

The Ultimate Guide to Relocating – Before, During, and After the Move

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So, you've decided to take an exciting new step in your life and relocate. You may be feeling stressed and overwhelmed with the scheduling, packing, and expenses that go into moving – after all, relocating is considered one of the top stressors a person will experience in their life. Whether you're relocating for a job, moving closer to family, or just wanting to start over, important steps in the relocation process can often be overlooked. That's why we've created the ultimate guide to relocating, including steps to take before, during, and after the move.



Before Relocating

Learn about your new city/town

Become better acquainted with your new community by researching the local culture, weather trends, cost of living, public transportation, while also finding out [how much house you can afford](#) in different neighborhoods. If you have any relatives or friends who live in the city, reach out to them for any suggestions or advice. Familiarizing yourself with the new area will help you begin thinking like a local in no time.

Find the best neighborhood for you

The best way to truly get a feel for every neighborhood is by simply visiting and spending time in each one. While you're exploring, keep in mind what qualities are important to you and don't hesitate to jot down the pros and cons of the area. Perhaps you value restaurants and shops within walking distance, parks and schools nearby for convenience, or just the quiriness of a quaint neighborhood. Once you've narrowed down your options, you'll be able to compare information like median home prices, walkability, crime rates, and school reviews and rankings.

Lean on your realtor

It's the real estate agent's job to support you through the homebuying process, so take advantage of their neighborhood expertise and industry knowledge. Your agent will be aware of housing market trends, potential red flags, or anything else you may have concerns about. When it's time to make an offer, they will help you make a good offer price and assist with the negotiating process. Buying a home is a big decision and can be an emotional process, but working with an agent you trust will give you the support you need.

Budget for moving costs

People have a tendency to underestimate just how much relocating will cost. Expenses can add up quickly, and you could end up way over your budget before realizing it. Prepare financially by taking the time to create a list of all expenses throughout your moving process, and any purchases you'll likely make immediately after. To avoid any surprises, you may also consider including potential costs you may incur during the move. This can include anything from cleaning and repairs, moving and storage fees, child or pet care, utility set-up, and additional furniture.

Research storage options

If you are choosing to move some of your belongings in stages or looking to store items for an extended period of time, you'll need to consider all of your options and factor in storage costs. Research storage companies and compare rates while keeping in mind the length of time you'll be storing items, the size of the storage space, and any additional services offered, such as central air/heat and surveillance. Or maybe you're interested in the portable storage option, a popular alternative among those storing belongings for a short duration. The company will drop the container off and once you're done packing your belongings, you have the option of storing the container at the facility or shipping it to your specified location.

Research moving companies

Hiring a reliable moving company to do the heavy lifting can relieve some of your stress, and generally results in a safer moving process. Moving companies typically offer different levels of services – full service, basic service, and specialty services – so it's important to weigh the prices and options when deciding who to work with. Full service will handle everything from packing, moving, and unpacking. If you opt for basic service, you'll be responsible for packing and unpacking, while the movers will handle transporting your items. It's true you'll save money upfront by handling everything yourself, but you may find that it takes significant time and effort.

Ask for a quote in writing, and don't forget to double-check customer reviews, licenses, and credentials – knowing you're working with a reputable company will provide peace of mind. Even if you're relocating from [Sacramento](#) to [New York City](#), their job is to transport your belongings from point A to point B safely.

Decorate with purpose

With the help of an interior designer, you'll get expert guidance and can make your new space feel like home even prior to moving in. Examine the floor plan or blueprint to find what works best with the layout of your new home, and begin creating your masterpiece. Not only will you get amazing results and save time, but your interior designer can help your vision come to life while staying under budget. Moving into a space that already has a touch of your style can even support an easier transition.



Update your mailing address and retrieve important documents

Before relocating, remember to [forward your mail](#) and notify banks and credit cards of your new address. If you have kids, inform the school district of your upcoming move, and request transcripts in advance for a smooth transfer. Don't forget to retrieve medical records, and cancel any subscriptions or memberships – anything from gym memberships and magazine subscriptions to utilities, electricity, cable, and internet. Consider creating a moving checklist to revisit while you're packing and on moving day.

Organize and Declutter

Set aside a binder for move-related paperwork so you're able to access any documents quickly. Before packing, remain organized by creating a detailed inventory of your belongings noting the condition, location, and size of the items. This will help you get a better idea of how much you'll actually be moving and if any belongings require specialty packing services because of their size or fragility. Also, if your belongings are damaged during the move and you need to submit an insurance claim, an inventory list will come in handy. You can also begin to sort through your belongings and decide what items you'll keep, discard, or donate. If you're downsizing, don't be shy when

giving items away – consider organizing a garage sale or donating to a charity.

Hire a cleaning service

Before getting settled into your new home, save time and start fresh by hiring a cleaning company to clean your new home before all your belongings are moved in. Sometimes the previous owners of your new home hasn't done a thorough clean and are not required to, so paying for a cleaning service will allow you to focus on packing and moving safely while the cleaners take care of tidying up your new home. They'll be sure to leave your home spotless, cleaning everything in and out of sight, and especially those hard-to-reach corners.

Sell your home

Before listing your home on the market, be proactive by hiring a home inspector, then make any repairs or minor updates necessary. The time you would save sure beats having to do repairs during the negotiation phase when the homebuyers hire out their own home inspector. Also, research the [U.S. housing market](#) and homes that have recently sold in your area to get an idea of what your home is worth and how competitively you should price your home. This will just be an estimate, so don't forget to hire a professional to get your home appraised. Make your home stand out by hiring a cleaning service and working with a staging company to prepare your home for professional photos and open houses. Staging your home to sell with [professional listing photos](#) will, on average, sell for more.

During the Move

Pack strategically and stay organized

It's common to begin packing and realize that you've accumulated far more than you've ever imagined. In this situation, staying organized and creating a plan of attack is essential. While tossing everything into uncategorized boxes may be the quickest option, unpacking identical boxes will create unnecessary work. Instead, label your boxes strategically using stickers, a numbering system, or even color-coding.

About three weeks before relocating, pack non-essential items that you won't be needing during the move, such as decorations and books. One week

before moving day, begin packing the essentials, with the exception of enough plates and silverware for everyone in your household. Be sure to label “open first” on a few of your boxes containing bedding, toiletries, towels, and tools, and a “valuables” box including birth certificates, fragile belongings, and passports.



Drop kids and pets off at day-care

Heavy furniture, tools, and sharp objects are safety hazards for kids. So if family and friends don't live nearby, arrange for child-care and/or pet-care on the day you're packing for your move. This will help reduce the number of distractions and stress, and you'll be able to focus your attention on ensuring a smooth transition.

Collect receipts of all transactions

If you're starting a new job or relocating with your current employer, the company may offer relocation assistance helping to cover any expenses you've incurred during the move. Depending on the agreed-upon contract, the relocation assistance could cover things like gas, storage unit rentals, and

moving services, so it's important to save all of your receipts from the moving process to confirm the transactions.

Check-in with yourself

It's common for people to experience moving anxiety and relocation depression, especially when relocating. We tend to underestimate the toll moving can have on our bodies, physically and mentally. Activities like napping, journaling, exercising, and refueling with food and drink can change your mood and give your body the break it needs. Your health comes first so be sure to listen to your body and recharge when you need to. On moving day, don't hesitate to ask for additional help from family and friends.

Settling into Your New Home

Unpack

If you've labeled your boxes and can identify the contents of each, unpacking should be a breeze. Be sure to check all boxes and furniture for any damages associated with relocating, especially valuables and appliances such as the stove, dishwasher, washer or dryer. Refer back to your inventory list to make sure nothing was lost in the transition. To avoid becoming overwhelmed when you're unpacking, focus on one room at a time, and if possible, even one box at a time.

Perform a general safety check

Even if you hired a home inspector during the homebuying process, it's important to perform a safety check throughout your new home. Change locks on the doors, be sure all windows lock, and perhaps look into installing a new security system. Other precautions include checking the electrical system and water pipes, the fire and smoke alarms, and the air filters and HVAC systems.

Register to vote and update your driver's license

Visit the DMV with a couple of forms of identification – like your current driver's license, social security number, and proof of residency – to obtain a new state driver's license. Pay attention to time restrictions as some states require you to update your driver's license within a certain time-frame. You may be able to kill two birds with one stone by registering to vote while at the DMV. Otherwise, register online or visit the local town hall to update your voter registration.

Find new services and professionals

Find new healthcare providers, including a new dentist, doctor, veterinarian, day-care, and optometrist. Research different options to find one that is best for you and your family's needs. When you've chosen, keep the contact information handy, and make sure all family members know where these numbers are located.

Contact insurance companies

Insurance provides financial security and peace-of-mind in case an emergency happens, so confirm that you're still covered under your current policies. If not, work with an insurance agent for new house, auto, and health insurance policies. More than likely you'll be required to get new homeowner's insurance, or at least update your current information on the existing policy.

Explore the neighborhood and meet new friends

Get a better sense of your surroundings by walking, biking, or driving around the area. This is a good way to find the nearest grocery stores, parks, libraries, and pharmacies. And once you're all settled, introduce yourself to your neighbors. Ring their doorbell and simply say hello, partake in neighborhood gatherings, or even host a housewarming party.



Check-in with your kids

Moving can be tough on kids and could possibly affect their mental health. They may have concerns of their own that you'll need to talk through with them – like their first day at the new school, leaving their friends, or missing their previous home. Explain that the feeling of uncertainty is only temporary, and illustrate the move as a positive shift. Make sure your kids are comfortable in the new spot, maybe even unpack and decorate their room first. Stay consistent with any daily routines they've developed and don't forget to stay positive so your children will too.

No matter your reasoning to move, relocating is no doubt a stressful task, but staying organized, planning ahead, and using your resources can help. Follow this guide so you can focus on what is important, enjoying your new adventure.

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