

How to Plan Your Move

The key to a good international move is *planning*.

Bearing in mind that it can take weeks to ship your goods to another part of the world, there is simply no room for last minute rushes. If you aren't ready, no 40,000 tonne steamship or jumbo jet is going to wait for your household effects!

In essence, your entire move has three key operations:

- **Preparation.** This means deciding what to take, what to dispose of and sorting out the paperwork. One thing you can be certain of – it will take longer than you think! You will have to organise insurance, an inventory and make plans for cars, pets and any new goods you are taking.
- **The journey.** You need to work out how much of your shipment is to go by sea or air. You may save hotel bills by sending some of your belongings in advance by air. Also think about how quickly you need your belongings once you are at destination – you can discuss all this with the moving company during the survey meeting.
- **Arrival:** You must allow for Customs clearance, delivery of your belongings, more paperwork and unpacking. You must also be available – don't even think about being on holiday when your shipment arrives!

PREPARATION

12 weeks before the move.

Choose a mover.

Your family is moving maybe thousands of miles away. So the first thing to do is to make sure you have a reliable mover. When you are posted abroad, and your personal belongings don't turn up, you can be a long way from home to sort out the problems.

If you choose a *FIDI agent* you can be certain that the company is a specialist in international moving and its operational and financial capability has been checked. Where one exists, it will also be a member of an approved national moving association.

Ask two or three movers to quote. Make sure you brief them in the same way and clearly show what goes and what stays, otherwise their quotes will vary.

What to take.

Most goods are cheaper to ship than to replace, so take everything you need but dispose of those items which are unsuitable in your new country, worn out or that you never liked anyway.

What stays behind.

Different countries have different rules about what you can take in and what you cannot. The first rule is – don't even think about flouting Customs regulations. What you think is harmless might cost you a spell in jail. Please consult your FIDI agents well in advance for advice as they can provide you with Customs information and country information for nearly 100 countries.

There are some items that are almost certainly a no-go area for shipping overseas. Restrictions include:

- **Firearms:** You will find it difficult to ship even antique or special firearm collections.
- **Alcohol:** Private wine collections are not welcome at all destinations.
- **Pornography:** What you consider a pin-up magazine is considered pornography in many countries.

Children.

If some items are going by air, remember to include children's clothes and toys. This will help your family settle in more quickly. Take enough clothes to live with and always include some familiar items from your home. Understandably, children are very vulnerable at this time. Involve them in the move. Get books from the library for information on your new home or ask your FIDI mover for a country guide.

Education.

Do you need advice about schooling at destination? Talk to your moving company as it can put you in touch with a suitable organisation. Movers are being asked similar questions every day, so they have a useful store of knowledge.



Pets.

Pets can also move to your new home, unless specific restrictions apply, on which your mover can advise. However, the shipping of pets is a specialist job and your mover could bring in another company to handle it. Most of these companies are regularly inspected and operate to high standards. If you can, it is probably worthwhile visiting their premises to make sure you are comfortable with them. There is no hard and fast guidance on this matter – some pets absolutely take moving in their stride while others find it very traumatic. Take time to discuss the matter and make sure you have your pet's relevant medical paperwork.

Cars.

Whether or not you pay duty depends on which country you are going to. All countries have rigid laws about imported cars, and some are more restrictive than others. In certain countries it is simply not worth having an imported car because the duty is so high. Look into this well in advance because you may decide you want to sell your car before you go. An attractive alternative is simply to put your car into store until you return, rather than have the worry of depreciation if it is an expensive one.

Ten weeks before the move.

Clearing out.

Take time to get rid of things you really don't need. Go through the basement, garage, loft and toy cupboards. Charity shops, garage or car boot sales are all good ways of disposing of unwanted goods that are in good condition.

Eight weeks before the move.

Who to tell.

If you have a Christmas card list, use this as the basis for a list of people to send change of address cards. Don't forget to add utilities such as mains suppliers (gas/electricity/water), telephone, doctor, dentist, bank, building societies, investment advisers, credit card companies, magazine subscriptions, hire purchase or rental companies.

Paperwork.

Start rounding up passports, birth/marriage certificates and check that you have visas, if required. These can often take several months. If you are in a hurry, some companies specialise in obtaining visas on your behalf but they charge. Other items to arrange include:

- Vaccination certificates
- Birth/marriage certificates
- Medical records
- Investment documents
- Invoices for any new purchases
- School reports
- Personal travel documents.

Electrical goods.

Don't take it for granted that all your electrical goods will work in your destination country. Check out the voltages first.

Six weeks before the move.

Moving date.

By now you should have confirmed your moving date with your selected contractor. If not, sign the acceptance form and send it off now.

Mail.

This is a good time to arrange for your mail to be redirected. The cost is reasonable and usually requires no more than your attendance at your local post office with some form of identification.

New goods.

Depending where you are moving to, you may be able to reclaim sales tax refunds on new purchases. Check this with your mover.

Insurance.

A great many people will be handling your shipment between departure and arrival. Although your shipment will be packed to withstand the longest journey, insurance cover gives you peace of mind from door-to-door. You should always insure to cover the cost of replacement in the country of destination.

School.

About this time it is worth inquiring if the school your children will be attending has any particular dress code or other formality. It is important that your children settle in as quickly as possible and taking care of these things in advance, helps the process.

At the same time, if your children are members of international organisations such as the Scouts or Girl Guides, it is worth obtaining details about the nearest group in your new home town. This will help them



make friends rapidly.

Getting connected.

Your employer's HR department, your property agent at destination or your mover can help you with contact addresses of the various organisations whose services you will need to connect your new home to electrical, gas, oil, telephone supplies and so on.

Odds and ends.

Sounds obvious, but don't forget to return library books, dispose of old cans of paint and other flammables in the garage or house, clear the attic and basement, and cancel household services such as milk, newspapers, gardeners and so on. Also, don't forget to find a home for your house plants!

The final bills.

Don't forget to contact main suppliers (electricity, gas, water, telephone) for a final bill. They will need a little notice to get your account up to date.

Seven days before you move.

Do not forget to:

- Defrost refrigerator/freezer.
- Plan simple meals for moving day to avoid using appliances.
- Separate cartons and luggage items you need for personal travel so they don't get packed. You would be surprised how many passports get packed!
- Clean garden tools, bicycles and any other gardening equipment. Don't forget to empty the tanks of powered tools such as mowers.

Three days before the move.

Just check that you have enough medication for at least two weeks, and ensure you have copies of any necessary prescriptions for use at destination.

It is handy to have some traveller's cheques and if you can get some local currency before you go, so much the better. You may need small change for papers, drinks, taxis and tips.

Moving day.

You need to be present, your children do not! If it is possible, try to park them with friends or neighbours for the day. It will be easier for you and less troubling for them.

You should obviously be present when the moving crew comes to the house. Take ten minutes to walk round with the foreman to check what goes, what stays and any special instructions. When the job is done, make a final check of the house with the foreman – don't forget to look inside cupboards!

Leave the packing to the professionals. Make sure someone remains with them in case they have questions and to see that nothing is left behind. Many shipments are checked by Customs at destination. So don't hide anything!

ON ARRIVAL.

What happens when your goods arrive? Your FIDI agent will have appointed another agent to receive and deliver your goods. One of the most important philosophies of FIDI is that the agent at destination will look after your shipment as carefully as the one at departure.

Clearance.

When your shipment arrives, the local company will arrange Customs clearance for you. Keep in touch to make sure your instructions are understood. Make yourself available to visit Customs if necessary and sort out any queries.

When cleared, your goods will be offered for delivery. If your new home is not ready, storage can be arranged although this will be a separate charge. Avoid delays - your container standing on the dockside can incur additional costs, which may be substantial.

Insurance.

Unpack everything straight away. If there is any damage report it immediately to your local mover and follow the claims procedure set out in your policy. It will save time if you can begin obtaining repair/replacement quotations. If you check your contract or insurance certificate you should see a time limit in which to make claims.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Your FIDI moving contractor should be able to answer any questions you have. If you would now like to find a mover, please consult our list of [FIDI movers](#).

[back to top](#)