



SAVE MONEY ON YOUR NEXT MOVE

Arrive at Your Destination with Cash in Your Pocket

ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO—Whether across town or across the country, Americans have never hesitated to pack up and head for greener pastures. The challenge is to keep the cost of moving to a minimum. The least stressful way to face that obstacle is by planning ahead.

Do It Yourself ...

In some situations, such as a college student moving to a new apartment or a young couple moving across town, costs can be kept to practically nothing by doing most of the work yourself. Collect used boxes, borrow a truck from a relative, ask friends to help load heavy items, and your out-of-pocket expenses might be as little as a tank of gas and pizza for your buddies. But, keep in mind that you could run into unexpected costs if your favorite lamp is broken during the move, a friend gets hurt or the truck is involved in a traffic accident. “Make sure to ask your insurance agent if you are covered for such events,” advises Ted Beck, president and CEO of the Colorado-based National Endowment for Financial Education® (NEFE®). NEFE is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to making sure all Americans achieve financial well-being.

Also, a rental truck may not be covered by your car insurance, so you might need to purchase separate liability and property damage insurance from the rental company. Ask if the coverage protects you against theft if something is stolen from the truck, and check your homeowners or renters insurance for theft protection during a move.

For a longer move or when you have a large amount of possessions, renting a moving truck may be the next step up. Estimate the volume of your belongings and call several truck rental companies to get a recommendation on the smallest truck that will accommodate your move. “A larger rental truck comes with poorer gas mileage,” Beck notes. “With the price of fuel these days, you could end up spending as much on gasoline as on the rental fee.”

Other costs to factor in are packing materials, pad and dolly rentals, an additional charge for a trailer hitch if you plan to tow your vehicle, hotels and meals while you are on the road and storage charges if you can’t move into your new home immediately. A potential

way to save money is to move during off-peak times. Truck rental rates may be lower from October through April and in the middle of the month rather than during the first or last weekends.

... Or Hire a Mover

Hiring a professional mover is another option. To keep costs and headaches under wraps, get recommendations on reliable movers and check names with the Better Business Bureau. If you are moving within the state, make sure the mover is registered with the appropriate state agency (which, for example, is the Public Utilities Commission in Colorado). If you're moving across state lines, the mover should be registered with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The FMCSA provides a list of properly registered and insured movers on its Web site, www.protectyourmove.gov.

- **Get written estimates.** After you have names, obtain written quotes from at least three movers. Ask for a company representative to come to your home to view your belongings, if possible. Estimates over the phone tend to be much less accurate. When the representative arrives, discuss what services will be provided, the mover's responsibility for any damages or losses that may occur during the move and how the business will work with you to settle a dispute. For interstate moves, the company should provide you with the FMCSA booklet *Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move*.

In addition, find out if the representative works for the mover or is a broker who merely arranges for transportation. "If a broker provides an estimate, it may not be binding on the actual mover, so you could end up paying more than you expected," Beck notes. "In addition, a broker would not be responsible for loss or damage to your possessions. Ask for a contact within the moving company and talk to him or her about the estimate and other concerns you might have before signing anything."

- **Ask for ways to save.** When getting estimates, don't hesitate to ask how you can cut costs. In general, the cost of a move is based on the weight of your possessions, distance and the packing and other services provided, such as disconnecting and re-connecting appliances. So, for example, if you pack your belongings, rather than having the mover do it, the cost will be lower. On the downside, the moving company will probably not assume liability for any damage during the move to items packed by the owner. To further minimize their liability, most moving companies will encourage you to carry valuables with you, including jewelry, collections, tax and legal papers and family heirlooms.

The mover you choose will ask you to sign an estimate and other paperwork. Carefully review all documents before signing to make sure you understand everything. For example,

be aware of the difference between a binding and non-binding estimate. Movers often give non-binding quotes, which allows them to bill you for additional money if the actual weight of your possessions exceeds the estimate. If you want to lock in a price, ask for a binding estimate, but realize that this may be higher because the mover may include an additional amount to cover variables like weight. Also, make sure you understand how the weight of your belongings will affect the cost, and know that you have the right to be present when your shipment is weighed, or to request another weighing of your shipment.

Before the movers arrive, videotape or photograph your belongings so you have a record of their condition. Be present when your possessions are loaded and unloaded to check the inventory list and watch for damage. If there's a problem, note it on the driver's paperwork before signing and file a claim promptly.

Find Out About Relocation Assistance

If you are moving because of a job relocation or military transfer, you may be eligible for financial assistance. Military personnel, for example, typically receive a moving allowance, but the amount will vary depending on the destination, your rank and whether you have dependents. "Because military families move often, it's wise to save money in a moving fund for non-covered expenses," Beck suggests.

Many private employers offer relocation assistance to employees, as well, but most people incur at least some out-of-pocket costs. Also, remember to keep your receipts, because they might qualify as a deduction on your income taxes.

"Moving is hard work, but it only takes a small effort to keep costs under control," concludes Beck. "Consider the recommendations suggested here and you'll arrive at your new destination with cash in your pocket."

For more moving tips, visit www.smartaboutmoney.org and search for moving-related resources.

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