

# Items of Value, Inc.

A Full-Service Appraisal and Estate Sale Firm

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## **PREVENTING PACKING, MOVING, AND STORAGE DAMAGE**

Most packing, moving, and storing damage is avoidable. Most damage can be prevented by more careful packing. Wouldn't you prefer to see your possessions arrive in good condition rather than having to repair or replace them later or having to live with them after they are damaged? When damage is done, the causes are largely predictable and preventable.

Damage occurs to items packed in boxes when they are packed too closely together. Everything will jostle around in a moving van, so packers should plan for this. Each item needs to be wrapped so that if it hits an adjacent item it will not be damaged. Packers need to add additional packing material such as styrofoam popcorn or loosely wadded up newspaper in between items in boxes. Some movers are wont to fill a box with anything just to have the box full. They end up putting heavy things on top of lighter things. For example, waffle irons and skillets are packed on top of crystal in the same box or clock radios and telephones are packed in the same box on top of pewter or figurines. Be sure lighter weight is packed on heavier weight, or better still, that every box is packed with items of uniform weight.

Packers may compress or squash items inside a box. To avoid this, pack cardboard or bubblewrap horizontally between items stacked in a carton. Avoid stacking lampshades because they may crush each other. Do not stack picture frames so that they will punch holes in photos or prints packed under them. Likewise, boxes or furniture stacked on leather sofas over a two-year period can permanently crease the leather. Furniture boxes stacked on top of mattresses and chair cushions can permanently compress them.

Because everything bounces around in a moving van, care should be taken to put packing material around all outside edges or projections that might bump or abrade items next to them. Framed items such as prints, paintings, and photos can be packed four to six at a time in the same box if they are packed front-to-front and back-to-back (facing each other or opposing each other). This way the screw eyes of one frame will not scrape or puncture the frame behind it. Put a piece of cardboard between the frames to prevent abrasion on the foreedges of the frames. Remember also to put cardboard not only in front of a painting but behind it as well. People forget that a painting can be just as easily punctured from the back.

Weight in motion can do damage that would not happen if the weight is stationary. Be sure that all drawers and file cabinets travel empty. A drawer full of shoes or books can break through the back or sides of a drawer as it bounces around, or is turned on its side or even upside down when put into a moving van.

Ensure that packing quilts are used abundantly. One regrettable situation involved items moved across country and put into temporary storage for three weeks before being reloaded for delivery to the final destination. The owner saw over one hundred packing quilts used to pack the furniture when it left the west coast but only three taken off the furniture when the items were off-loaded on the east coast. The primary mover had packed the furniture well, but the secondary mover, hired by the primary mover for the short-distance move from temporary storage, did not. Damage was considerable. The dining table had long parallel scrapes in its top from chairs being dragged across it. The top of the TV was scraped by staples in the bottom of boxes put on top of it. The large glass panes in a cabinet were smashed. One cabinet door was broken off when the door fell open as it was carried off the moving truck.

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Large items are best protected when wrapped in packing quilts before they are taken out of your home. Or they can be carried out with the movers' hands cupped around the outside edges to avoid scraping against doorways on the way out. Then they can be packed with quilts, cardboard, or boxes in between in the truck. Chair and table legs are easily dented during moves. Avoid this by wrapping each chair or table leg first in paper (even newspaper), then in large bubblewrap and taped near the top, middle, and bottom. Use the bubblewrap with bubbles 1" diameter rather than the smaller bubbles. Mirrors and table tops often are damaged by compressed corners. Prevent this by cutting cardboard corner guards or styrofoam. Fit them over the corners and tape them to the item. To prevent doors from opening, lock them (and keep the keys with you). If you cannot lock a door, then run a band of wide tape around the entire piece. The tape can touch/adhere to the glass and back but should not touch the finished wood as it may pull off the finish when it is removed. To prevent this, fold newspaper or packing paper into 3" to 4" wide strips and put this under the tape wherever it runs across the wood surface. Be sure to remove all adjustable shelves from cabinets before moving them. Do not ship shelves inside cabinets. Shelves may cut deep gashes in the wood casing or break through glass-paneled doors.

Any part of a piece of furniture that is loose or removable should be repaired, secured, or removed prior to moving. This includes loose veneer, loose handles, finials, railings, casters. Any part that sticks out or up and which cannot be removed should first be packed with material to fill in the spaces around it, then entirely wrapped until the projection is well protected. This is also advisable for figurines, statuary, and sculptures packed into boxes.

Clocks should be packed with pendulum and weights removed. Tall case clocks should be moved with the movement and bonnet taken off and packed separately. Put a bag tie or a piece of string through the loops near the top of all the chains and the rest of the chains into a bag tied to the chains so they will not get caught in the movement.

Chandeliers should be wrapped so the prisms or pendants cannot hit each other or the frame. As part of one move, a chandelier was shipped from Taiwan to the U.S. with only one paper wrapped around it. When the owner opened the shipping box, he found that the originally clear crystals were now evenly frosted by the continual abrasion that had happened during the shipping. You do not need to wrap each pendant individually. "Roll wrap" each garland with a section of bubblewrap by rolling the entire garland in one length of bubblewrap, or cut cardboard walls to insert in between tiers and tape these to the frame.

Mirrors and marble tops to furniture are usually packed vertically in boxes but then sometimes put into moving vans horizontally. Vibration during the move may cause the mirror or marble to crack under its own weight. Be sure that mirrors and stone slabs ride vertically "on edge" during moving.

You may want to clean carpets either before or after moving. If you are going to store carpets for a year or more, be sure they are clean. Also, sprinkle moth flakes (not moth balls) lightly across the pile as you roll. The last one and a half rolls should be done in paper that extends about 6" beyond the ends so that the paper can be tucked into the ends of rolls when the rolling is complete. Rugs can be rolled with the pile side inside or outside. However, if the carpets are rolled pile side outside, they will lie flat sooner when they are unrolled and the rolling will not pack the pile so tight. It is better to roll carpets as well as other textiles rather than to fold them. Folds may permanently stretch fibers in the folded portions.

It is good to keep original packing boxes. They are generally well designed with foam shapes for stabilizing figurines, audio equipment, and clocks. For objects with fragile sections, you should consider having a special box made with poured foam to "body shape" the item during moving. For example, if a 24" high 19th century German footed porcelain compote is not "body molded" with poured styrofoam, it may snap in the middle during shipping because there is too much weight at top and bottom with insufficient support for the weakest point in the mid section. Such an item should be disassembled if possible or ride in a box well marked "This end up".

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Before you move, look at and think about each item. What can be broken off? How could it be smashed, punctured or dented during moving or shipping? Also, try to anticipate what moving parts could come undone or get lost if not removed beforehand. Think about weight on top of items as well as weight pushing against items during moving. A refrigerator traveling in a truck next to chairs may push against them, breaking the legs off or crush the floor lamp carelessly put next to it.

Additional precautions should be taken for items placed in storage. In many instances damage may occur that has nothing to do with physical moving but is due to damage occurring while the items are stationary. Most people have no insurance coverage for storage damage, so you cannot receive any monetary compensation for deterioration to stored items. Read your insurance policy carefully to see what types of damage are and are not covered.

Most storage damage is caused by humidity/water and secondarily by insects. If veneered furniture is stored in areas of high humidity for long periods, the veneer may begin to rise and separate from the underlying wood. Likewise, coil springs on sofas/beds may corrode and stain the cushions or mattress. Mold and mildew may grow on wood as well as paper items such as photo albums and record albums. High temperature coupled with high humidity can warp computer disks and CDs. High temperatures will also melt candles together. Again, coupled with high moisture levels, heat can cause photo prints to stick together or cause pictures to stick to glass.

“Climatized storage” can be successfully achieved by minimal heat in winter time as needed and during hot weather by fans continually circulating air within storage units. When items are packed too tightly or too closely in storage, they may suffer damage while surrounding items do not. Continually circulating air is the essential ingredient to climatized storage. Also remember not to put food, matches, batteries, or flammable liquids in storage.

Be aware that it is better to wrap items in paper or cloth than in plastic. This applies to just about every type of material including leather, paper, glass, porcelain, silver, other metals, and wood. Plastic can cling to items, eventually causing a discoloration that cannot be inexpensively removed. Saranwrap is the worst wrapping material because when it breaks, air and moisture will penetrate through the hole. Especially for silver, this may lead to a permanent stain impossible to remove.

Insects including moths and silverfish can damage items. Moths find good nesting material in wool or felt rugs, felts on the hammers of pianos, fur hats and coats. Silverfish will eat trails along the face of mats surrounding pictures under glass. Other insects eat or nest in glue bindings of books and leather. Wrap everything. Rodents, especially mice and rats, may enter a storage area and nest in pillows, clothes, or furniture. It is a good idea to spread moth balls and roach and rodent killer along the floor and especially the periphery of a storage area.

Check inside walls of storage units, especially dark walls farthest away from light, for lines of sandy grit-like matter. These may be termite tunnels that termites build to move along under cover. Check the floor around furniture that has sat without being moved for several years either in your home or in storage. If you find sawdust underneath, this may result from wood-eating insects nesting in your furniture. The insects need to be dug out or destroyed by fumigating.

Sunlight can cause what is known as “light burning”. In many instances sunlight will fade dark colors. In other instances it will darken light colors. Be sure your items are protected from long-term exposure to both direct and reflected sunlight.

Heat is not a great destructor of stored items except when coupled with moisture. However, high heat without humidity will dry out anything that is organic. Eventually, high heat can dry out glue joints or glued veneer, deteriorate fabrics and paper. It can also promote cracking of ivory carvings, including chess pieces made of ivory.

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Ivory, more so than wood, requires a higher relative humidity than other materials. Ivory is organic like wood and develops cracks as it dries out. Wrap ivory in multiple layers of thick cloth. If it has to be stored, store it as low as possible in a storage unit. However, store carpets off the floor. If carpets are in direct contact with the ground floor, they can absorb moisture through the floor.

Other considerations pertain to lifting in general. It is easier to move lighter weight boxes than heavier ones. It is also easier to move items that are smaller than ones that are larger. Hence, heavier and bulkier items have a higher risk of damage when movers are tired and have been lifting things all day. They also risk damage if moved by too few people. Upright pianos can “get away” from movers who are rolling them down truck ramps. Sofas can be ripped because they are dragged on end through a doorway. Dining table legs can be broken off when they are hit against doorways or if the table is dropped while being carried. Damage frequently occurs to furniture made of particleboard. Particleboard breaks more easily than solid wood or plywood. Since particleboard furniture is heavy and easily chipped, movers may bash in the corners or pull the item apart quite easily. Movers need to handle such items more carefully.

If you fill a large box with LPs or china, you might not even be able to lift it. Or movers, tired after hours of work, may watch it slip out of their arms. So, it is preferable to pack heavier items in small boxes. It is better to pack items into more small boxes instead of a few big boxes.

Aside from taking every precaution you can to prevent and avoid damage, you should also be sure you have enough of the right kind of insurance to protect you in case of damage or loss. It is best to purchase “full replacement value” insurance on everything. Be sure it covers your items from the time packers put their hands on them until they are unpacked at the next destination. Insurance known as “cash value” will not cover replacement of the items. Insurance by the pound, often sold by movers, is generally inadequate coverage for ceramics, glass, collectibles, jewelry, CDs, computer equipment, in fact most everything you own.

In getting ready for a move or putting items into storage, imagine beforehand what types of damage can occur. Wrap well, wrap appropriately, pack with enough packing material, use the right kinds of packing material, and do not overstuff boxes. The best way to prevent moving or storage damage is to know how to avoid it in the first place.

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