

ADVICE

How to unpack your house

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You have endured the white-knuckle stress of buying a property or the hassle of dealing with letting agents and landlords. You have shelled out eye-watering sums of money, bundled up

your worldly goods and loaded them into a



Plan ahead

If possible, find someone to look after small children and pets on moving day. Most broadband providers are happy to move your service to a new address, but BT, for instance, requires at least two weeks' notice. [Visit broadbandchoices.co.uk](https://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk) for a guide to how much time other providers need.

Survival 101

Once through the door, you're likely to need a cuppa at the very least, so keep a bag of essentials in the car. "Allocate an airline-style baggage allowance to each family member and ensure they have everything they need for the first few days," says James Greenwood, regional director at Stacks Property Search. "That way, you won't be frantically unpacking boxes at 9pm, looking for a must-have night-time teddy."

As well as bear necessities, you should include sensitive paperwork, jewellery, toiletries, medication, phone chargers, loo roll and pet food. You should also pack a kettle, mugs, teabags, coffee, teaspoons and biscuits. Put cleaning supplies in your essentials bag, too.

Order in the house

To make sure all your boxes and belongings arrive in one piece, count them before they go in the van and inspect them carefully once unloaded. In addition, look at walls, door frames and hardwood floors as soon as you arrive, and again when the removers have finished.

If a professional removals company packed for you, it will have labelled boxes for their destined rooms and will put together any dismantled furniture. Packed yourself? Label everything clearly, and make sure you have a hammer and Allen keys in your essentials bag so you can tackle beds straight away.

The order in which you unpack boxes on the first day will probably depend on what time you arrive. “If it’s lunchtime or early afternoon, take on the kitchen first, as this is the engine room of a house for most people,”

says Thea Carroll, senior buying consultant at The Buying Solution. If you arrive later, the top priorities will be the bathroom and bedrooms.

Work methodically and focus on one room at a time. “Every two hours, stop, have a drink and reassess,” says Beatriz Garcia-Martinez, head of settling-in services at SP Property Group. “That way you can see progress and break down what can feel like an overwhelming task.”

Let older children unpack their stuff in their new bedrooms, suggests Suzanne Jarvis, co-founder of Move in Style. “This can make the move feel like an adventure. And if you didn’t use the packing process to declutter, do it now.”

If things go wrong

In a recent survey carried out by the online chat provider Yomdel, 12.8% of movers said their removals firm had broken something. If you hire a man and a van, you will have to rely on your own insurance. If you are using a member of the British Association of Removers (Bar), then you will have more protection — but read the small print before you commit. “A lot of insurers will not cover you for loss or damage if you packed the boxes yourself,” says Rob Houghton, chief executive

of the removals comparison site
reallymoving.com.

For extra peace of mind, take photographs of valuable items before they are packed. Should you need to make a claim, speak to the removals firm — you must do this within seven days of your move if you hired a Bar member. The firm must acknowledge complaints within three working days and endeavour to resolve the matter within eight weeks. Unresolved claims are referred to the Furniture Ombudsman, which can award up to £10,000 in compensation.

What should I do with all that cardboard?

Check whether the movers offer a collection service — some pick up empty boxes free of charge. Alternatively, ask friends or neighbours if they want them, or advertise on local Facebook, Nextdoor or Freecycle groups.

Cardboard boxes are widely recycled; check with the council. Bubble wrap can be recycled at the carrier-bag collection points at the larger stores of most supermarkets.

Get help

If you're long on cash but short on time, you could hire a professional unpacker. SP Property Group, which is based in London, will unpack and find cleaners, nannies and

pet sitters from £66 an hour; Move in Style operates nationwide, offering bespoke packages from £400.

Top tips

Don't forget to give your new postal address to everyone from your bank to your contact-lens provider, and take out a mail redirection service for a few months. Start hanging pictures and placing family photos around as soon as you can — the earlier you do it, the sooner it will start to feel like home.

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