

Tips for staying green and saving money when moving house

Moving house is an expensive and waste intensive activity, beginning with the belongings, boxes and packing material that end up in landfill, straight through to the large moving trucks and harsh cleaners that are used during the process.

Start early

Your best intentions for all of those old belongings go out the window when it comes to crunch time. If possible start six to eight weeks early so you have to declutter responsibly. If you have to rush, you'll be tempted to cut corners.

Sell used belongings

Before you move, take the time to simplify your life. One option is to sell your items online on sites like eBay or Gumtree - there are smartphone apps that make listing very easy.

Give items away

Donate unwanted items to friends, relatives or charity. If you can't think of someone who wants an item, then Freecycle is a website that helps to match up your used belongings with a good home. You'd be amazed at some of the things that people want to take off of your hands.

Discard stuff

Everything that your removalist moves for you costs money, and burns petrol. If you have not used an item for a year, think very hard about letting it go.

Rent your boxes

Plastic boxes can be rented for the period of your move, for less than buying cardboard boxes. Even if cardboard boxes are reused (which many aren't), they can usually only be reused three to four times. Plastic moving boxes can be reused many hundreds of times, before being finally recycled and made into new boxes.

Reuse packing materials

No matter where you live, there's a good chance you'll know someone moving, and you can give them your packing paper and bubble wrap. If you don't know someone moving, list the packing materials on Freecycle and they will be snapped up very quickly.

Use what you've got

When packing up breakable items, use t-shirts, socks, pillows and blankets to help protect them. This not only minimises excess packing material waste, but it consolidates your belongings into less boxes (and saves you buying extra packing materials).

Put everything in a box

Saving by using less boxes is tempting, but when you are using removalists, time is money, and every time one of them takes a trip out to the truck with a loose item, they waste a few minutes. Those minutes add up. Making sure everything is packed and labelled in a box ensures that the process is efficient, at both ends of the move, and your belongings will be more secure.

Green clean

Before handing over the keys to your old home, you'll need to ensure that it's thoroughly cleaned. Put together a small cleaning kit that you can carry easily. The bulk of your cleaning supplies will be boxed up, but if you plan ahead, you can ensure that the cleaners you use are biodegradable and non-toxic. Also consider using rags (from some of those old clothes) to save on paper towel waste.

Buy used items

Once you arrive at your new home, it's likely you'll need a few pieces of furniture. Consider the environment and check back on freecycle or eBay before heading off to Ikea. You could help out someone moving by getting rid of items they no longer need.