

HIRING PROFESSIONAL MOVERS

Hiring a professional mover is always going to be more expensive than doing it yourself, but it can be worth it in the time and potential aggravation saved. If you're thinking of hiring a moving company, the first decision is whether to hire a local or a national company.

You can look up companies on the web or in your local yellow pages. Your Realtor may also be a great resource to recommend moving companies, so ask them as well. When you've picked a few companies to talk to about your move, research them before you pick up the phone:

- First, check if the mover is licensed or not. In order to perform moves from one state to another, movers *must* be licensed by the Federal Department of Transportation. In addition, most states require moving companies to have a local DOT license. You can check for licensing information on the US Government's Department of Transportation website, which will also provide links to individual state DOT sites.
- Then, check with your local Better Business Bureau or state Department of Consumer Affairs to see what their rating is and if there are any complaints about the company.

Once you have selected licensed and reputable movers, it's time to get some estimates:

- When you call to talk about estimates, get the names of at least three references to call as well.
- Verbal estimates are, as the saying goes, worth the paper they're printed on. Get *everything* in writing. Preliminary estimates are fine with general information, but in order to get a written estimate you should have the company estimator come to your home and actually see everything that is going to be moved. Don't forget articles in basements, attics, garages, and storage spaces!
- Initial estimates are NON-BINDING and the company cannot charge you for them. They can also vary greatly from what your final actual cost will be. Get NON-BINDING estimates from each of your moving companies, and then look at all the factors involved. Once you have decided on a company, get a final, written estimate in writing from them. Make sure that there is a "Not to Exceed" price listed before you sign off.
- Find out up front how the moving costs are to be paid. Do they require a deposit, and if so, how much? When is the balance to be paid? What forms of payment do they accept? Get the facts beforehand so you can plan your finances accordingly.
- Finally, make sure to keep a separate folder for all the information from the mover about your move. Have it with you on moving day, and refer back to it as needed.

Hiring a moving company can save you time and trouble. However, if you're not careful and organized, it can end up costing you time and giving you trouble. Make sure you're in control of the situation by asking questions, getting everything in writing, reading all paperwork carefully and thoroughly, and not signing anything until it's correct.

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