

Simplifying the big move

By Kimberly Fusard taken from the April 2008 issue of Martha Stewart Living

A little forethought and a checklist can keep you organized

Moving and all its attendant chores are inevitable. But the accompanying sense of chaos, while common isn't necessary. The following schedule outlines the essential tasks, both large and small, that need to be addressed and allows several weeks for you to tend to the details (although everything can be accomplished in far less time.) In preparing consider which belongings you really need to keep. A lighter load always means an easier move, less to unpack!

6 WEEKS BEFORE

- **HIRE A MOVER** Ask friends for recommendations and if you are in Santa Barbara, call the mover we recommend on our website. He has done a great job for many of our clients and my own family. Get quotes from all licensed companies. On-site estimates will be more accurate. Decide whether you or the movers will pack (regardless, you may want to wrap your fragile articles.) Make sure the quote is binding and what extra charges could arise. Check if insurance is included. Also check you own insurance for additional coverage. Get a signed copy of your contract. **STAY ORGANIZED** use a 3-ring binder to move related paperwork, such as to-do lists, contracts, receipts, checklists, and phone numbers.

5 WEEKS BEFORE

- **GATHER MATERIALS** Moving supplies, boxes, box cutters, tape dispensers, wrapping material such as bubble, plastic and tissue paper. If in doubt, purchase extra; you can return anything unused. Wardrobe boxes w/ built in bars for hangers and light fixtures. Boxes found at book stores are built to carry heavy loads so they are excellent for other items.

3 WEEKS BEFORE

- **START PACKING** Box infrequently used items, including garage contents, attic, and other storage areas. All out-of-season clothing, holiday decorations, books and special-occasion dishware. Number the boxes and keep track of the contents on a master inventory list. Keep the box weight at a minimum for lifting. Fill all large boxes with pillows and other light weight things. Reserve smaller boxes for your heavier possessions. Always reinforce the bottoms with packing tape. Pack electronics tightly in their original boxes if you kept them.

- **COLOR-CODE ROOMS** Assign a color to each room. Mark boxes and furniture with coordinating stickers to ensure the movers will know at a glance where everything should go.
- **NOTIFY UTILITY SERVICES** Request that your utilities, phone and Internet service be disconnected the day after you leave and installed in your new home the day before you arrive.
- **CALL A LOCKSMITH** Arrange to have the locks in your new home changed on moving day or earlier if convenient.
- **HIRE A CLEANING COMPANY** Consider having housekeeper scrub both of the spaces-so you won't have to-preparing the new home in the morning and tidying up the old one after you have left.

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- **CONTINUE PACKING** Before you pack the bulk of your belongings, think about whether you'd like to do so by room, by category (such as sports equipment or formal dinnerware,) or by another system that works for you.
- **CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS** Have your mail forwarded, complete a change-of-address form online (usps.com) or at the post office. Update newspaper and magazine subscriptions and notify banks and credit card companies.

1 WEEK BEFORE

- **PREPARE YOUR MOVING PAPERS** Print an information sheet for the movers with the old and new addresses, directions and your cell phone number.
- **FINISH PACKING** Box your remaining items, setting aside sufficient clothing for the week ahead, as well as a suitcase or two to transport in.
- **CREATE A LAST-OUT AND FIRST-IN BOX** Pack your day-to-day necessities so that they're together in one place, including bedding, towels, toiletries, toilet paper, basic tools, cleaning supplies, medications, a camera (to document anything broken in transit,) snacks, a few dishes and utensils and a coffee pot-plus coffee and mugs. Take the box with you in the car.
- **STASH SMALL VALUABLES** Keep jewelry and important paperwork together. Have a friend hold on to them until you get settled or lock them in the trunk of your car on moving day.

Moving Day

- **TAKE ONE LAST LOOK** Do a walk-through before movers arrive to make sure everything is packed and afterward to make sure nothing was left. Give your keys to the real estate agent or landlord.
- **DIRECT TRAFFIC** Arrange for someone to be at your new home when the movers arrive to oversee them and answer questions. Check items off your inventory list as they are unloaded.
- **INSPECT FOR DAMAGES** Photograph relevant object before signing the release, also known as the bill of lading.
- **START TO SETTLE IN** Test faucets, toilets, utilities, phones, smoke detectors and security systems. Turn on the water heater if necessary. Begin to unpack, discarding anything that no longer serves you. Flatten boxes to recycle or store them for next time.

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