

How to prepare for your next move

When you decide to move, don't expect to hear anyone say, "I'm so jealous. I just love moving!" It doesn't matter if it's your first house or fourth, moving can be stressful. Whether you're moving across town or somewhere much farther, here are a few things to consider when planning your next move.

Get an early start

The first step in planning a smooth move is to create a moving checklist that includes things like packing and/or hiring movers, submitting change of address forms and setting up utilities. You should do this at least four to five weeks in advance of your actual moving date. If you are moving yourself, reserve a moving truck as soon as you can. If you plan to hire professional movers, it's important to set that up early, too. Waiting until the last minute—particularly during the busy summer moving season—limits your options and may result in disappointment with both available service dates and the selection of the movers. At this stage, you should also begin notifying friends, family, and the post office of your change of address.

Declutter your home

Start sorting through your belongings early. Look at your next move as an opportunity to get rid of clutter. Hold a garage sale or donate items to your favorite charity. Downsizing will make packing simpler and less time consuming. And, if you're hiring movers, fewer boxes mean lower moving-related expenses.

Pack it up

Proper packing is crucial to a good move, but you don't have to do it yourself. You can hire professional movers to do the packing for you. By doing so, they typically are also accepting liability for items damaged in the move, but you should read the contract closely to see what's covered.

If you do the packing yourself, you will save money, but make sure you either pack well or insure your goods. There are several options for insuring your goods against possible loss or damage. If you choose a moving company that is a member of the American Moving and Storage Association, you will likely have limited liability insurance on your belongings. But this will only provide you with partial coverage. You can also purchase full-value protection based on the value you declare for your goods. In this case, any items that are lost or damaged are repaired or replaced, based on current market value. If you have homeowners insurance, check to see if it covers damage during a move.

When to make your move

Most people want to move during the summer months, which means professional movers are extremely busy and are likely charging premium rates at these times. It may also be easier to secure the company of your choice during the low season. Additionally, many consumers prefer to move at the end or the beginning of the month because that's when most mortgage and rent payments are due. If you can move in the middle of the month, during off-peak times, you'll likely save yourself some money and hassle.

Choosing a company

When it comes to choosing a moving company, it's important to do your homework. Ask your San Antonio area REALTOR® for a recommendation of local moving companies. Get several estimates and ask for a written, binding estimate. You may ask the moving company to visit your home for a more accurate estimate based on things like weight, number of boxes, what needs to go up or down stairs and the distance they will travel. Binding estimates guarantee the cost of the move based on items to be moved and services listed on the mover's estimate sheet. But remember, if you fail to list an item or need some additional packing services, the price will go up.

Ask questions such as whether they are licensed for in- or out-of-state moves, what insurance they offer and if there are items they won't transport. These movers are holding your life's possessions in their hands, so make sure you feel comfortable with your decision.

Moving doesn't have to be a terrible experience. With some advance planning, you can enjoy a smooth transition.

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