Plan your home move with a realistic timeline

Moving house is a big logistical task. Without a clear schedule, small delays can snowball, turning a straightforward move into a stressful rush. A realistic timeline helps you stay on top of each stage, from the first decisions to the moment you hand over the keys.

This guide takes you through the main phases of a home removal, with practical checks along the way. The aim is to help you plan your own move, keep control of the process, and avoid last-minute surprises. Use it as a starting point, then adapt it to your own situation.

Getting the dates nailed down

The first step is to fix your moving date. If you are buying or selling, your completion date will dictate everything else. Talk to your solicitor and the other party's solicitor as early as possible. Exchange of contracts gives you a legally binding date, so until that happens, treat any target date as provisional.

Once you have a completion date, work backwards. A typical home removal needs at least four to six weeks of preparation for a full house. If you are renting, check your notice period and the date your new tenancy starts. Allow a few days of overlap if you can. That overlap gives you time to clean the old property and get the new one ready before the removal van arrives.

Working out your moving budget

Moving costs more than most people expect. A realistic moving budget covers the removal van, packing materials, any storage fees, and the cost of cleaning both properties. It also includes smaller items such as boxes, tape, bubble wrap, and protective covers for furniture.

Decide early whether you will handle the move yourself or hire a professional team. A full-service removal company will do the heavy lifting, packing, and unpacking. That saves time but costs more. A self-drive van hire is cheaper but requires more physical effort and careful planning. Whichever route you choose, get quotes from at least two or three providers. Ask for a breakdown of what is included, especially loading and unloading times, travel distance, and any charges for stairs or long carries.



Decluttering and sorting before you pack

Before you pack a single box, go through every room and decide what to keep, sell, donate, or throw away. This is the most effective way to reduce your moving load. Fewer items mean fewer boxes, a smaller removal van, and lower costs.

Start with rooms you use least, such as the loft, garage, or spare bedroom. Work room by room. Be honest about what you really need. If you have not used something in a year, consider letting it go. Sell valuable items online or at a car boot sale. Donate good-quality clothes and household goods to a charity shop. Dispose of anything broken or unsafe.

Decluttering also makes unpacking easier. You will not waste time finding a home for things you do not want. The whole process feels lighter when you move only the things you actually use and care about.

Creating an inventory list and a floor plan

An inventory list is a detailed record of everything you are moving. It helps you keep track of boxes and furniture, and it is essential if you are using a removal company. Write down each item or group of items, note any damage before the move, and assign a box number if you are packing yourself.

Alongside the inventory, draw a simple floor plan of your new home. Mark the rooms and label them. Then decide where each piece of furniture will go. This floor plan guides the removal

team on moving day and saves you from having to shift heavy items twice. It also helps you plan the order of the load: large furniture goes in first, so it ends up at the back of the van, and the first items you need at the new house come off last.

Booking the removal van and arranging access

Once you have a firm date and a clear idea of your load, book your removal van. If you are using a company, confirm the booking in writing and check their terms. Ask about their policy on cancellations or date changes, and whether they offer packing materials or packing services.

Access arrangements matter more than most people realise. Check the width of doorways, hallways, and staircases at both properties. Measure large furniture to make sure it will fit through the doors. If there are steps, narrow passages, or tight corners, tell the removal company in advance. They may need extra crew or special equipment.

Also check parking restrictions. You may need a parking permit for the removal van on moving day. Contact your local council to arrange it. The same applies at the new property. If there is no space for a large van, the crew may have to park further away and carry items a longer distance, which adds time and cost.

Packing methodically, room by room

Packing is the most time-consuming part of any move. Start at least two weeks before moving day. Work room by room, packing the things you use least first. Seasonal clothes, decorative items, books, and spare bedding can go early. Leave everyday essentials such as kitchen utensils, toiletries, and a change of clothes until the last day or two.



Label every box clearly. Write the room it belongs to and a short description of the contents. A colour-coded system works well: use a different coloured marker or sticker for each room. That way, anyone helping on moving day can see at a glance where each box goes.

Protect fragile items with bubble wrap or newspaper. Pack heavier items in smaller boxes so they are easier to lift. Seal boxes with strong tape and reinforce the bottom. If you are using a removal company, check whether they supply boxes and packing materials. Some include these in their service, which can save you a trip to the shop.

Proper packing is one form of support for a smoother house move. The more organised your boxes are, the less time the crew spends figuring out where things go. It also reduces the risk of damage during transit.

Planning the moving day itself

Moving day starts early. The removal van usually arrives in the morning, so have everything packed and ready the night before. Leave out a box of essentials: toiletries, a change of clothes, phone chargers, medication, and important documents. Keep this box with you, not in the van.

On the day, do a final walk-through of the old property. Check every room, cupboard, and loft space. Make sure nothing is left behind. Turn off the water and electricity if required, and lock

all windows and doors.

At the new house, use your floor plan to direct the crew. Tell them which room each piece of furniture goes to. If you have labelled boxes clearly, the crew can place them in the right rooms without asking. That saves time and reduces confusion.

Set a delivery window with the removal company if they offer one. A delivery window tells you roughly when the van will arrive at the new property. It helps you plan your day and avoid waiting around. If you are moving yourself, plan the loading and unloading times to avoid traffic and parking problems.

Unpacking and settling in

Unpacking does not have to happen all at once. Start with the kitchen and the bedrooms, because those are the rooms you use most. Set up the beds first, then the kitchen essentials. Leave non-urgent items such as decorations and spare linen for later.



Take your time. Unpacking can feel overwhelming if you try to do everything in one day. Work through one box at a time, and recycle or reuse the empty boxes as you go. If you are using a removal company, some offer unpacking services. That can be worth considering if you are short on time or energy.

Keep your inventory list handy. Check it against the boxes as they arrive. If anything is missing or damaged, note it down and contact the removal company. Most companies have a claims process for damaged items, so keep the original packaging and any photos as evidence.

Staying flexible through the process

No move goes perfectly. Delays happen. The completion date may slip, the van might arrive late, or the weather could cause problems. Build a little buffer into your timeline. A few days of overlap between properties gives you room to handle unexpected issues without panicking.

Good planning and clear communication are the best forms of support for a smoother house move. Talk to your removal company, your solicitor, and anyone else involved. Keep everyone informed of changes, and ask questions when you are unsure. A realistic timeline keeps you on track, but a flexible mindset keeps you sane.