



## **Highlights: Moving Companies**

Relocating is never easy, but working with a quality moving company can eliminate much of the stress. With ratings of local moving companies, price information, and expert advice, ***Boston Consumers' Checkbook*** ([Checkbook.org](http://Checkbook.org)) will help make your move a smooth one. Highlights from Checkbook's report:

### **Tips for a smooth move**

- Beware of online brokers. These companies simply collect a deposit and arrange for a moving company to handle the move. The problem is you have no control over which company is hired. And some brokers reportedly work mainly with unlicensed or otherwise disreputable companies.
- To ensure you aren't dealing with a broker, if a moving company can't be reached via phone, or won't come to your home to provide an on-site written estimate, don't hire it.
- Shop around. To get a good price (there are big differences—see comparisons below), have several reputable companies give you written estimates, showing the rates that are used to calculate the estimate—either per hour or rates based on weight and mileage.
- Checkbook recommends you get an estimate with a cap. Otherwise, the company may work slowly and you'll pay more than estimated. Also, without a binding price from each company, you don't have a sound basis for comparing prices.
- For moves within Massachusetts, companies set their prices based on the number of workers and the amount of time needed for the job. Rates are based on tariffs that companies must file with the state, and companies must apply these tariff rates to calculate the cost of every job.
- Movers can charge customers only for the actual number of workers and number of hours it takes to complete the job. If your move takes eight hours, the company cannot charge you for 10 hours, even if it initially gave a written estimate of 10 hours. If you get help packing, prices will also include charges for any company-supplied containers.
- Think about what services you'll want. You can save a lot of money by doing work yourself, particularly by doing your own packing—although having a company pack for you saves you time and gives you a better basis for filing a claim if damage occurs.
- Be sure estimates detail the services to be performed and include an inventory describing the major items to be moved.
- Be present and attentive when belongings are loaded and unloaded. Be sure the mover prepares an inventory and that it specifies the condition of each item.
- Carefully read the bill of lading (the contract between you and the mover) before you sign it, and keep it until your shipment is delivered, all charges are paid, and all claims, if any, are settled.
- As your goods are unloaded, check your inventory to be sure each item has arrived in good condition. Don't sign anything without first writing in notes of any damage.
- No matter who does the packing work, move fragile or valuable belongings on your own.

### **Price and quality of local companies**

- Checkbook found big company-to-company price differences for the same jobs. For example:
  - Prices to move a four-bedroom house from Canton to Westwood ranged from \$1,500 to more than \$5,500.
  - Prices to move a townhouse from Belmont to Waltham ranged from \$973 to \$2,800.
  - For "overall quality," companies' scores ranged from 41 percent to 92 percent.

*Checkbook's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or [jlettis@checkbook.org](mailto:jlettis@checkbook.org) to schedule.*