

A CONSUMERS GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MOVER:

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Basic tips for choosing the best – and avoiding the worst the moving world has to offer



Just ask the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and they'll tell you that complaints about moving companies rank at the top of their listings. You've heard the horror stories about moving. As you make plans to move all your worldly goods, you're probably wondering how to ensure a good move.

Telephone directories, the flyer placed under your door, the soliciting phone call or voice mail from an unknown moving company, and the flyer stapled to the local hydro pole can tell you only one thing – the company has a telephone.

A telephone number will not help you to locate the company if your goods are lost, if the movers don't arrive on moving day as agreed, or if additional moving charges show up on your credit card statement. It's a lot easier to do a little careful preparation in advance of a move than to chase a mover who's only given you a cell phone number afterwards with a claim. Here are some basic steps to have a good move.

FIND A REPUTABLE, PROFESSIONAL MOVING COMPANY.

It's your responsibility to find a good mover. This is the one basic step that you must take. Find a company that will treat you fairly and provide you with a safe, reliable moving service. It's simpler than you think to find a reputable mover but you have to look in the right places and ask the right questions.

Ontario's Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, the BBB and the Canadian Association of Movers receive thousands of calls from consumers each



year complaining about bad moves and bad movers. We hear about overcharging, damage to property, late pick up and delivery and failure of the mover to perform as promised. Each of these agencies can help you find a reputable mover. You will find these agencies in your telephone directory or at www.mover.net.

ASK AT LEAST THREE MOVERS FOR ESTIMATES.

Most astute consumers do comparison shopping to obtain the best service at the best price, and engaging a mover should not be any different. Consider the price you pay against the risk you take. Get estimates from three different moving companies. A reputable mover will give you a written estimate. Both the company representative and the customer agree to it. A good mover will abide by the terms of the estimate given to you (as long as you have dis-

closed all details of your move and there are no changes on moving day).

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE INSURANCE PROTECTION FOR YOUR GOODS.

Damage to your furniture or home can occur during a move, even with the most careful mover. Goods can be lost. Problems can be avoided by using professional movers who employ trained staff and proper packing and transportation procedures. Ask the mover to explain what care they will take in packing, transporting and storing your goods. Ask what happens if damage or loss does occur and how to insure against them. Ask your mover to explain their liability and claims process.

Take personal documents, medicines, money, jewellery, coin or stamp collections and computers (or at least your backup disks) with you. Many of these items have value that

can never be replaced.

GET THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF YOUR MOVE IN WRITING.

Disputes over the final cost are the most commonly-heard complaint. Unethical movers may demand cash after promising that a credit card payment is okay, or there may be surprise charges. Ensure you have a written contract in advance of moving day and that it is clear about what services you are to receive, and how you will have to pay for them. There should be no surprises on moving day.

Failure to engage a reputable mover can result in a late arrival or no-show on moving day with all of the attendant problems and costs associated with a failed move. Delays caused by traffic or unforeseen circumstances may be unavoidable and may result in legitimate, additional moving charges. But those delays caused by the mover's overbooking or poor scheduling are avoidable. Confirm your moving schedule with your mover the day before your move.

Keep in mind some simple rules to make your move a good one:

- Do your homework in advance
- Get all information in writing
- Protect your valuables
- Ensure you have adequate insurance.

But first and foremost, find a reputable professional moving company – and both you and your possessions will arrive at your new home in good condition.

A listing of reputable movers and other information may be viewed at www.mover.net.