

2 months before you move

Two months before you move it is time to start deciding a floor plan for your new home and where your bulkier items will reside. If you have a young family it is also important to begin researching schools and liaising with friends and family about potential help on your moving date.

- Draw up a list of your main possessions.
- Decide what items you'll take to your new home and where you will place larger items. A floor plan of your new home may help with this so try and acquire one; your seller may be able to sketch you a rough copy.
- If you have items you don't want to take with there are a number of ways you can get rid of them, including car boot sales, online auction sites and charity shops.
- Check to see if your insurance policy will cover your move. If not, your removals company should be able to provide cover – get it early to avoid any complications.
- Research schools in your new local area. Visit them if necessary until your child finds one they like.
- Arrange to transfer your child's school records.
- Ask around to see who's free around your moving date – the help of friends and family will be paramount to success.

6 weeks before you move

With just over a month away from moving home, at this stage it is important to begin sorting which items you would rather sell or give away. If you are going to be changing jobs as a result of your house move you will also need to prepare to hand in your notice to your current employers.

- Clean out cupboards and place possessions in usable piles/larger rooms. Take a full inventory so you know exactly what you own.
- Items you won't want to take with can be sold or given away don't forget removals companies quote by volume so the more you bring with the more you pay.
- If you're relocating due to a job move, find out what costs your employer will cover. If you plan to hold a going away party, send out invitations now.
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1 month before you move

With just four weeks away from your house move you will be looking to assign a removals company to carry out your transition as well as the many other related services that can make things easier on moving day.

- Finalise your move date so you can start making firm bookings for removals and other related services - this will be easier once contracts have been exchanged.
- Appoint a removals firm, but remember to make sure they are a professional and reputable company. Ask them when they offer discounts, as many companies will charge a premium for moving you on bank holidays, weekends, and in the summer months.
- If you're looking for moving insurance, cleaning or storage check with your removals company - they may offer these at a discount.
- Arrange to have your new house cleaned in between the old owners moving out and you moving in. At the very least get the carpets, walls, floors and inside cupboards cleaned. If you want to go further you can have the carpets shampooed and steam cleaned, in addition to a full spring clean.

- Book carpet fitters if any carpets are beyond repair. Visit the house to ensure you know what colour will suit the property.
- Get your car serviced and work out a travel route to the new house.
- Book overnight hotel accommodation if the journey is a long one - many hotel chains, such as Travelodge, offer regular promotions where rooms in less popular locations can be booked for as little as £9.
- Arrange for childcare and pet care on moving day - friends and family are best so ring around until you find someone who's free.
- Send out change of address cards to friends, relatives and relevant companies - make sure you send them to all the right organisations.
- Start packing non-essential items and clothing. By starting early you can pack possessions systematically and ensure you fit as much as you can in a box. Removals companies quote on volume so the less boxes you bring the less you pay.
- Start running down freezer compartments - making a meal plan is a great idea to save money and use everything up.
- Clear out the loft. Borrow a high powered light and search all corners to ensure you don't miss anything. Watch out for hidden cables.
- Find out new school dress codes and order uniforms if necessary.
- Find out about children's groups in your new local area to get them involved as soon as possible e.g. cubs, scouts, brownies and girl guides.
- If you'd like a locksmith to change the locks at your new house arrange for them to meet you there on the day of your move.

2 weeks before you move

With only a fortnight until the big moving day you should have already secured all important services for your moving day. Now it should be a case of preparing a moving day 'survival kit' of essentials designed to help you and your family get through the trauma unscathed.

- Check you have adequate prescription medicines to cover the moving period. Make sure you stock up on the essentials - such as painkillers and cold remedies - too.
- Safely dispose of all materials and liquids that require specialist treatment e.g. paints, gas bottles, cleaning fluids and oils - find out where to take each one before you go by contacting your local council.
- If you need specialist help around the home but haven't arranged for your removals company to help, book people to carry out these tasks e.g. removing light fittings, house cleaning and dismantling of hi-fi systems, computers and printers. If you do this yourself, insert transit screws where applicable.
- Cancel local deliveries and inform them of your moving date - newspapers, gardener, cleaner, milk, fuel and oil.
- Prepare a moving day survival kit that contains everything you need to get through the day unscathed.

1 week before you move

In your final week at home you should be preparing to store all important and sensitive documentation and information in a safe and secure place, whilst ensuring that all outstanding bills and payments have been settled on accounts from newsagents to dry cleaners.

- Put all your important documents in one plain, sturdy box and place it where you won't lose it this should include passports, driving licenses, house deeds, wills, insurance papers, football pools, jewellery and cash.
- Keep all moving-related documents in a single folder for easy access.
- Finish packing so you have everything boxed up and ready to go - make sure you do this systematically.

- Make sure all boxes are labelled and colour co-ordinated for easy identification - check out our handy spreadsheet for labelling your boxes here.
- Prepare detailed directions and an itinerary with emergency numbers for your moving company.
- Settle outstanding bills with retailers e.g. newsagents. Pick up dry cleaning and return library books/DVDs/video tapes.
- Return any borrowed items to friends and family.
- Take pets to the vet and obtain copies of their records. If they are poor travellers ask about sedation and relaxants.
- Give away plants and flowers you won't be taking with.
- Make arrangements to pay for your move and ensure you have sufficient cash assets in the bank for emergencies.
- Clean outdoor equipment and toys. Drain fuel from petrol lawnmowers and water from hoses.
- Defrost fridge and freezer. Ensure they are completely dry before moving to prevent mildew build up.
- Wash and dry all linen and clothing and box up, ready to unpack at your new house. Prepare your washing machine for moving. Disconnect power and water and check if transit bolts need to be fitted.
- Dispose of unwanted drugs through the chemist. Do not throw them away. Set up a mail redirection service with the Royal Mail.

1 day before you move

The day before your removals day it is important to carry out one final, thorough check of your home to ensure all important items have been packed and stored ready for transit. Arrangements are also required to pick up the keys to your new home!

- Do a thorough, final sweep of your house to ensure you haven't missed anything. This is best done when all boxes and items are packed into one room. Look behind cupboards, under beds, behind sofas (if leaving them), and down crevices in the kitchen to ensure you leave nothing. Take your time doing this - if you don't do it properly first time round you'll get anxious the next day.
- Strip the beds and pack the bedding material - this can be taken with you in a box so you can put it straight back on beds when you arrive.
- Ensure you have the keys to your new house, or have arranged to collect them in advance.
- Inform friends and relatives of the time of your move and have several 'on call' to help you if things get too much.

On the day you move

You will no doubt be experiencing a mixture of excitement and trepidation on the day of your house move but it is still important to have a plan of action. Be sure to have checked meter readings and secured windows before leaving the property in the hands of the new owners.

- Record all utility meter readings (water, electricity, gas) and store in a safe place.
- Stay until your movers have finished packing up - have another walk through the house to make sure you or they haven't missed anything.
- Check traffic for your journey at keepmoving.com.
- Before leaving check all windows are secure and water, gas and electricity supplies are switched off.
- Your removals company may ask you to sign a packing/inventory list. Make sure you're happy with the list before you sign. You'll be asked to sign it again once the company has unpacked your belongings.
- Give movers several copies of emergency contact details and directions to your new house.

Once you are in your new home

Upon arrival at your new home it is important to ensure your removals team are aware of where each box is headed from the moving van and unpack your moving day survival kit to ensure everyone is suitable clean, refreshed and happy throughout what is undoubtedly going to be a very hectic day all round.

- Make sure you arrive before the removals crew so you can guide them around the house confirming where you need each box or item to be it helps if you've provided them with a floor plan. If you colour code the rooms on the floor plan to correspond with boxes this will make it easier for them.
- Check the unloading of each item and account for every one on the inventory. Check carefully for damaged or missing items. Your removals company will ask you to sign a release form so only do so after you're happy.
- Place moving and other important documents in a safe place where they won't get disturbed.

- Collect held mail from the post office if you've arranged this service.
- Once your locksmith has finished ensure you have several copies of the new keys. Unpack your survival kit and get the kettle going.

You should also perform the following tasks:

- Utility meters – read them as soon as you move in and before you start using electricity, gas and water.
- Sweep for items – ensure the previous owners have not left anything behind. If they have, put it in a box and arrange for delivery at a later date.
- Inspect the garden – make sure it's completely childproof and petproof if applicable.
- Ensure the keys work – this applies to windows and doors. If your locksmith has changed all the locks you should check everything works before they leave.
- Use the boiler and heating – ensure you know how to program it in so at least you can all have a hot shower and a warm house to relax in.
- Write down all your emergency numbers – this includes out of hours doctors services, taxi numbers, vets, poison centres, local hospitals, your child's school and non-urgent police and fire numbers.

After you have moved in

Once you are settled into your new property it is very important to make sure everyone in the family is comfortable in their new surroundings. You should also ensure that you remain contactable by friends and family so ensure phone lines are plugged in so loved ones can get in touch and offer their services to lend a hand!

- Give the place a quick clean and make the beds so you know you'll be able to fall into them later when you're exhausted.
- Plug in telephones to ensure you're contactable, connect the answering machine and large appliances particularly fridges and freezers.

- Let older children organise their own rooms - there will inevitably be periods in the future when you rearrange things but let them arrange them for now so they feel at home.
- Settle younger children in a room with some toys and treats.
- If possible keep pets away until you're settled in.
- If you're having carpets fitted, make sure you get the boxes placed in one room so your carpet fitting company can do their job easily.

The week after you moved in:

- Don't peak too early. The week after you've moved in can still be packed full and you must take it in your stride to avoid getting stressed.
- Try to get back to the favourite parts of your routine as quickly as possible.

Here are some of the things you may wish to do:

- Rearrange deliveries - talk to the milkman and have your milk delivered and arrange to get your daily newspaper again.
- Talk to neighbours don't be a stranger or you'll quickly feel isolated. Invite neighbours round for coffee or attend a coffee morning.
- Go for walks you don't feel truly at home until you know the place you live like the back of your hand.
- Relax everyone knows that Rome wasn't built in a day, and your new house won't get sorted within a week. Take the time to relax from your stressful move or you'll soon exhaust yourself.
- Take your dog for walks - this is a great way to reconnect with your companion and also explore the local area at your leisure.
- Sort your bedroom - not permanently, but give it a once over and put up some photos. You need a safe, comfortable haven to retire to at the end of the day.
- You should also make friends in your new area as quickly as possible.