

# Preparing for a Move: A Checklist for Newcomers

This moving checklist is designed to help newcomers navigate the moving process in three stages: three weeks before the move, two weeks before, and on move-in day. It provides a step-by-step guide to ensure that important tasks are completed on a timeline to help newcomers stay organized during their move. By following this checklist, newcomers can ensure a smooth transition into their new home, with all necessary arrangements made and essential items packed and ready to move.

## THREE WEEKS BEFORE YOU MOVE

### Plan and Organize

- Confirm move-in/move-out dates
- Schedule utility disconnections *for your move-out day*
  - Gas
  - Electricity
  - Wi-Fi / phone (landline)
  - Water, if applicable

**Tip:** Have your account numbers from recent bills or account documents and have the contact information for your service providers ready. *Call ahead to schedule utility disconnections to avoid late fees and ensure services end on the correct date.*

- Decide where you will buy or borrow packing materials:
  - Cardboard boxes or plastic bins in various sizes
  - Protective (plastic “bubble”) wrap and/or brown packing paper or used newspapers
  - Packing tape, markers, and labels.
- Secure important documents in a safe folder or box
  - Passport(s) and birth certificates/records
  - Immigrant documents, i.e., I-134 and other documentation you have
  - New and old lease agreements
  - Bank statements if you have paper copies
  - Billing records, e.g., paid utility bills, if you have paper copies
- Arrange help and/or a vehicle for moving day
  - Contact family, community members, or local organization volunteers for help moving boxes and furniture

- Plan to rent a truck or van\* or borrow a vehicle from a family or community member. \*If you do plan to rent, *be sure to make a reservation!*
- Make plans for your children and/or pets during the move, e.g., daycare for the children and/or ask a friend to watch your pet.

## Declutter and Donate

- Start to sort through your belongings and separate them for
  - Donations** to friends, neighbors, family, or a donation center
    - Contact local donation centers to schedule pickups for larger items or use community platforms like Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist to sell or give away items.
  - Recycling**
    - Check with a community or municipal agency, or your trash collection service, to find out how to recycle different types of household items.
  - Disposal**
    - Check with your landlord or apartment building manager, or your trash collection service, to find out if you can leave extra, large items with your regular trash.

## Things you might donate or recycle

- **General items:** Decorative pieces you no longer use – Unworn or outdated clothes – books and toys that are no longer needed
- **Kitchen items:** Unused or extra pots, pans, and cooking utensils – unused or extra drinking glasses, coffee mugs/teacups, plates/bowls
- **Furniture items:** chairs, tables, or couches that will no fit in your new home space
- **Cleaning supplies:** expired cleaning products – old sponges, mops, brooms, cloths.

## Resources

- [Donation Center & Thrift Store Locator – Goodwill Industries International](#)
- [The Salvation Army Thrift Stores | Find a Dropoff Location](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity ReStores](#)
- Online social platforms: [Facebook Marketplace](#) and [Craigslist](#)

## Early Packing Steps

- Declutter / Sort:** Go room by room to identify and set aside things you will donate or sell
  - **Pack Non-Essential Items:** Start with least-used items: decorations/art, including seasonal (holiday) decorations; non-essential lamps, extra bedding (sheets, towels), off-season clothes and shoes, etc.

**NOTE:** In the week before you move you will pack essential items\* for moving day. These are things you will want to access when you first arrive in your new home. You will pack these separately from other boxes, furniture, etc. – and mark them clearly – so they are easy to find when you reach your new home.

\*Key documents | Medications | Toiletries | A change of clothes for each family member

- Organize and Label Boxes:** Mark each box with the room it belongs to, e.g., kitchen, living room, etc., and add notes about what is in each, e.g., “FRAGILE\*: plates and glasses” or “Children’s Clothes,” etc.

\*Use packing paper, newspaper, or clothes to individually wrap fragile items.

**NOTE:** If you have friends or volunteers helping you move, labeling boxes will help ensure that belongings are set in relevant rooms in your new home, and then easy to access and unpack once you arrive.

## Resources for packing

- [Packing Moving Tips](#)
- Find a U-Haul or similar store near you for packing supplies: [Moving Boxes, Packing Supplies, & Box Kits](#) | [U-Haul](#)

## TWO WEEKS UNTIL MOVING DAY

### Packing Tasks

- Designate an area to store packed boxes and keep supplies: empty boxes, tape, labels. etc.
  - Pack Less-Used Items First: Clearly label all boxes with the room name and brief contents.
  - Disassemble Less-Used Furniture:
    - Take apart bed frames, desks, and shelving units
    - Keep hardware needed to reassemble furniture in a labeled plastic bag and tape it to furniture.
- Pack Kitchenware and Electronics
  - Box up all but essential dishes, cookware, utensils
  - Pack unused appliances or electronics

**NOTE:** Take time to thoroughly wash all kitchen items and appliances before packing.

**Organize & Confirm Move-In Details:** Two weeks before your move, also take time to confirm essential details like address updates, new utility activations, and arrangements with your movers to ensure a smooth moving day.

- Update Your Address**
  - Notify the Post Office\*, your bank, your employer(s), and the pharmacy where you get prescription medication(s) of your change of address
    - \*You can change your address online if that is easier than going to the local P.O. [Official USPS® Change-of-Address Form](#). You may be able to make other changes online, too.
  - Update your address with agencies like the IRS, Medicare, and Medicaid
- Confirm Moving Details**
  - Communicate moving plan details with family, friends, and/or community members who are helping you.
  - Confirm your vehicle reservation (rental truck or van), including pickup and return time and location.
  - Confirm move-out date, and schedule a walk-through\*, if required, with your current landlord.
    - \*A walk-through with a landlord is when you inspect the rental property together to check its condition and ensure everything is in order before moving in or out.
  - Confirm move-in date and time with your new landlord. Make sure that you have contact details to be in touch with the landlord or rental agent on the day you move into your new home. *This will be especially important if there are issues with access, utilities, and amenities.*

## Contact New Service Providers

- Schedule utility activations – new accounts or transferred services – and provide your new address, move-in date, and required account details for

- Gas
- Electricity
- Wi-Fi / phone
- Water, if applicable

**NOTE:** Your rent payment may include some utilities, and this will be written in the lease. In this case, you need not set up those utilities in your name.

- Confirm Transportation:** If you rent a truck or van (as suggested for 3 weeks before your move) confirm the rental. If you did not rent or otherwise arrange for a vehicle (truck or big van) do this immediately.

- Check on Maintenance Issues:** Now is the time to address any small repairs and deep cleaning tasks to leave the home you are leaving in good condition.

### Inspect and Repair

- Patch nail holes in walls with spackling compound or filler. If you do not know what these are, the landlord can tell you.
- Touch up big scratches or scuffs on walls or floors
- Tighten loose fixtures like doorknobs, cabinet handles, and light switch covers
- Ensure all windows and doors close and lock properly

### Deep Clean All Rooms

- Clean windows
- Dust and wipe down baseboards, shelves, and ceiling fans
- Vacuum and mop floors

### Garbage and Large Throw-away Items

- Schedule removal of large items (broken furniture or appliances, etc.).
- Dispose of all trash and recyclables properly before leaving.

## Resources for removing large items

- [Full-Service Junk Removal | 1-800-GOT-JUNK?](#)

## ONE WEEK UNTIL MOVING DAY

### Clean and Prepare Home

- Reconfirm your moving details** to community members helping with the move.
- Double-check Transportation:** If you need to rent a truck or van, make sure you have made all these arrangements in advance, and then call to confirm the vehicle is reserved for you, including the time you can get it at the rental place.
- Double-Check Repairs and Maintenance:** Be sure you removed all nails, screws, or plastic picture hoods and that you patched any holes and that you repaired scratches on the walls, touched up the paint. If there were hardwood floors, check those for scratched, and repair them. Check for loose fixtures or handles and tighten them.
- Complete a Final Cleaning**
  - Deeply clean appliances – microwave, oven, stove, dishwasher, refrigerator, and freezer – inside and outside.
  - Sweep, mop, and vacuum all floors: linoleum, hardwood, and/or carpeted
  - Dust surfaces, shelves, baseboards, and baseboards.
  - Clean light switches, doorknobs, and other high-touch areas with a disinfectant cleaning solution.
  - Deeply clean bathrooms (toilets, sinks, tubs, mirrors) with a disinfectant solution.

### Final Packing

- Kitchen**
  - Pack additional pots, pans, dishes, utensils, glassware, and serving items you can do without until the end of the week.
  - Also, pack any appliances that are not daily necessities
  - Finally, pack canned and packaged foods that do not need to be refrigerated.
- Clothing:** Pack all clothes and shoes except the ones you want to wear this week, including moving day. This will include accessories like scarves and jewelry.
- Pack a First Night Box for Easy Access**
  - Bedding:** Sheets, blankets, pillowcases, and comforter
  - Toiletries:** Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, towels, and toilet paper
  - Clothing:** Pajamas, clothes for your first day in the new home, and shoes
  - Medications:** Any necessary medications and medical supplies
  - Documents:** Securely boxed as described above (and as listed here):
    - Passport(s) and birth certificates/records
    - Immigrant documents, i.e., I-134 and other documentation you have

- New and old lease agreements
- Bank statements if you have paper copies
- Billing records, e.g., paid utility bills, if you have paper copies – *plus the copy of the vehicle rental agreement*

## What Should Be Left Unpacked?

- Keep everyday use items like a few dishes, one or two pots and pans, toiletries, towels, and bedding easily accessible for the last few days
- Leave items like your phone charger, laptop, work materials, and anything you need to carry on your day-to-day life

## Final Move-Out Preparation

- Confirm the scheduled move-out inspection walk through with the landlord. Or, if you forgot to schedule this, do it right away.
- Document the condition of the apartment or house before leaving. Take clear photos of each room, focusing on any areas that were cleaned or repaired.
- Repair and Clean
  - Empty and clean out all cabinets and closets
  - Remove all discarded personal items, trash, and unwanted furniture

## Moving Logistics

- Make a detailed plan for packing, loading, and unloading
- Confirm moving details, e.g., rental vehicle, community assistance, etc.
- Make a detailed list of what you will leave unpacked for moving day, e.g., clothes, food, water, ID, etc.

## Resources

- Essential Move-Out Cleaning Checklist For [Getting Your Deposit Back](#)

## MOVING DAY

- If you are using a rental vehicle, when you pick it up and sign the paperwork, confirm your responsibilities as the renter, including liabilities if there is an accident or the vehicle is vandalized or stolen.

**NOTE:** The rental company will offer insurance to cover all liabilities, but each insured situation adds a cost to the total bill. You can learn about all the insurances – what is covered and what each coverage costs – before you rent the vehicle.

- Also, understand exactly when the vehicle must be returned. There can be additional fees for every hour the vehicle is overdue for return.

## Before Leaving Your Old Home

- Take photos of all the rooms in the old home for documentation, including any remaining, and repaired, damage.
- Be sure all boxes are moved out of every room and do not leave anything, except what the landlord provided, e.g., appliances and some furniture, in the home.
- Follow the landlord or property manager move-out instructions: Double-check that all steps outlined in your move-out agreement are completed.
- Ensure all appliances and lights are turned off.
- Double-check closets, cabinets, drawers, storage unit, and the garage (as relevant) to be 100% certain nothing is left behind.
- Ensure all keys are returned to the landlord or property manager as instructed.

## When You Arrive at the New Home

- Immediate walk through the new home to check for, and photograph
  - Damage to walls, floors, or kitchen/bathroom cabinets
  - Non-working light switches
  - Non-working sink/tub/shower faucets and drains
- Utilities Check: Verify utilities are working as agreed with the relevant service providers.
  - Gas
  - Electricity
  - Wi-Fi/phone
  - Water, if applicable
- Appliances Check: Verify that appliances included in the lease are working properly.
  - Heaters or coolers
  - Refrigerator
  - Stovetop/oven



# Newcomer Moving Checklist

- Dishwasher
- Microwave
- Washing Machine

**NOTE:** If there are any issues with some or all of these aspects of the home, immediately contact the landlord or leasing agent to report them. If a phone call is not answered, leave a message and/or send a text message (to a mobile phone).

**Unpacking: Take your time and unpacking each box carefully.**

- If the labels on boxes are in a language your helpers do not know, provide clear instructions to them about where to place each box/item.
- Unpack the most important items first: kitchen supplies, including any food from the refrigerator, plus medications and toiletries as well as the bag or box that has the clothes you and your family will wear on your first week in the new home.
- Ensure that important boxes are handled with care and placed in the correct rooms according to their labels.