

# Moving Time – PCSing and Packing Out

## When You're "Packing Out" - Moving Survival Tips

### Some tips to remember:

- Packers will pack anything not nailed down. If you don't want the trash in your trash can shipped to your new base, be sure to empty it before the packers come! Put the pet's food and water bowls aside or they'll get packed, too. Some of the active duty member's records must be hand-carried. And if you got a newcomer's welcome package about your new base from your sponsor don't let the packers box that up, either. The info in that package will come in handy as soon as you arrive at your new base!
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- The movers must seal everything in crates before they leave your house. Do not let them take un-crated boxes and tell you they will crate them at the warehouse! You should witness them seal the crates, and the seal numbers go on the paperwork.
  - Put the items you DON'T want packed in a bathroom or closet clearly marked "DO NOT PACK", or lock them in your car.
  - Have your own inventory of all your items, and list the serial numbers for those things that have them. Take pictures of all of your belongings. If you have to file a claim and you have a picture, you are much more likely to get replacement value instead of depreciation value. For items that are high value but you would not have receipts for (such as wedding china), you may also submit a letter from a third party (such as a friend or relative) certifying that these items were in your possession and they saw them in your house. The reason for this is because boxes will not be labeled "12 place settings of Noritake china, Gold Ring Pattern with 5 piece serving set". They are more likely to be labeled "China".
  - The packers will note the condition of items on their inventory; for instance, if the couch is worn, or a dresser is scratched. Sometimes they will note "scratched" for an item that is nearly new. If you do not agree with the packer's assessment of the condition of an item, have them correct it. If you have problems with this, or concerns about how the packers are noting the condition of many of your household items, call the Traffic Management Office and ask them to send an inspector out.
  - It can sometimes be difficult to keep an eye on all that's going on when the movers are packing everything up. The active duty member is released from duty to help with this; do not let the supervisor insist that the member report to work. You can also ask for help from friends, if there's a large crew boxing all your things. Use the "Child Care for PCS" program (see below) if you have young children. Packing up is a hectic time; if you know your kids are safe and well cared for, you have one less worry on moving day!

- Do NOT pack battery-powered items with the batteries in them, no matter what shipment they're in. Pack the batteries separately, or buy new batteries at the new location. If a battery-powered item is jiggled in shipment and turns on, the box that it's in may be destroyed to be sure that there's not a bomb in it!
- If you're moving overseas, be aware of the voltage and cycle differences, and the different sized plugs, depending on the country you're moving to. Although you can run your American clock radio off a transformer, if there is no adjustment for the cycles, the clock won't keep the correct time! The same is true for microwaves and other electric items with timers (coffeepots, bread makers, etc.). American (and Canadian) voltage is 110/120 volt, 60 cycles; nearly everywhere else is 220/240 volt, 50 cycles. Most newer electronic items that are dual voltage automatically adjust the cycles, but older items may not. Check the technical information on the back of your electric item if you're not sure! Adapter plugs can be purchased at your new location.
- Adapter plugs differ according to the country you're in. Even though England and Germany have the same voltage and cycles, the size of the plugs are different. Don't try to buy any adapter plugs until you get to your new location.



- You can take your lamps overseas, but don't bring the bulbs. Buy new light bulbs for the correct voltage, and adapter plugs, at your overseas location. You do NOT need to use a transformer for a lamp! (FYI, if you're living off base and paying your electric bill, transformers use a lot of electricity when they're turned on, even if you're not using the appliance that's plugged into them!)
- Your American telephone may or may not work in your new overseas location, and if it does work, you might need a telephone adapter plug. Ask your sponsor if you should bring your American phone to your new base!
- If you are going to buy electric items at your new overseas location, check out the Thrift Shop first. Many people will sell their locally purchased electric items, adapter plugs, transformers, extension cords, etc. in the Thrift Shop, because they can't use them back in the States (or in a different overseas country). You can save money by getting these items "used" at the Thrift Shop instead of buying them new at the Base Exchange or from a store in the local economy.
- The Loan Locker or Family Services at the Family Support Center has essential household items you can borrow for free. Nearly all military bases will have this service available, and you can check out dishes, pots and pans, irons and ironing boards, baby items, etc. The exact items available vary by base, so ask your sponsor what items you'll be able to borrow at your new location. If you can borrow these items, you won't need to pack them in your Unaccompanied Baggage!

- The Air Force Aid Society has a program called “Child Care for PCS”. They will pay for 20 hours of child care, per child, on both ends of a PCS move! Check with the Family Support Center Relocation Office to get a certificate for this program.
- Shipping a pet has its own “ins and outs” – check with the Family Support Center Relocation folks for more information!



**Unaccompanied Baggage:** This shipment is sent when your new assignment is overseas. These are the items you will need immediately upon arriving at your new destination. It is packed separately from your household goods, and will be transported more quickly than your household goods. **BEWARE:** there is a weight limit for Unaccompanied Baggage. Check with the Traffic Management Office (TMO) to find out what your limit is! You could be living off the items in your Unaccompanied Baggage for two months or more, depending on where your new assignment is. This will be the last shipment packed up aside from your suitcases (TMO calls your suitcases “Accompanied Baggage”).

Clothing (consider climate of the new location)  
 Bedding for each family member  
 Sleeping bags  
 Air mattresses  
 Shower curtain and hooks  
 Bath towels  
 Couple sets of curtains  
 Travel iron  
 Travel alarm  
 Battery powered radio  
 Electric frying pan  
 Most frequently used spices  
 Stove-to-table serving dishes  
 Flatware  
 Kitchen knives  
 Can opener, bottle opener  
 Plates/bowls/glasses/mugs (plastic is best!)  
 Spatula, serving spoon  
 Dish towels  
 Potholders  
 Extension cords  
 Coffee pot  
 Broom, dustpan  
 Lamps (a battery operated one can come in handy!)

Phone  
 Cookbook  
 Sewing kit with scissors  
 First aid kit  
 Basic household tool kit  
 Sporting gear appropriate for the season (skis, tennis racquets, etc.)  
 A few “homey” items; family scrapbook, favorite pictures, etc.  
 Mixer  
 Food processor  
 Card table  
 Folding chairs  
 Hobby items and toys  
 Sewing machine  
 Infant and toddler equipment – playpen, stroller, etc.  
 Computer



**Accompanied Baggage:** This includes your suitcases, carry-ons, children’s backpacks, and so on – all the items you’ll take on the plane and/or pack in the car. Depending on which airline you fly on, the number, size, and weight of suitcases and carry-ons may vary, so once you get your tickets, check and see what your limits are.

Passport (for overseas travel)  
Important family documents; birth certificates, medical records, school records  
Address book  
Road maps, travel books  
Newcomer’s welcome package from your new base  
Medicines and prescription drugs (make sure you won’t need refills enroute!)  
Valuable jewelry  
Camera equipment  
Travel iron  
Electric curlers, curling iron, hair dryer  
Portable battery-powered radio  
Travel alarm  
Pocket knife  
Games for car/plane travel

Games, toys, cuddlies to keep children occupied. Don’t forget the security blanket!  
Seasonal clothing; umbrella, raincoat, walking shoes  
Clothing; seven days supply for each family member will save on trips to the laundromat  
Military uniforms!  
Hobby and sports gear; jogging clothes, running shoes, swimsuits, etc.  
Picnic gear; cooler, thermos, blanket (doubles as a tablecloth for on-the-road picnics)  
Flashlight  
Matches  
Toilet paper, paper towel  
First aid kit

**Household Goods (HHG):** This is the bulk of your shipment, and includes all your furniture and everything that’s not in your Unaccompanied and Accompanied Baggage. The total weight that the Air Force will pay to ship depends on the active duty member’s rank and the number of family members that are living with him or her, AND where you will be stationed. The “total weight allowance” includes how much the Unaccompanied Baggage weighed, but not the weight of the Accompanied Baggage. A good “guesstimate” for how much everything in your house weighs is to figure on 1,000 pounds per room (not

including bathrooms, unless you have furniture in your bathroom!) Add extra if you are shipping a fridge, washer and/or dryer, or if you have a lot of books, or other heavy items. You cannot ship your fridge, washer, or dryer to some locations, so be sure to check with TMO if you have any questions! A motorcycle can also be shipped in Household Goods – it’s not counted as a shipped vehicle, but the weight is included as part of your Household Goods (check with TMO for preparation necessary before shipping)! If the active duty member has a good number of “professional” items, such as manuals, books, and equipment that are necessary for his or her job, these can be shipped separately under a different (additional) weight allowance. **TIP:** pack a set of bedding with each mattress. By the time you get the beds unpacked and set up, you’ll be too tired to search for the box with the sheets and blankets!



The Final Box: This is the last box or boxes of your Household Goods that is packed. Be sure that this box (or boxes) are the last ones in the truck or crate, so it will be the first one unloaded at your new location. This is especially convenient for “door-to-door” military moves, saving you the trouble of plowing through the entire shipment for essential items.

Cleaning supplies

Broom, mop, dustpan, sponge, light bulbs

Can opener

Flashlight

Hangers

Clock radio

Lamp

Phone

Coffee pot, filters

Toilet paper, paper towel

Paper plates and cups, plastic knives, forks,  
spoons

Pot, frying pan

Kitchen knives

Trash bags

Scissors

Bed linens for the entire family

Bath towels

Extra sheets for temporary curtains

Hammer, screwdriver, nails

Extension cord

Soup, dry cereal, crackers, peanut butter and  
jelly

Shampoo, soap

For information about Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates, overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), Dislocation Allowance (DLA) and Per Diem rates, go to <http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/rateinfo.html>. \*Be sure to request DLA from your new base's Finance Office as soon as you arrive. This allowance is not always automatically disbursed!

