



Canadian Association of Movers

Help Sheet: How to Pack Up Your House and Move Safely During Coronavirus

Packing up your entire house is never a fun or easy task, but COVID-19 has thrown movers a few additional curveballs. With the second wave that is well underway, and health officials urging folks to lessen their interaction with the outside world, quick and frequent runs to the hardware store are pretty much out of the question if you are in a locked down area — and you'll want to think twice about using borrowed or "found" moving boxes. Plus, now's not the time to call in favours from friends, as much as you'd love to bribe them with some pizza and beer in exchange for their help.

If your move must go on, here we'll cover how to get your moving supplies safely and on time, sanitize all your packaging, and strategies for packing during quarantine to make the best use of some extra down time.

Order your moving supplies early

Since trips outside the home are discouraged, you'll want to have a comprehensive list of moving supplies ordered online, or through your mover, well before you start packing up. Most services are reporting delayed shipping times between 5-7 business days after the order is placed. Work backwards from move-out day and allow for some padding in between.

Most packing can be done in small ("2 cube"), medium ("4 cube") and large boxes ("5 cube") as well as china or dish barrels. Include packing tape and paper (not newspaper), markers, post-it notes and a box cutter and you're ready to start. However, there are also other specialized boxes and supplies you *might* think about acquiring:

- Tall wardrobe boxes for hanging clothes
- TV boxes
- Small and Large picture boxes
- Reusable plastic moving bins
- Glassware packing boxes
- Stretch wrap
- Bubble wrap
- Mattress bags

You should be able to order most of these supplies through your moving company or through a supply depot like Staples, U-Haul or Home Depot.

You may also want to consider:

- Furniture sliders
- Masking tape
- Scotch tape
- Measuring tape
- Hand truck/dolly rental
- Ratchet strap

It might be tempting for Prime members to go with Amazon, but the online retailer is giving shipment priority to essential items, so it's hard to know exactly when your stuff will arrive.

Make sure you have enough boxes

Real estate agents and moving experts agree: now is not the time to scour the neighborhood for used boxes. With Kijiji and the liquor store off the table, here's what you can do instead:

- **Use “box alternatives” you can find in your home.**
Pack non breakable items in sturdy laundry baskets/bins, suitcases, and leave your clothing in your dresser drawers.
- **Turn kitchen pots into packing boxes.**
You can fit spices and other small kitchen items inside cooking pots. Put a dish towel in the pot to avoid clanging, and don’t forget to secure the pot lids with rubber bands or packing tape.

Even if you use all the containers around your home to pack, you’ll probably still need a few moving boxes. The average three-bedroom home will require between 80-100 boxes to move.

You should also avoid renting moving blankets and instead rely on blankets, towels, bedding, or sleeping bags from your own home as padding.

Stock up on sanitizer

In addition to moving supplies, you’ll want to stock up on disinfectants and sanitizers for your home as you invite movers in, and ensure that boxes have been properly disinfected. Use one of the [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) or [dilute household bleach](#) (5 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water) for a DIY disinfectant spray. If both are unavailable, solutions with [at least 70% alcohol](#) can be used. Alternatively, you can use high-proof spirits, rubbing alcohol, essential oils, and paper towels to create a [homemade batch of Lysol wipes](#).

Take precautions with your supplies deliveries

[Early studies emerging from Harvard](#) show that the risk of being exposed to coronavirus via delivered packaging is low. However, given that the virus was detected on cardboard for up to [24 hours \(albeit at low levels\)](#), we recommend playing it safe with the following tips as your supplies packages begin to arrive:

- **Leave packages at the door for a few hours**
To avoid infection from any traces of the virus that could have made its way onto the packaging, leave [your deliveries outside or in a safe remote location](#) — like the garage or mudroom — for up to 24 hours. After they’ve sat for a bit, bring them in and wipe the packages down with disinfectant. Wash your hands immediately after you handle any packages.
- **Remove outer packaging outside**
If you’re looking to be extra cautious, you can [get rid of the outer packaging of a delivery](#) before you bring the package inside. Pay attention to which surfaces you touched, or the package touched, and disinfect them immediately.
- **Use a staging space in your home as you pack**
As soon as moving boxes are packed and ready to go, put them in a low-traffic staging area, like a garage. If you’re using professional movers, you can prevent the spread by limiting the trips they need to take into the home.

Packing priorities during quarantine

Right off the bat, start packing away [non-essential items](#) in your home, including:

- Wall hangings
- Out of season clothing
- Holiday and home decor
- Special occasion and infrequently used dishes
- Books
- Unused toys
- DVDs, CDs, records

Next, before you start packing anything else, start thinking about your overnight bag. Typically, this bag is limited to toiletries and a few sets of clothes to get you through the first few days in a new place. Amid a pandemic, you want to be extra thorough and make sure you set aside items you're using most right now. You may be moving to an area that requires a 14-day quarantine/self-isolation. Because you're encouraged not to leave the home unless absolutely necessary, plan for a larger-than-normal overnight bag for everyone in your home and be sure to:

- Keep iPads or other entertainment for the kids easily accessible to help with the move transition.
- Put anything you need to work remotely (laptop, chargers, extra screens) in a backpack.
- Double check for all your essential toiletries — if you forget the toothpaste or (god forbid) toilet paper, running to a store is a little more complicated than it used to be.
- Set aside paper plates, plastic cups, and plastic cutlery.
- Plan for a few non-perishable meals with a food bag including PB&J, canned soup, instant mac n' cheese, cereal, or the like in case getting to the grocery store is difficult.

Consult HomeLight's [comprehensive moving checklist to make sure you have everything](#). Label boxes or bags with any of your essentials, and plan to have them travel with you, not with the movers or in the van. This ensures you can access them ASAP when you reach your new home without risk of contamination. (You'll want to let whatever the movers have touched sit for 24 hours if you can).

Next, with your essentials identified and set aside, consider how your lifestyle has changed over the past few weeks and how it may have drastically altered your packing priorities. You may decide to:

- Pack your fancy clothes and office attire first — your sweatpants and comfy clothes last.
- Leave your home office intact until right before the move so you can maintain productivity.
- Consider what cooking utensils you're using most frequently and keep those together in a ZipLock bag since eating out is a challenge right now.

Don't underestimate how long it'll take to pack

[Parkinson's Law](#) states that “work expands to fill the time available for its completion.” In other words, don't count all the extra time you're spending at home leading to extra productivity.

In a best case scenario, it would take the average person 3-5 days to pack a three-bedroom home — but that's if they were theoretically going nonstop without breaks. And that figure also doesn't factor in the time it takes to wipe down boxes, entertain the out-of-school kids, and cook most meals at home — aka the joys of quarantine. So, try not to leave work until the last minute, even if you feel like you have the time.

Leave your residence spotless for the new owners

Be hypervigilant about cleaning your old home for the new owners. Consider hiring a professional cleaning company to perform a top-to-bottom cleanse of your home. It would be worth the money to get a proper service done.

What if we have to quarantine?

You're moving to a new province (or a new country) during the pandemic. Most Canadian provinces and territories have a 14-day self-isolation/quarantine ruling in place for travellers. Some provinces are much stricter than others, so check your new provincial rules. It is likely that your shipment will arrive in your new city before you are out of isolation/quarantine. There are options that you need to discuss with the moving company you booked your move with:

- Assigning someone (who is not in mandatory isolation) to receive your shipment on your behalf.
- Considering having your shipment “held” for a period of time so that the delivery occurs once you are free and clear of the 14-days. Most call this storage-in-transit. This usually results in additional fees.

- Depending on the driver's circumstance, and if you have only 1 or 2 days left until you get the "all clear," you might be able to arrange to hold your shipment on the trailer. That would be a remote possibility, but worth asking about.

If you are isolating/quarantining in the home you are going to be moving into, then the moving company is under no obligation to deliver until you are safely past the 14 days. They will need to confirm that anyone in the house is free of symptoms and that you have properly sanitized all surfaces in the home prior to their arrival. It would be prudent to wear a mask while they are present. Any charges incurred for the delay would be your responsibility.

If the moving company agrees to deliver while you are still in your isolation/quarantine period, it is suggested that you isolate in a separate room without any contact with the movers during the move. As well, if you have more than one washroom, designate one washroom for the movers to use for handwashing.

These are unprecedented times and flexibility and strong communication are going to be required by both the mover and the customer. It is your responsibility to make sure that you understand all aspects of your move, including forced delays due to government restrictions.

How to unpack and move in safely

Consider doing a deep cleaning of your new home before moving in, or observe the quarantine period between delivery and move-in dates. If boxes were transported by professional movers, they should be disinfected or kept in the garage or other low traffic area for at least 24 hours before you open them.

Go ahead and get takeout!

And after all that work, we wouldn't blame you for craving some takeout for dinner. Early studies are showing it is safe to order takeout or delivery, as long as you can opt for a contactless drop-off. The biggest risk of transmission comes from interaction with the delivery person, not from the food or the container it's in. But, to be safe, dispose of the packaging as soon as possible, and wash your hands thoroughly before you eat.

Plan ahead and play it safe

No one loves the idea of packing and moving, and circumstances surrounding the coronavirus have surely made a monumental task even more challenging. But if you order your supplies plenty early, pack in a strategic order, and stage your belongings to avoid contact with movers, you can help to make it a more manageable experience for everyone involved and get to your next destination as safely as possible.

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