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“How do I get It All from Here to There?”

**A Home Sellers Guide to Sorting,
Packing & Loving It All**

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So you're selling your house. Congratulations!

So you're selling your house. Uuuuuuufff.

The next few weeks can be a time of transformation, enlightening but painful. Sweet and sour. A double-edged sword. Being aware of what to expect, how to spend your o-so-precious time, and determining your priorities will make all the difference in how easily – and confidently – you stand inside the storm.

Before we get started with the technical details of what to pack, etc. we need to discuss the personal effects of moving. That's right. Moving is not about boxes and newspaper wrapping; Instead, it is a holistic experience that challenges your emotional capacity, engages your mental faculties and pushes your physical limitations. And it all needs to be finished within 2-4 weeks.

To get the most from this guide, please read every page before packing a single thing.

Hopefully, the following information will stop the yelling, "Why meeeee?!" and instead feel, "Thank youuuuuuu!!!"

Some people are thrilled they get to build a new "fort" or finally decorate their bathroom a la Moroccan Palace. Some other people dread the thought of schlepping it all across town, or state or country. Some hire a moving company and never break a sweat. Some just want to bury their heads in the sand and wake up when it's over.

Whichever you are, moving can be exactly how you want it to be. YOU OWN THIS!

Write a few notes or words about your fears, and what you don't want. Then write down a few experiences you DO want.

EMOTIONAL CAPACITY

Moving will challenge your relationships. Everything you, your significant other and your kids have been enjoying about each other will be threatened... And you can come through it together stronger and funnier. Remember, packing up all your worldly belongings is a liberating but emotionally draining process. And since working together requires teamwork and participation, it can increase stress! In other words, leaving your home of years, or even decades, can rip the heart apart, and we tend to take out our stress on the ones we love the most.

But it's not supposed to be this way and doesn't have to be this way. Instead, consider that it can be a beautiful adventure, full of awareness, growth, unity and creativity.

Therefore:

Be kind and gentle with yourselves and each other. Blast awesome music. Purge and pack at the pace that is easy and comfortable for all of you. Stop when you get tired. Get out of the house and enjoy each other in your usual ways -- walks at your favorite local park, meals at your favorite local restaurants, movies at your favorite local theater. Designate these as Times We Are Not Allowed to Talk About the Move or the house, boxes, plumbing, painting, plans, moving, scheduling, blah blah blah. Just enjoy each other.

Honor your memories. Many items will have meaningful memories. Share what you've rediscovered, what you love about it, and share your memories with each other. Children especially love the stories! They also need to be reassured that nothing is being left behind, that the most important things are coming with you. And what is most important? The Love. So share every day.

"Foul for interference." Each person is in charge of their own things, on their own time (Of course toddlers and little kids will need your help, but let them feel like they're still in charge of their own belongings – and experience). Ideally, there's a family guideline or two. Try this: "Every box needs 8 corners, a securely taped lid, be clearly labeled, and it needs to be on the truck by high noon on Saturday the 28th. Everything not on the truck at 12:01 gets donated or thrown out." Let each person pack their own way. Let everyone box their own things.

Trust in the expertise of your Helpers. Realtors, Mortgage Bankers, Stagers, Movers, Cleaners, Inspectors. They do this for a living and can be relied on for guidance and answers. Rely on them. Lean on them. Let them take care of what you've already hired them to do. Yes, you can and should ask questions! Yes, they should be the calmest person in the room! Yes, they should reassure you that everything will work out in the end! Because it will. Let them lead the dance. And be a willing and easy dance partner.

MENTAL FACULTIES

Whether you pack one entire room at a time, or drift from room to room or box to box, keep these guidelines in mind and it can all be quicker and easier than you thought possible.

Once you decide to put your house up for sale, you'll have between 2-4 weeks to get it ready. Discuss your target date more specifically with your Realtor and Mortgage Banker. You may have a few regulatory steps to complete before even getting your house photographed and listed "For Sale." And any extra time you get will be very helpful.

For the next day or so – or take an hour if you're really in a rush! – take a look around your house with these thoughts in mind:

- Eat your food. (Most households have a 2 to 4-week supply of food already in their freezer, pantry and refrigerator.) Do not pack food. It can spill, spoil or explode. Ew.
- Use your open bathroom supplies first.
- Trash or recycle everything that is already on its way out.

- Schedule a weekly pick up from your local donation center.
- How many boxes do you think you'll need? You'll most likely use 3x more than that, not just to pack, but also to donate, to recycle, to trash.
- Wrap your breakables in your towels, linens, blankets, sweaters – everything you were going to pack up anyway.
- Large trash bags work really well for the remaining soft things: blankets, pillows, clothes, towels, linens, etc.
- If you have time before you move, finish all filing, taxes, projects, etc.
- Do not buy anything new – you'll just have to move it anyway. Whenever possible, use what you already have.
- Consider a “loan” of some furniture or décor to friends and family. If they come pick them up and enjoy them for a few months, or years, it's one less thing to move. Take a photo of them with it, or make a list so you know who has what.

What not to pack first

As you bring home your first load of boxes and bags, the first box in your house will get a special designation: Master Tool Kit. In it goes Post-its, fat (colored) markers, 3x5 cards, clear packing tape, duct tape, scissors, wood glue, glue sticks, a pad of paper, pencils and ball-point pens, a stapler with extra staples, a Philips head and a flat-tip screw driver, Allen wrench set, clothes pins, brightly colored or permanent labels or stickers, a few newspapers pages, various sizes of plastic Ziploc bags, a few trash bags - anything else you might need for successfully packing each box.

For example, the duct tape can be used to keep rugs rolled up (put a layer of newspaper between the rug and the tape), the wood glue is to fix broken furniture you want to keep, the screwdrivers help dismantle some furniture, colored markers and cards will label boxes...

Keep this box available to everyone, or make a Master Tool Kit for each person, or each floor. This box will not only help you pack, but will have everything you need to help you unpack when you arrive.

To pack or not to pack

Now, let's take a step back and get a better sense about what you own, what you use and what you really need. These are not all the same things.

A study came out of the Netherlands in 2003 or so. It showed that we use about 80% of our belongs 20% of the time, and use 20% of our belongings about 80% of the time. To see if this is true for you, add up:

The 20% of what you use nearly every day:

Your favorite outfits + The dishes on the top of the stack and the glasses in the front of the shelf + Food that hasn't expired + Current books and work with deadlines + The furniture in your most-used room +

Your computer, phone, day-planner and other day-to-day tools + A purse or wallet + Bathroom products = about 20% of your belongings? Or less?

Everything else remaining is that 80%. Or more:

Garage boxes, tools, supplies, storage, etc. + Off-site storage units and memorabilia + Seasonal clothes, toys, sporting equipment, supplies, kitchenware, dishes + Nearly everything you've saved for "just-in-case" + Clothes and shoes for special occasions + Home décor that you have not touched or used for 30 days, including artwork, wall hangings, stored holiday décor including seasonal pillows and throws, outdated media like CDs, DVDs, video cameras, "back up" computers + most furniture in your least-used room + All other boxes, cabinets, drawers, closets.

Returning to the 80%. Some of this you will want to take with you, and some of it you won't. Now is your opportunity to let go of everything that will not serve or support your current or future self. We are a culture of excess, and our stuff replicates out of control. Seize this chance to clear out and tidy up!

Absolutely take it with you – if you can say out loud:

"I love this!"

"I use this all the time."

"I don't use it all the time, but I really do need it."

"I need this for my current..."

"I love having this for the holidays."

"I've been looking for this!"

Pack it with gratitude.

Absolutely do not pack these:

"I've always hated this."

"Where did this come from?"

"It expired how long ago?"

"I've only used this twice in like 5 years."

"Another one?!"

"I can't look at this anymore."

"I have no idea what to do with this."

"I forgot I even had this."

"Broken."

Donate. Recycle. Trash.

Absolutely ignore these statements:

"But it cost so much!" Then consign or gift it.

"But it matches." What's important is that you love it.

"But I should / should not..." Don't should on yourself.

"But someday, this will/I can/I might..." Donate it. Someone might be looking for it today.

You get the idea?

What to pack

After 100 boxes and 150+ hours of sorting, wrapping, packing and labeling, we all get to a point when we're just DONE. Consequently, any last remaining items tend to get thrown out – literally! – simply because we can't. Take. Anymore.

So pack your most important things first, while you have the energy to pack them with care! Do this now, before your house is even put on the market. Label each box clearly, and remember that we pack wisely so that we can unpack easily.

A few clients have asked me about packing specific items, like books and bookshelves, lawn care equipment, artwork, kid's toys, and more. This is always my response: Since you're going to have to move at some point anyway, and if you really don't need it to survive your daily life, pack it up!

BONUS: Buyers touring your property want to see that you're moving out, they want to see a nearly empty house. A house full of YOUR personal things makes it really hard for them to visualize THEIR personal things!

Pack in the following order:

1. Favorite irreplaceable personal things that include family photos, unique items, specific artwork, memory chests, memorabilia, mementos, etc.
2. Valuables including family heirlooms, décor, collections, breakables, shoes, jackets, purses, special occasion clothes, ties and dishware, wine glasses, etc.
3. Jewelry, legal papers, passports, and other irreplaceable documents and valuables may be stored safely in a safe deposit box at a local bank.
4. Then pack up everything else that you won't use or need until after you have moved in to your new home:
 - Seasonal items: These aren't limited to the holiday decorations stored in the garage. If you're moving in the spring or summer, pack up your winter coats, scarves, mittens and sporting goods. If you're moving in the winter, feel free to pack up your summer camping gear, sporting goods, and pool and sand toys. You won't need them until then.
 - Clothes: Remember that 80/20 guideline? Leave out your most popular outfits and pack up the rest.
 - Kitchen: Again with the 80/20 – what do you use on a weekly basis? In my house, I would never pack the mini donut maker, as every Sunday we make them gluten-free. But the panini grill? I totally forgot we even owned that one. Keep out what you use, pack up everything else.
 - Storage: If you have time to sort and discard before the move, take it. There's no point moving junk, trash, donations, or other old stuff.

BUT WAIT! Before you pack up or Goodwill any furniture or décor, discuss with your Stager or Agent what will be needed for Staging. After your Stager or Agent has arranged furniture, artwork, rugs and décor, pack up or discard the rest. Technically, a house requires near minimalism to show well, and it

needs to be as “neutral” as possible. So, although your macramé collection from 1978 makes you giddy, it makes it difficult for a new buyer to imagine themselves (and their 12 dogs) moving in.

Remember, every family who comes to look at your house wants to imagine themselves living there happily ever after. Removing our own personal items creates a possibility for theirs. If you don't have a Stager, consider an Essential Feng Shui® consultant. They can help you “neutralize” your space with simplicity and compassion.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL?

This is your official permission slip to spend your energy only on the fun things, only on the tasks you want to do!

You do not need to feel alone.

There are Helpers waiting for you to ask.

- Hire a cleaning company to do a thorough deep clean prior to photos.
- Hire movers to carry boxes downstairs, to a storage unit, your garage or a POD.
- Hire movers to load your truck.
- Hire professionals whenever you can.
- Rest when you're tired.
- Reserve a dumpster if you'll have a lot of trash to throw out.
- Hire an Estate Sale team to sell those quality belongings you are ready to let go of.
- Schedule weekly pick-ups from a local donation center.

What Help do you want? What Help do you need? Make a few notes here:

TIME CONSTRAINTS

There's no need to waste time trying to remember what you packed, or where the box goes, or "That's not bathroom stuff?!" We are packing to unpack.

Pack to Unpack

Like climbing Mt. Everest, packing up your house is not a one-way trip. We can think – and plan – for the entire journey. This means that when packing each box, pack it in such a way that when you open it in your new home, it fills you with joy and delight and warm smiles and, just as important, relief. Consider what would make you happy when you open that box:

- Wipe off all bathroom bottles so that when you unpack them, they aren't sticky or gooey.
- Vacuum rugs and upholstery and pillows before bagging them up so that they arrive clean and dustless.
- Box up only clean and washed dishes, silverware, glasses and kitchen tools.
- When possible, bag clothes still on their hangers. Pop a hole in the middle of the bottom of the bag and stick about 10-12 hangers through. Rubber band the hooks and tape around the bottom of the bag so that if items fall off the hangers, they won't fall out of the bag. Or, invest in box designed for this purpose – it will have a bar or rod across the top.

Even though climbing Mt. Everest is a life-threatening journey of epic proportions, and sometimes moving and selling your house will feel like a similar journey, they are both completed just one step at a time.

- Label each box with the room where it will eventually land. Your movers or friends and family will appreciate the clarity, too. Use a brightly colored 3x5 card or paper to differentiate each box from room to room, and tape that same color card to the door or above the archway at your new place. Or, just use a 3x5 card to stand out against the writing on your recycled boxes. Write a few items on the box, to jog your memory about what else is inside. Some items won't need to be unpacked for a few months, or you may not have time to unpack for a few months. This little trick will help you prioritize your time and energy on the other side.
- Personally, I keep plastic use to an absolute minimum, and I strongly encourage you to limit yours as well. Instead of buying a new roll of bubble wrap, for example, pack your fragiles in bath and kitchen towels, sweaters, or newspapers. You don't need to tape every box top if you fold the flaps into each other. Invest in plastic storage tubs only if you promise to recycle them when they break.
- With conservation in mind, consider that you might not have to buy anything extra in this process. That's a relief, right!? Get your boxes from Costco or Sam's Club or send out a call on Craig's List or Facebook. I've seen several clients search for a few boxes this way, and as synchronicity would have it, a family just unpacked and has 100 boxes flattened and ready to pick up. For free. Plan ahead and start asking around right now.

- If you're not going to use it at your new home, leave it behind. There's no point wasting mover's time, truck space, fuel expenses or your own time when you're unpacking.
- To pace yourself, pack a certain number of boxes or rooms per day. If you have energy for more, go ahead. But if you don't, there's always tomorrow. For example, "I have to be packed up for the listing photos in 10 days and I have 12 areas to pack. If I combine the bathrooms and the kids do their own rooms, I can pack everything else in 8 days. That gives me 2 extra days for the cleaning crew and to rest."
- Hire a professional organizer.
- Hire a moving company to pack and move for you.
- Ask friends for help.
- Once you've reached that "I Can't Take It Anymore" moment, call me. I will help you figure out where you are in the process, what options you have and how to proceed thoughtfully. If you don't call me, call someone who has a fresh eye and an eagerness to Help. 760-579-9519.

IT'S SHOW TIME!

When a client's house is on the market, my favorite phone calls go like this:

Agent: "Hi, I'm an agent and I'd like to show your listing on Main St."

Me: "Thank you. When would your clients like to see it?"

Agent: "Well, we're actually in the neighborhood right now..."

Me: "Ok. Let me ask my clients and I'll call you right back."

Me: "Dear, sweet wonderful clients. Can your house be shown, like, RIGHT NOW!?"

Clients, calmly: "Of course! We're at work now, and the house is always ready to show!"

Later that evening.

Agent: "Your house showed beautifully. They'd like to put in an offer."

And yes, this really has happened. It was a successful showing because the homeowners started each day as if they were going to show their house. And you can have a successful showing, too! Contact us at www.BlessthisAddress.com for your customized **It's Show Time!** guide.

First thing every morning:

Make beds and straighten up bedrooms.

Sweep the front walkway and all sidewalks, patios, backyard, etc.

Empty the trashcans in kitchen, baths and garage.
Open window treatments if weather permits and view is a selling point.

After each meal:

Kitchen returns to immaculate.
As much as possible, please refrain from cooking highly aromatic meals. For example, garlic makes some pregnant women nauseous, some curries can linger for days, and sadly, vegans don't like the smell of bacon.

With a 5-minute notice:

Pause all laundry, dishwashers, and other noisemakers.
Check bathrooms for trash, flushed toilets, closed lids, and cleaned countertops and showers.
Open window treatments if view is a selling point.
Turn on all lights.
Turn on peaceful music.

The reason they were able to prepare so quickly? Their house was purposeful, clean, organized, simple. In fact, they appreciated this minimalist décor so much that they decided to live with only the essentials in their new home, too.

AHHHHHHH...

So you've sold your house. Wow.

And now you're planning to move in. Wow.

One final push: These last belongings that you've been using and living with will be the first you use and live with in your new home. Pack these on the truck (or in the POD) last. When you arrive, they'll be the first ones you unpack!

As you get settled in your new home, you may choose to have some kind of a "House Blessing." From a House Warming Party to a Space Clearing Ceremony, or simply your first home cooked meal, know that your home is meant to be safe, comfortable and beautiful. Our homes support our happy relationships, creativity and rejuvenation.

These last few weeks have been transformative. With managed expectations, time wisely spent and prioritization, you can call this a Huge Success. You were kind to yourself and others. You thought about your belongings with a keen eye for what you really need. You've respected your physical limitations and found endurance you didn't know you had. You asked for Help. Congratulations!

Liv Kellgren is a Real Estate Broker, Interior ReDesigner and Environmental Coach. She is the founder of Bless This Address, a full-service firm Helping families create spaces where they feel safe, comfortable, creative, rested and loved.