kg) item to be taken away to store by the staff (be very polite and grateful) because it's fragile then proceed to load up another small item to be checked in while they are working on the fragile item (they will see it but they are too busy to complain). Try to get your family to stand around because it psychologically looks like there are more people getting on the flight and the lady might forget that you are now nearly twice over the limit. Pack the heaviest things in your hand luggage but be warned things could go horribly wrong some airlines have those nasty springy baskets that measure size and weight (7kg max, push to 10, if you stuff your pockets).

For this you will need your family to take things away in order of heavy and useless. This is why you need them to bring spare bags; it is never too late to loose some heavy items. They can take the stuff home with them and bring them when they come visit you on holiday.

Net result you now have 10 kg in Fragile 25+ kg in the Hold and 10 kg in your hand. (5-10kg heading back home): 45kg in total.

Tip don't bring any liquids, because they explode and ruin your clothes. Keep fragiles in the suitcase but don't put fragile in the hold unless you strictly get them to put it in for you. They really pound the luggage into those cargo buggies. Wear baggy clothes and soft shoes, no belts (unless it is heavy) wear lots of clothes and hold your heaviest jacket in your arms even if it is summer. And have a pleasant journey!

Moving Pets Cross-country

Do not assume you can simply ride a horse behind your pets waving your hat and yelling 'Yeehah!'. This will not work. Here are some tips that a Researcher and his wife thought of while moving seven cats from Chicago to San José a few years ago, then a reconfigured six from San José to Chapel Hill in North Carolina. It is possible that some of these tips may well work for other small animals and children, but the following tips pertain to cats:

- Tell them it's not their fault. Often.
- Make sure all of them are current with their shots, and will be current for several months after the move - chances are you will need more time than you think at the other end to find a vet that fits. And make sure you have copies of all the vet records with you: you'll need them for the new doctor, and they might prove handy along the way should something unexpected occur.
- Make sure you have enough carriers of the correct size, ie: not too big. It will seem like you've chosen an Iron Maiden that is far too small, but you don't want them to rattle around and bang their fuzzy little heads every time you hit an unavoidable pothole.
- It helps to line the carriers with an absorbent, disposable pad (or three) under a towel. Someone will get carsick and/or poop or something no matter that you haven't fed them for the past eight hours. Also, toss in that t-shirt you've been packing in for three days straight - they will take some small comfort from the smell, even if you don't.
- Try not to put more than one cat in a carrier. Even litter mates who've grown up together and are normally inseparable might take their frustrations out on each other in these horrific circumstances.
- Put the carriers in the car so that they can see you: they will need to be able to stare accusingly at you during the trip. Have a towel or five handy (towels again!) to drape over the carriers when you need to get out of the car and stretch your legs. They will not be interested in seeing another scenic rest stop, and won't have change for the soda machine anyway. Avoid letting them think you are abandoning them.

- It is unlikely that you will find pet-friendly lodging along the way. This will, however, give you and your family the opportunity to play 'Smuggler'. Do not mention anything about your 'children' when checking in. Try to get a room that can't be seen by the front desk, and wait 'till the coast is clear before racing into the room with as many carriers as you can carry all at once. Whew! Of course, before this adrenalin high, you will have 'kitty-proofed' by tying up the drapes, sealing off the underside of the bed and having your temporary litter box set up and food and water waiting. Be prepared to de-fur the place before you leave in the morning.
- Remind them that it's not their fault again.
- It is possible to get over-the-counter car sickness remedies for cats/pets, but call your vet to check dosage limits. Some herbal tinctures like 'Rescue Remedy' seem also to help. Check with you vet for other suggestions unique to your special little furry barf-machine.
- Lastly, drive as fast as possible the whole way. It will take months and months before they begin to think about forgiving you, so get where you're going quickly and let them get started.
- Oh - you might want to have a pair of thick gloves around just in case. Good luck.

Assorted Suggestions

Here's a general round-up of some of the issues dealt with in this entry that deal with the stress-fest that is moving house. The general motto for moving is *let things go*. General stuff to have include:

- Boxes, loads of Boxes
- Markers
- Adhesive strips, kilometres of them.

How to best cope with stress and sadness concerning the move

Moving always means changing. People can fear changes. No matter how far the move is, a new ambience will bring new feelings. In order to cope with sadness the basic trick is to concentrate on what is to come and not what is going to be left behind. Perhaps the only way to deal with stress is by acknowledging that your stress is only temporary.

How to decide what things to throw away/leave behind

Not having many things, or just having the basic useful things is the best policy in the first place if there is the danger of many moves. But who knows when this is going to happen... People collect the strangest things, and people keep the strangest things, partly because these things bring back memories and make them remember their long-gone lovers. A move is a perfect pretext to change this attitude, and to get rid of all the stuff. Move on. Literally.

Things you can plan well in advance of the move

If the move is not a sudden one, there is basically only one thing to decide: what to take and what not to take. Furniture, books and electronic paraphernalia take the most space and are the bulkiest and heaviest part. Deciding if these things are going to be kept is crucial (For anyone looking for a reason: it is a good pretext to change styles or to get a new stereo and reduces drastically the amount of stuff to load). Check out if the place where you are moving to is easily accessible with a leather-sofa on the backpack. This helps your decision making process.

If there is the possibility, move in the summer.

How best to pack delicates/breakables

Delicates and expensive objects like Chinese Ming dynasty vases are best left unpacked. The reason for this is if you see a brown paper-wrap in the corner of the room where all the other stuff is piling to be transported, you will not automatically associate it with your beloved vase. People tend to get sloppy when they are not constantly being reminded that the stuff is fragile. Take out insurance, if it is too valuable... insured stuff rarely breaks.

How to keep an effective inventory

Boxes, many boxes. Markers, lots of markers. Write it down on every single box. If you are moving by yourself, it's OK to know what is in which box - you will not have to fear things being stolen.

What to pack/unpack first/last

First step: if there is the danger of things being delayed, pack an SOS pack containing clothing, sleeping bags, a small camping kitchen, food etc. First things to pack are books, clothes, crockery, mattress(es) and the last things to pack are cupboards, shelves, beds (and the stereo if the move is being done by yourself - you will need music).

The first things to unpack are the stereo (if you are moving by yourself), the mattress and your clothing (just in case everything else delays, you will want to sleep and have new underwear). After the vital systems are established, proceed to unpack the shelves cupboards and other furniture. The last things to unpack? Well, the rest of the stuff that goes on the shelves and into cupboards.

How to load the van if you're doing it yourself

Loading a van is real- life tetris. There is probably not a perfect way of doing this. Always be aware that things can tilt and slip forwards and backwards. The best thing is to have enough time to come and go many times because it's best not to overfill the van.

How to deal with heavy pieces of furniture

The obvious method: get rid of them. If there is the desire to keep them: find good and strong friends. There is no cheap-trick to circumvent *that*.

How to get along with brand new neighbours

Neighbours are always curious (they will never admit it), but they will not want to know hidden details of your life (at least not in the first week). At first they will be interested if you will bother them, ie if you are a musician, have teenage children, a huge dog or if you take care of the lawn.

At first they will be suspicious. To defuse that initial situation a grill-party or, if you want to keep a safe distance, an invitation for a coffee or a tea is the best thing to do. You are probably also curious about the neighbourhood. That is probably the best way to get to know it. As for the time after that... well, that's everyone's personal cup of tea.

How to deal with the kids during a move

I was a kid when we moved for the first time. I was very sad because I had to leave all my friends. The stuff, the car the kitchen and my room didn't matter to me. My father kept assuring me that we were not moving that far after all, and he kept telling me that old story about visiting each other and writing letters. For that moment I believed that - afterwards, of course, I wrote one or two letters, made new friends, and forgot all that was before. Children have this ability to let go.

Keeping kids busy is probably the best way to keep them from disturbing in the packing/loading part of the move.

And Finally...

And why not live on a boat? That way, when you want to move, you just sail off to some place else. Simple, eh?