



# Free Move Planning Guide

Keys to a Stress-Free Relocation



Wirks Moving and Storage

# Moving 101

Moving has a reputation for being a stressful experience. The good news, though, is that it doesn't have to be. Like most things in life, preparation is key.

For example, your boss asks you to talk to staff about a new company proposal. If you don't take the time to educate yourself about that proposal, your speech probably won't go over too well. Or you've got your eye on a new car you'd like to buy, but you find out it's a manual. If you've only ever driven an automatic car, with no training on how to drive a stick shift, you'd be in for a bumpy and unpleasant ride.

Moving is no different, and you've taken the first step in the right direction by coming to the experts. In this section you will learn about how to choose a mover, when to move, what type of estimates to request, and what to expect on moving day. If you have any disputed charges or loss and damage claims after your move, we can help you resolve them as well.

## Moving Tips

### **1. Verify a mover's identity to know who you're dealing with.**

Look for red flags that something may not be right, such as:

- No physical address or phone number online, just a "Contact Us" feature
- You're quoted a very low price that seems too good to be true
- They don't offer to come out and give you a Free In-Home Estimate

We make verification easy for you. Just check the State of Georgia list of Licensed Moving Companies. Or if it's a move out of State move, check with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration website. You can check using the Carrier's U.S. DOT #, or carrier's MC #.

## **2. Get at least three written in-home estimates.**

Be wary of any "guaranteed" estimates offered over phone or online; instead, ask to have someone come over in person. Get more than one written estimate. If a mover insists that he can provide a "final" estimate over the phone without ever seeing your home and your furniture — choose another mover.

**3. Check the company's** ratings with the Better Business Bureau, or other consumer websites such as Angie's List, and ask family and friends for referrals.

**4. Know your rights.** Your rights for an interstate move are spelled out in two federal government publications, *Ready to Move?* and *Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move*.

Federal regulations require your mover to give you a copy of the first brochure, *Ready to Move?*, with all written estimates for interstate moves. When you agree to hire a mover, you must then receive a copy of *Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move*, a second booklet that goes into more detail. You must also receive information on the arbitration program that the mover participates in.

Most state governments regulate movers who operate within that state, so for a local move, check with your state moving association or your state consumer affairs office for details.

**5. Understand the level of liability,** or *valuation*, that your mover would be responsible for in case of loss or damage. The cost of full-value protection must be included by law in interstate estimates — so you must "opt out" to get the minimum coverage of 60 cents per pound, which we don't recommend. This is a different product than traditional insurance, which is written by a third party.

**6. Avoid large down payments.** Although some movers may ask for a small "good faith" deposit to hold a date (especially during the busy summer season), be wary of carriers seeking large down payments, or payment in advance for any reason.

**7. Make sure all agreements between you and your mover are in writing,** and get a copy of everything you sign, especially the most important document, called the bill of lading. Never sign any blank forms.

**8. Take valuables with you.** Cash, coins, jewelry, photographs, and important papers should be taken with you or sent ahead separately.

**9. Be reachable by phone.** Make sure the mover has your cell phone number and is able to reach you during your move, in case there is any unforeseen change in your delivery schedule. Be sure to have the driver's full name, ID and truck number to allow for fast and accurate communication.

**10. Ask questions.** If you do not understand something, ask. The moving business and has its own terminology and can be complex. If you aren't satisfied with the answers to your questions or if the mover hesitates when you ask for clarification, talk to another carrier.

## In-Home Estimates

### **Getting Estimates:**

Once you have a list of several potential movers, the next step is to contact them to get estimates. It is very important to get in-home, written, signed estimates from the companies you are considering. That way there is no disagreement later about what the terms of your agreement were. Get estimates from at least three different companies so you can also compare their services and prices.

Estimates should be at no cost to you. If a mover you are considering refuses to give you an in-home estimate and claims he can provide an accurate estimate over the phone or online without ever seeing your possessions – choose another mover.

Moving consultants are trained to identify any issues with stairs, low hanging tree branches, or other obstacles, and can provide a more accurate estimate of your total weight through a visual inspection.

Get initial estimates from AMSA members using our free Mover Referral Service. Be wary of low-ball estimates. If a company you're considering tells you that it can do the job for a surprisingly low price, ask questions. It could mean he will "suddenly remember" some extra charges once your belongings have been loaded on the truck, the doors have been padlocked and your leverage over the situation has been greatly reduced. Types of Estimates.

Many movers offer 2 types of estimates, binding and non-binding. It's important to know what the differences are. Ask your moving consultant which one best suits your situation.

#### Making Your Decision:

After you have compared your estimates, you should be ready to make a decision about which mover to hire. Contact that company and choose pickup and delivery dates. Your mover may ask you to select several consecutive days during which your goods can be loaded, and a second series of dates during which your goods can be delivered to your new home.

A spread of days gives you and your mover the flexibility needed to keep your move on schedule. You'll then receive a document of service, commonly known as an order for service, which will include the agreed-on price for the move from the estimate. After you sign and return it, you're good to go unless anything changes before your moving day.

# Free Moving Guide Manual

## Moving Children, Pets, Plants & Electronics

Tens of millions of Americans move every year. Some families become veterans at relocating; others may be moving for the first time. Either way, it can be easy to overlook the impact that moving to a new house in a new city will have on those closest to us: our children, pets, plants, and yes, even home electronics ranging from at-screen TVs to computers. Here is some advice to help you make these transitions as smooth as possible.

### Moving with Children

Keep in mind that whatever the reasons behind it, moving represents a major change for everyone in the family. Fatigue and uncertainty can eventually cause emotions to run high and tempers to run short. Prior preparation will help your entire family better handle the stress that moving can create.

#### ***Discussion***

Talking with your children about the move in advance should be a top priority. Explain to each child at his or her own level of understanding why you are moving, what the new home will be like, and how each of them can contribute to the success of the family's relocation.

Encourage them to express whatever feelings they have on the subject. Accept their attitudes, even if they are negative, and discuss your own feelings. If you as a parent view the change as the fulfillment of some hope or ambition, the attitude you will transmit to those around you, especially your children, will be a happy one. You can meet the inconvenience of relocating with an optimistic outlook and a fresh start.

On the other hand, if the move is associated with disappointment or grief, your children may be unintentionally left to emotionally fend for themselves in a situation they may not fully understand. Acknowledge that both you and your children will probably have mixed feelings about leaving, no matter how nice your new situation may be.

Above all, be honest. Truth will go a lot further than pretense or made-up stories in preparing children for the move. And remember that the strength of the family as a unit will contribute immeasurably to the readiness and confidence with which the children adapt to their new surroundings.

### ***Experience***

If children have moved before, the current move will recall memories of feelings they experienced then. If the feelings were unpleasant, the child may exhibit signs of depression, withdrawn behavior or tantrums as the pending moving day nears. Watch for these signs, and when dealing with them remember that the child may not fully understand the reasons for his or her behavior.

For children who have not moved before, this experience may be their first with giving up the known for the unknown. While they may seem to accept the move well, understand that their need for reassurance and security is high.

### ***Age Matters***

Each child, because of differences in age and experiences, will view the move differently. An infant, of course, will be least affected — as long as they are comfortable and their normal routine isn't disrupted too much, they won't be a concern.

But the pre-school child can pose a real problem. Their sense of identity relies on his or her parents, the family routine, and several objects that are special to them. When they see their favorite toys being packed and put away, a crib being dismantled, or mother rushing around with apparently little time to with them, they start to worry. One of your child's greatest fears may be that they will be left behind. Make sure their special stuffed animal or favorite toy doesn't get packed away.

The temptation may be great to send your preschooler to a babysitter during the move, but they will feel a lot better if you let them stay with you. Let them pack and bring along some of their special possessions (do not discard any of them before the move, no matter how old and tattered they are). Still, some parents find their move goes more smoothly with the children occupied elsewhere.

Grade school-age children have a more highly-developed sense of self, since their world extends beyond the family circle. Their developing sense of discovery may make the idea of moving exciting to them. While they will be leaving friends, these will not be the deep, vital friendships of older children. The expressed concerns of a grade-schooler usually deal with how well they will fit into where they are going.

### ***Timing***

One of the unfortunate myths about relocation is that school age children should not be moved until summer. Many families have undergone considerable inconvenience just to avoid a school-year move. But a summertime move may cause more problems than it solves.

Since school is a primary source for making friends, a summertime move will place your child in unfamiliar surroundings at a time when his or her chances for making friends are at a minimum. When school opens in September, they will enter the first day chaos as a stranger. The teacher, meanwhile, facing a new class, may not be able to identify their discomfort and need for special attention.

A move during the school year, on the other hand, allows your child to go directly from one social setting into another. They are new on the scene, so their classmates – and more importantly, the teacher – pay special attention to them.

Classes in the elementary grades are especially flexible enough to allow school transfers with a minimum of academic problems. High school curricula are generally more structured, which might cause some transitional academic difficulties. These issues, however, would still be a problem in September in the case of a summertime move. The uncertain academic drawbacks of relocation during the school year should be weighed against the social problems a summer move is almost certain to cause.

Adults find that moving can sometimes be an emotional and stressful experience. And it is likely to be even more so for your children, who don't have the maturity, independence and understanding of a parent. You will move many valuable possessions when you change addresses, but none as precious as your children. Give them the attention they deserve and need.

## Moving Day

### **Moving**

Here is a Pre-Move Countdown Checklist so you don't forget anything in the days and weeks leading to your move. Here are some other tips:

## **Packing**

Proper packing by a trained packer using specially-designed cartons and materials is crucial to a good move. Schedule packing with the mover a day or two before the moving van is loaded. If you are packing yourself, it is never too soon to start, however movers do not usually accept liability for any damage to items packed by owners.

Be present when your goods are packed. An inventory of your goods will be made and it is important to resolve any disagreements prior to signing the inventory. Make sure all copies are legible and all items are numbered. Have valuable items listed separately. Some appliances may require servicing prior to the move, which your mover can schedule for you.

## **Moving Day**

The **bill of lading** you will receive on loading day is the receipt for your goods and the contract for their transportation. It is your responsibility to read the bill of lading and understand it before you sign it. If you do not agree with something, do not sign it until you are satisfied that it is correct. You will also receive an **inventory** of your items.

These are both important documents, so don't lose or misplace your copies.

- Be on hand when the movers arrive
- Discuss the delivery arrangements fully with your driver
- Have beds stripped and ready to be packed
- Save your energy – let the moving crew disassemble items like pool tables or swing sets
- Tell your driver how to reach you at your destination and en route
- Keep in contact with the mover's agent at your destination while you are in transit

## **Delivery**

Your belongings will often be transported in a van with those of other customers in the same general area. This helps to keep your costs down. Delivery is made on any of the several consecutive days agreed upon before the move began. Make sure the mover knows how to contact you to schedule actual delivery. If you cannot be reached at destination, the mover may place your shipment in storage to avoid delaying other shipments. This can mean additional charges for storage and handling.

At your new home, the movers will expect to be paid what you still owe them before unloading your belongings.

As the truck is being unloaded, check your goods for any damage. Do not sign off on the inventory sheet until you have inspected all of your items and the exterior of packing cartons.

# Deducting Moving Expenses from Your Federal Taxes

Did you know that in many cases, your moving expenses are deductible from your federal income taxes? If you moved due to a change in your job or business location, or because you started a new job or business, you may be able to deduct your "reasonable" moving expenses.

To qualify, you must satisfy two tests. First, under the "distance test", your new job must be at least 50 miles farther from your old home than your old job location was from your old home. If you had no previous workplace, your new job must be at least 50 miles from your old home.

The second test is the "time test." If you are an employee, you must work full-time for at least 39 weeks during the first 12 months right after you arrive in the general area of your new job. If you are self-employed, you must work full-time for at least 39 weeks during the first 12 months, and for a total of at least 78 weeks during the first 24 months, after you arrive in the general area of your new work location. There are exceptions to the time test in case of death, disability and involuntary separation, among other things.

If you are a member of the armed forces and your move was due to a permanent change of station, you do not have to satisfy the distance or time tests.

"Reasonable expenses," according to the IRS, include the cost of packing and transporting your goods and effects, the cost of storage and insurance on these items and the cost of connecting and disconnecting utilities while moving household goods and personal effects. As for traveling to the new home, reasonable expenses are the cost of lodging and transportation from the old house to the new house.

Meals are not deductible as an expense. Also pre-move house-hunting expenses and entering into or breaking a lease are not deductible. The standard mileage rate for moving expenses for 2010 is 16.5 cents a mile, plus parking fees and tolls.

Moving expenses are figured on Form 3903 (PDF) and deducted as an adjustment to income on Form 1040 (PDF). You cannot deduct any moving expenses that were reimbursed by your employer. For more information, visit [this link](#) at the IRS.