



How To Pack Like A Pro

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Who Will be Packing?

Your first step before moving is deciding whether you'll pack for yourself, hire a professional mover, or do a bit of both. Packing yourself will take some time and energy but can be a real money saver. Hiring a professional mover, on the other hand, can save you time and effort but cost a bit more. You also have the option of hiring a professional mover, yet packing some or all of your possessions yourself can trim your costs.

Box Basics

Use new high-quality packing materials specifically designed for moving to better ensure that your items will arrive safely. Professional moving cartons come in a variety of shapes and sizes specifically suited to fit a variety of household goods. Look into barrels, for example, as they are great ways of loading a lot of odd-shaped items into one large container. Sturdy boxes in a variety of sizes can be retrieved from your local Lowe's store. Stereo equipment and electronics should be replaced in their original packaging, if possible.

Other Supplies to Consider

- Bundles of [packing paper](#) (clean, unprinted newsprint)
- [Bubble wrap](#), tissue paper or paper towels for delicate items
- [Packing peanuts](#), wadded-up newspaper, old pillows and blankets
- Rolls of PVC tape (don't use masking tape or cellophane tape)
- Tape dispenser
- Broad-tipped markers for labeling
- A [razor knife](#) or [scissors](#) for cutting cartons
- Notebook and pen or pencil for listing contents of cartons as they are packed
- Labels or stickers for identifying boxes
- Dark, water-resistant marker

Wrapping How-tos

Before packing cartons, you'll need to wrap most items to protect them from scratching and breakage. There is a variety of materials available, including bubble pack, foam peanuts and tissue; however, 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! When the corners come together, secure them with tape.

Before packing each carton, line the bottom with a few inches of wadded paper for padding. Then place large, heavy items on the bottom and lighter, more fragile items on the top. Plates, books and things of a similar shape, should be loaded vertically to utilize their own maximum structural strength. Don't overload cartons; keep them to a manageable weight. Fill in any voids and top off loaded cartons with wadded paper. Then tape cartons securely to avoid shifting while en route.

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, felt-tipped marker. Clearly mark each box with your name, the contents and the room it belongs in. Assign a number to every room of your new home and label boxes with the number of the room in which they belong.

Also label each carton with a separate, unique number that corresponds with a numbered list detailing its contents, so finding specific items is a snap. On moving day, you can check boxes off on your list as they are unloaded from the truck to be sure nothing is left behind.

- Indicate "FRAGILE" on delicacies and "THIS END UP" where appropriate.
- Put a special mark (the number 1, or the letter A) on cartons you want to unpack first at destination.
- If you'll be putting some boxes in storage, pack according to the season. Mark the boxes accordingly.
- If available, include your bill of lading (or invoice) number on every box.

What Not To Pack

Obviously, not everything will fit into boxes. As a general rule, furniture and major appliances should be wrapped and padded by a moving professional. Also, items requiring professional disassembly and/or crating (such as slate pool tables, chandeliers or large glass table tops) are best left to the professionals. There are certain items that neither you (nor the professionals) should pack. These include heat-sensitive items like candles, records, audio and video tapes and computer disks. In addition, professional movers are prohibited from moving certain items such as aerosols, propane tanks, oil-based paints, some cleaning fluids, loaded guns and even nail polish remover. What's more, you may want to personally carry certain valuables such as important documents, jewelry and family photographs.

Tips from the Pros

Most movers suggest you start with out-of-season items. Next, pack things used infrequently. Leave until the last minute things you'll need until moving day. Here are some more helpful hints.

Empty drawers of breakables, spillables, nontransportable items and anything that would puncture or damage other items.

- Pack similar items together. For example, don't 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.
- Wrap items individually in clean paper. Use tissue paper, paper towels or even facial tissue for fine china, crystal and delicate items. Colored wrapping paper draws attention to very small things that might otherwise get lost in a carton. Use a double layer of newsprint for a good outer wrapping.
- Use newspapers for cushioning only. The ink can rub off and embed itself onto fine china. Place a two- or three-inch layer of crushed paper in the bottom of cartons for cushioning. Build up the layers, with the heaviest things on the bottom, medium weight next and lightest on top.
- As each layer is completed, fill in empty spaces firmly with crushed paper and add more crushed paper to make a level base for the next layer, or use sheets of cardboard cut from cartons as dividers.
- Cushion well with crushed paper; towels and lightweight blankets may also be used for padding and cushioning. The more fragile the item, the more cushioning needed. Be sure no sharp points, edges or rims are left uncovered.
- Pack small, fragile, individually wrapped items separately or a few together in small boxes, cushioning with crushed or shredded paper. Place small boxes in a single large box, filling in spaces with crushed paper.
- Limit carton weight to about 50 pounds. Avoid overloading cartons but strive for a firm pack that will prevent items from shifting; the cover should close easily without force, but should not bend inward. Put heavy items in small boxes.
- Seal cartons tightly with tape. If you are hiring professional movers, do not tape up cartons containing items that must be left open for the van operator's inspection.
- Have the kids pack a box of their "special" items, things that they'll want to have nearby as soon as you all arrive at your new home. Make sure this box is one of the first to be unloaded.