

Robin Benjamin Relocation Checklist

Congratulations! You're planning to relocate, and this is a very exciting time for you. Planning and organization are going to be key to ensuring that your experience is a positive one. Failing to prepare can herald disaster. Here are a few well-proven strategies for all-round relocation success.

Picking Your Moving Company

Perhaps more than anything else, the **moving company you select** can affect your relocation experience. Know that on the Big Day, some things are going to happen that may make you lose your cool. Practice keeping cool and detached, and always fall back on your plan. Unfortunately, no one has ever moved without **something** being scratched or broken, so accept it and move on. However, picking a professional moving team with experience will mean that you can keep the unexpected to a minimum.

One Month Before Moving

- **Pick up a Change-of-Address Kit from the Post Office and fill out:**
 - Friends and family
 - Banks
 - Insurance companies
 - Credit card companies
 - Magazines and newspapers - cancel local newspaper delivery
 - Doctors, dentists and other providers - transfer drug prescriptions
 - Past employer - for W2 forms
- **Take a look around the house. Start to think about what you don't want to take with you.**
 - Use up perishable foods
 - Sell, donate or hold a garage sale for unwanted items
- **Prepare a list of what you want to move.**
 - Large appliances?
 - Outside furniture?
- **For full service moves:**
 - Get written estimates from several moving companies
 - Will the movers pack for you?
 - What items won't they move?
 - Get appraisals of high-value items in case of future claims
- **For do-it-yourself moves, make arrangements for truck rental and moving help, and buy packing supplies:**
 - Boxes
 - Packing and masking tape
 - Markers
 - Newspapers
 - Twine
- **Start packing boxes. Mark boxes clearly as to contents and room to be placed in. Mark "Open First" clearly on boxes containing important items to be unpacked first:**

- Dishes
- Pots and pans
- Alarm clock
- Bedding
- Special toys
- Towels
- Lightbulbs
- Plates
- Tools - hammer, pliers, wrench
- **Stop by and make arrangements for picking up your important records:**
 - Birth
 - Doctor
 - Dentist
 - Legal
 - Optician, optometrist
 - School - make sure you get one with a raised seal
 - Veterinarian
- **Close out your bank accounts:**
 - Checking
 - Savings
 - Safe Deposit Box
- **Start a new bank account in your new town.**
 - Transfer account from current bank?
- **Contact your child's new school and notify them of your upcoming move to their area.**
- **Contact the Chamber of Commerce in your new town. Request a relocation package.**

Two Weeks Before Moving

- **Pack your vital documents in one place:**
 - Passports
 - Military records
 - Mortgage records
 - Marriage license
 - Birth certificates
 - Vehicle titles
 - Stock certificates
 - Insurance papers
 - Bank records
 - School records
 - Medical records
 - Tax records
- **Make arrangements to disconnect your utilities. Get refunds for any deposits made. Have meters read. Give new address for them to send their final bill:**
 - Cable - return box if necessary
 - Electric
 - Gas

- Internet access
- Telephone
- Water
- **Make arrangements to connect utilities at your new residence.**
- **Make arrangements for cleaning**
- **Inquire about your new state's auto licensing procedure and auto insurance rates.**
- **Check with your insurance company about transferring coverage to your new home.**
- **Arrange to have a sitter watch your children at their house on moving day.**

One Week Before Moving

- **Dispose or drain any flammable items:**
 - Lawn mower gas
 - Snow blower gas
 - Paint
 - Aerosol cans
- **Plan what goes in the car with you:**
 - Toys and games for kids
 - Special breakable items or collections
 - Important documents and records
 - Change of clothes and toiletries for your first day
 - Vacuum cleaner - if you want to clean right away
 - Toilet paper
 - First aid kit
 - Food kit with bottled water, cereal, bananas
- **Make travel arrangements for your pets and plants.**
- **Purchase moving insurance if you have valuable antiques and collections.**
- **Have your car tuned up.**

The Day Before Moving

- **Defrost, clean and air out your refrigerator.**
- **Clean your stove.**
- **Make sure you have payment ready for the mover - they will not unpack without a check. Check your moving company's payment policies.**
- **Purchase traveler's checks for other possible expenses.**
- **Pack your former town's phone book for future correspondence.**
- **Get a simple breakfast ready for the next morning.**
- **Pick up ice and beverages for moving day.**
- **Take down curtains and curtain rods.**
- ***Get a good night's sleep!***

Moving Day!

- **Strip your beds.**
 - Moving company - will they disassemble?
- **Show movers around. Make sure your possessions to be moved are inventoried with them.**
 - Write "subject to further inspection for concealed loss or damage" on contract when you sign to protect yourself should you find damage while unpacking.
- **Get all keys together. Put in a safe spot.**
- **Make sure moving van driver has correct address, phone number and directions. Confirm delivery date with him.**
- **Check all rooms one last time. Remember closets and cupboards, basement and garage! Make sure all windows and doors are locked.**

Good luck! Remember - many of your moving expenses are tax deductible, so hang on to your receipts. Call the Internal Revenue Service and request Publication 521: "Tax Information On Moving Expenses" to find out which moving expenses you can deduct.

This takes care of the material side of moving. Have you prepared **your kids**? Are **you** prepared? It can make all the difference to how you and members of the family react to the upheaval if you've taken the right steps to prepare yourselves emotionally.

No matter how excited you are to be moving to another area, it can be a wrench to say goodbye to friends and even family that you may have had for neighbors for a very long time.

If you've followed our advice about finding your new home (url), it will be perfectly situated for everyone to continue with activities they love, such as golf and various sports. This can be a very important part of settling in to your new surroundings. Especially for younger members of the family, try to make the routine as familiar as possible, as quickly as possible.

2. Hire professional packers -- or be your own pro.

When you pack, you open up the hidden places. Packing up the attic, basement or messy kitchen drawer, will force confrontation with a part of the self that has not been visited for years. Often "I have" means saying "I am."

Professional packers do not make judgments. They do not sort through your closets, sighing over the pants that won't fit anymore. They pack everything.

People often say, "I wish we had taken that lamp (or bookcase or chair) with us. I could really use it now."

Unless you are on a really tight budget, err on the side of taking too much. There will probably be a Goodwill or a Salvation Army in your new city.

If you pack your own household, follow the example of the pros.

Pack everything. Pack fast. And don't judge.

3. Pack an emotional first aid kit.

Packing your best intentions isn't enough.

When you undertake a voyage into the unknown, you pack sunblock, Band-Aids, and insect repellent, as well as the basic medications for unexpected encounters

with local food and water. For your first six months, prepare an emotional first aid kit to deal with stresses you are likely to encounter. Some items you might include are:

- **Coping phrases to repeat when feeling frazzled:**
"Let go and relax."
"I can deal with this."
"I face the future with confidence."
- **Tapes of meditation and visualization to help you calm down when you have a bout of anxiety.**
- **A book or a tape of yoga exercises or some physical activity you enjoy.**
- **Favorite photos of friends, family, places and pets.**
- **Phone numbers of friends and family who can be called when you really need to talk to a familiar voice:**
someone to laugh with;
someone who will listen;
someone who just moved a year ago and can offer good advice

4. Honor your new home.

As you unpack, play your favorite music and enjoy your favorite foods. Arrange one room -or one corner of the room-to look familiar. Some people create a ritual of settling in to make the new house their own.

5. Create your own tugboat.

Think of a tugboat that guides an ocean liner out of the harbor. Ocean liners are designed to move smoothly on the high seas and they need special handling while they're close to shore. For the first six months in your new home, create your own tugboat -- a temporary identity that can be released with gratitude when you reach cruising speed on the high seas.

The top deck is your creativity, your connection with air and sunlight.

Creative activity will unfreeze your mental processes. Write a journal entry or a novel, paint a picture or a sketch, stitch a quilt, make a piece of jewelry.

The lower deck is your connection to the physical. Exercise gives you confidence and energy. Don't be surprised if you feel less homesick after a long walk, a good run or a challenging aerobics class.

6. Make new friends by doing what you love.

Fill your life with activities that will be creative and fulfilling. When you nurture yourself, you communicate strength and confidence to others. If you are seen as vulnerable and needy, you will attract negative people and negative experiences. Remember what you promised yourself you'd do "after we've moved." You may have promised yourself you'd get a dog or take opera lessons. Don't wait. By doing this while you're in transition you'll have more energy and vitality rather than if you wait until you're "settled."

7. Be your own best camp counselor.

Camp counselors, boarding school directors and drill sergeants know: If you fill the time, newcomers won't have time to be homesick. Set up time to explore your new city. Create a demanding schedule and stick to it. Map out your itinerary for the first few weeks before you move so you'll begin to set a structure to your days. By staying busy you'll give yourself a chance to acclimate to your new home more quickly.

8. Celebrate everyday life.

Think small.

A walk around the lake.

A perfect cup of coffee in a nearby coffee shop.

A friendly face at the local hardware store.

Listen for the moments when you say, "I could get used to this..."

9. Ask The Big Move Question: Can I still be me?

Moving often interrupts identity. The secret to a successful move depends on how you answer the question, "Can I still be me?" To answer this question, write ten "I am" statements about yourself -- anything from "I am a mother" to "I am a dog-owner" to "I am friendly and outgoing." Before you move, ask yourself, "How will this list change after I move?" After you move, ask, "How has the list changed? Am I pleasantly surprised?"

10. Embark on an adventure.

Believe it or not, many people love to move and describe their relocation as a great adventure! I like to compare moving to time travel. After the moving van has been loaded, you go to sleep in a bare room. The next morning, you wake up to a world of exciting possibilities.

No matter what happens, you will find at least one pocket of joy in your new life. Everyone I've interviewed said, "Even when I was happy to move, there was always something I hated to leave behind. And even when I dreaded moving, there was always something wonderful that I had never expected."