

Questions to ask a moving company

Ask every mover before you book, and get the answers in writing. The rules here are the federal ones for moves between US states.



Who they are

- ☐ **What's your USDOT number?** Every mover that takes your things from one state to another has one. Look it up in the FMCSA's mover search: it shows whether they're registered and insured to move households, and their complaints.
- ☐ **Are you the mover, or a broker?** A broker sells you the move and hands it to a moving company. If it's a broker, ask which company will do the move, and look that one up too.
- ☐ **Where's your office?** A real street address, not only a phone number. Look it up on a map.
- ☐ **Where can I read reviews of your moves?** Read them on more than one site, and look for complaints about late deliveries, missing boxes or a price that went up on the day.
- ☐ **Moving within one state?** The federal rules on this page are for moves between states. Ask your state's consumer protection office whether movers there need a license, and check theirs.

The estimate

- ☐ **Will you see my things before you give me a price?** In person or on a video call. A price given over the phone or online, without seeing your things, is a warning sign.
- ☐ **Can I have the estimate in writing?** Movers between states must give you a written estimate. Never agree to a price they'll work out after loading.
- ☐ **Is the estimate binding?** Binding: you pay what it says, unless you add things or services. Binding not-to-exceed: you pay that or less. Non-binding: the bill follows the real weight, and at delivery you only have to pay up to 110 percent of the estimate; the rest is billed at least 30 days later.
- ☐ **What could cost extra?** Stairs, a long walk to the truck, an elevator, a smaller shuttle truck, bulky things and packing materials. Ask for each one to be on the estimate.
- ☐ **How much is the deposit, and how do I pay?** A credit card gives you a way to dispute the charge. A mover that wants cash, or a large deposit before the move, is showing a warning sign.

If something breaks or goes missing

- ☐ **Is it Full Value Protection or Released Value?** With Full Value Protection the mover repairs a lost or broken thing, replaces it, or pays what it would cost to replace. Released Value costs nothing extra but pays 60 cents a pound per item, so a 50-pound TV gets 30 dollars. You only get Released Value by choosing it in writing.
- ☐ **What does Full Value Protection cost?** Ask for the price, and any deductible, in writing. A deductible can make it cheaper.
- ☐ **How do I list things worth a lot?** Anything worth more than 100 dollars a pound, like jewelry, a laptop or a camera, should be listed in writing before the move. If it isn't, the mover can limit what it pays for it.
- ☐ **How do I file a claim, and by when?** In writing, within 9 months of delivery. The mover has 30 days to say it got your claim, and 120 days to pay it, deny it or make an offer.
- ☐ **What if we can't agree on a claim?** Movers between states must offer arbitration. For claims up to 10,000 dollars, if you ask for it, the mover must agree, and the decision is binding on both of you.
- ☐ **And ask your own insurer.** Whether your home or renters policy covers your things while they're with the movers, before you pay for more cover.

Moving day

- ☐ **What are the pickup and delivery dates?** Get them in writing, as a window of days, and ask what happens if they're late.
- ☐ **Will it be your own truck and crew?** A rental truck turning up instead of a company truck is a warning sign. If another company will do the move, ask which one.
- ☐ **Will you make an inventory?** The crew should list every box and the condition of your things. Read it before you sign, and keep a copy.
- ☐ **Where are the two booklets?** "Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move" and "Ready to Move?". Movers between states must give you both, on paper or as a link.
- ☐ **Who do I call while my things are on the road?** A name and a number that answers, and the driver's.

Warning signs of a moving scam (the FMCSA's red flags)

- They give you a price over the phone or online without seeing your things.
- They won't put the estimate in writing, or say they'll work out the price after loading.
- They want cash, or a large deposit before the move.
- They ask you to sign papers that are blank or unfinished.
- They don't give you the "Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move" booklet.
- Their website has no address, and no registration or insurance details.
- They answer the phone "Movers" or "Moving company" instead of with their name.
- A rental truck turns up on moving day instead of a company truck.
- They say everything you own is covered by their insurance.
- On moving day they say you have more than they estimated, and the price goes up.

Where to check a mover

- FMCSA mover search ([fmcsa.dot.gov/protect-your-move/search-mover](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/protect-your-move/search-mover)): Registration, insurance and complaints for movers between states, by name or USDOT number.
- National Consumer Complaint Database (nccdb.fmcsa.dot.gov): To report a mover or a broker online, or call 1-888-368-7238, weekdays 8am to 8pm Eastern.
- Your state's consumer protection office: For a move within one state.

Compare your quotes

Get at least three, and fill in a column for each.

	Mover 1	Mover 2	Mover 3
Company			
USDOT number			
Mover or broker			
Binding estimate?			
Price			
Deposit			
Protection			
Pickup dates			
Delivery dates			
Notes			

Pax's tip

Whoever you book, keep your own list of what goes on the truck: if a box goes missing, it's your proof of what was in it. BoxTrack makes that list as you pack. Your first box is free at box-track.com.



Scan to tick it off