

Pricing & Estimates Guide

How Moving Buddies explains local pricing, move estimates, estimate accuracy, billable time, travel fees, materials, deposits, long-distance estimates, and the difference between a low quote and a reliable quote.

Short Description

A practical Moving Buddies pricing guide that explains how local and long-distance moving estimates work, what affects the final cost, how hourly rates, travel fees, materials, deposits, and inventory accuracy fit together, and how customers can compare quotes without being fooled by lowball estimates.

Meta Title

Pricing & Estimates Guide | Moving Buddies Tucson AZ

Meta Description

Learn how Moving Buddies estimates moving costs, including hourly rates, travel fees, materials, deposits, local vs. long-distance pricing, quote accuracy, and how to compare mover estimates fairly.

Pricing & Estimates Guide

How to understand moving costs before moving day

The simple truth about moving prices

A good moving estimate is not a magic number. It is a prediction based on inventory, access, crew size, truck needs, distance, preparation, packing, and the customer's actual move conditions.

The cheapest quote is not always the cheapest move. A low quote can become expensive if it ignores stairs, parking, long carries, disassembly, packing, materials, extra stops, or the real size of the shipment. A better estimate tries to identify those variables before moving day.

Moving Buddies uses estimating tools and move-coordinator input to calculate time, volume, and weight from the information provided. The calculator is only as accurate as the inventory and conditions entered. That is why customer communication matters so much.

How Moving Buddies prices local moves

For local moves, Moving Buddies pricing is based on the official quote. The public customer handbook explains that Tactical Relocation Systems charges an hourly rate, a service or travel fee as declared in the official quote, and materials when applicable. The contact-page FAQ also states that local moves are billed by hourly rate plus a travel charge, also called a truck fee, and that the hourly rate is prorated to the quarter hour.

In plain English, most local moves are priced by time plus the trip-related fee and any approved materials or add-on services.

The hourly rate pays for the moving crew and the work itself.

The travel or truck fee helps cover the cost of getting the crew, truck, fuel, equipment, and operating resources assigned to your move.

Materials may apply when packing supplies, mattress bags, boxes, paper, tape, specialty cartons, or other supplies are requested or consumed.

Your official quote is the controlling document. A website guide can explain the structure, but your actual price depends on the written quote for your move.

When billable time starts and stops

Moving Buddies' customer handbook explains that billable time starts when the movers arrive at the first location, also called the origin, and continues through transport, additional pickups, and delivery phases and locations. Time stops when the job is complete and the customer physically verifies that the trucks have been cleared of their belongings.

This matters because moving time is not only the time spent carrying furniture inside the house. It can include loading, disassembly, furniture preparation, wrapping, truck staging, transport, additional stops, unloading, placement, reassembly, and the final truck check.

A move can take longer when the crew has to wait for access, elevator availability, parking, customer decisions, unfinished packing, or storage-facility entry. Delays not caused by the mover can still affect the time required to complete the job.

Why estimates vary so much

Two movers can look at the same address and produce very different estimates. Sometimes that happens because one company is more thorough. Sometimes it happens because one company is lowballing. Sometimes it happens because the customer provided different information to each company.

Common reasons estimates vary include inventory assumptions, box count, crew size, truck size, stairs, elevators, long carries, parking distance, disassembly, reassembly, furniture wrapping, packing needs, appliance handling, specialty items, multiple stops, storage access, and time of year.

The estimate is only as good as the facts behind it. A quote that does not ask enough questions may feel simple, but it may also be less reliable.

Local hourly pricing: what affects the clock

For a local move, the main cost driver is usually time. The hourly rate matters, but the total time matters more.

A lower hourly rate can lose to a better crew if the lower-rate company sends an undersized crew, works slowly, arrives under-equipped, or creates preventable delays.

A local move takes time for many reasons: walking distance, stairs, elevator wait time, truck parking, furniture wrapping, disassembly, reassembly, tight doorways, large items, box count, packing quality, customer readiness, and decision-making at the destination.

The best way to reduce local moving cost is not to pressure the crew to rush. It is to make the move ready before the crew arrives.

Travel fee, truck fee, and service fee

Many moving companies charge some form of trip charge, travel fee, service fee, truck fee, or dispatch fee. The name varies by company.

For Moving Buddies, the local travel charge or truck fee is part of how local moves are calculated when stated in the official quote. The important thing is transparency: the fee should be disclosed before booking, not introduced at the end.

When comparing quotes, do not compare hourly rate alone. Compare the full structure: hourly rate, crew size, travel fee, minimum hours, materials, add-on services, and what counts as billable time.

Materials and packing supplies

Materials are not always included in the base labor rate. If you want the crew to bring boxes, blank newsprint, tape, mattress bags, stretch wrap, TV boxes, wardrobe boxes, or specialty packing materials, request them before move day.

Moving Buddies' customer handbook says trucks are not sent out with packing materials unless the customer has made a prior request. That matters because supplies affect both cost and preparation.

A properly packed move can save time and reduce damage risk. But packing materials are real costs, and they should be discussed in advance.

Deposits and reservations

A deposit is part of the reservation system, not a surprise charge. Moving Buddies' customer handbook states that the final step to booking is submitting a deposit, that reservations require a nominal deposit of up to 50% of the cost, and that the company usually asks for about 20% unless abnormal expenses are involved, such as lodging for crews or extensive packing material costs. The deposit is credited directly to the moving bill.

The purpose is simple: a reservation holds a crew, truck, equipment, and schedule space. Once that appointment is reserved, the company may turn away other work for that same crew.

Cancellation and rescheduling cost

Moving Buddies' handbook states that deposits are non-refundable and that rescheduling is treated the same as canceling. This policy protects crew scheduling and employee hours.

For customers, the practical advice is straightforward: do not reserve a move date until the date is realistic. If there is uncertainty around a closing, lease, elevator reservation, or property access, explain that before booking.

A good scheduling conversation can prevent an avoidable cancellation problem.

Long-distance, statewide, and interstate estimates

Long-distance pricing works differently from most local hourly moves. Moving Buddies' contact FAQ states that long-distance jobs are calculated primarily by weight, among other factors, and that all long-distance jobs must be evaluated in person by an experienced estimator.

For long-distance moves, the key variables may include shipment weight, distance, access conditions, packing, valuation, route, delivery timing, storage, fuel, labor, and specialty services.

Statewide long-distance moves stay inside Arizona but travel beyond the local service area. Interstate moves cross state lines and may involve federal household-goods rules. Always ask whether the move is local, statewide, interstate, direct, brokered, or van-line style.

Binding, non-binding, and not-to-exceed estimates

For interstate household-goods moves, estimate language has specific meaning. FMCSA explains that a non-binding estimate is what the mover believes the total cost will be based on estimated weight and requested services, but the final charges are based on actual weight, services provided, and tariff provisions. FMCSA also explains that a binding estimate guarantees you do not have to pay more than the estimated amount at delivery, as long as the services and shipment match the estimate.

A binding estimate is not a blank check for unlimited extra work. If the inventory, services, packing, access, or conditions change, additional charges may still apply under the rules and written terms.

A guaranteed-not-to-exceed estimate generally means the customer should not pay above the stated estimate if the shipment and services match the estimate, and may pay less if the shipment is lighter or services are reduced, depending on the agreement.

For local Tucson moves, the more common structure is hourly pricing plus disclosed fees and materials, rather than a federal interstate-style binding estimate. The words on the written quote matter.

Why “flat rate” is not automatically better

Customers often like flat-rate pricing because it feels predictable. Predictability is valuable, but a flat rate is only as good as the inventory and service scope behind it.

If a mover gives a flat price without inspecting the move, reviewing the inventory, asking about access, or documenting what is included, that price can create conflict later.

A reliable flat rate should clearly state what is included, what is excluded, what inventory it is based on, what happens if the inventory changes, what access conditions are assumed, and what could create additional charges.

Why “hourly” is not automatically worse

Hourly pricing can be fair when the crew is efficient, the rate is clear, and the customer is prepared.

Hourly pricing also gives flexibility. If the move is smaller than expected, the cost may be lower. If the customer removes items, packs better, clears access, or makes decisions quickly, the final cost can benefit.

Hourly pricing becomes frustrating when the customer did not understand what counts as work time, when access delays occur, or when the shipment is larger than described. That is why the estimate conversation matters.

The biggest price drivers

The most common price drivers are move size, box count, furniture volume, packing, stairs, elevators, long carries, parking distance, crew size, truck size, disassembly, reassembly, specialty items, appliances, storage, multiple stops, customer readiness, and time of year.

Distance matters, but for local moves it is not always the biggest driver. A short-distance apartment move with stairs, poor parking, and unfinished packing can take longer than a longer drive between two easy-access homes.

Access can be more expensive than mileage.

Access conditions that change estimates

Tell the mover about access early. This includes stairs, elevators, loading docks, long hallways, gate codes, steep driveways, low branches, narrow roads, parking permits, HOA rules, apartment move-in hours, storage facility rules, and whether the truck can park close to the door.

A “two-bedroom apartment” is not enough information. A first-floor apartment with close parking is a different move from a third-floor apartment with no elevator and a long walk from the truck.

A mover can estimate better when the access details are known before moving day.

Packing and preparation affect the estimate

Packing affects cost in two ways. First, professional packing service adds labor and materials. Second, poor customer packing slows the move.

Open boxes, weak boxes, overfilled boxes, half-empty boxes, unboxed lamps, loose kitchen appliances, and random bags all slow the crew and increase risk.

A clean, fully packed, labeled home is faster to move than a home where the crew must wait while the customer finishes closets and cabinets.

How to get a more accurate estimate

To get a better estimate, provide a real inventory. Include each room, large furniture, approximate box count, appliances, patio items, garage items, storage items, heavy items, fragile items, packing needs, stairs, elevators, parking, and extra stops.

Photos and videos can help. United Van Lines describes virtual surveys as a way for customers to walk an estimator through the home by video so the estimator can understand the goods and prepare a quote. Moving Buddies' own calculator converts move conditions and furniture values into time, volume, and weight, but it can be accurate or inaccurate depending on how much information the customer enters.

The rule is simple: more accurate information creates a more accurate estimate.

How to compare moving quotes fairly

Do not compare only the first number. Compare the assumptions.

Ask each mover: What crew size is included? What hourly rate applies? Is there a travel fee? Is there a minimum? Are materials included? What is billable time? Is disassembly included? Is reassembly included? How are stairs, elevators, and long carries handled? What could increase the price? What is the deposit? What is the cancellation policy? What damage coverage or valuation applies?

A higher-looking estimate may be more honest if it includes the real work. A lower estimate may be missing pieces.

Lowball estimate warning signs

Be cautious when a mover gives a price without asking enough questions, avoids written terms, ignores inventory, pressures you to book immediately, asks for a large deposit without clear paperwork, refuses to explain extra charges, or quotes dramatically lower than everyone else.

FMCSA warns consumers about moving fraud and tells customers to use Protect Your Move resources. FMCSA also advises consumers to understand estimates and moving documents before signing.

A trustworthy estimate should get clearer as the conversation continues, not more confusing.

The “hour per room” baseline

Moving Buddies' contact FAQ notes that for run-of-the-mill local moves, an hour per room is a good baseline, while also explaining that an in-depth analysis is preferred.

This is not a rule or guarantee. It is a rough starting point. A room with a bed, dresser, and a few boxes is not the same as a room full of books, disassembly, fragile items, and closet overflow.

Use simple baselines only as conversation starters. The final estimate should be based on the actual move.

Ways customers can reduce cost without cutting corners

The safest way to reduce moving cost is to reduce wasted time and reduce shipment size.

Declutter before the estimate. Finish packing before move day. Use strong, closed, labeled boxes. Box all small kitchen appliances. Move personal valuables yourself. Reserve elevators. Clear walkways. Secure parking. Disassemble simple items in advance only if you can keep hardware organized. Tell the mover about changes early.

Do not save money by underreporting the move. That usually creates more cost and tension later.

DIY versus professional cost

DIY may look cheaper because you see the rental truck price first. But the real DIY cost includes truck rental, mileage, fuel, insurance, blankets, dollies, straps, boxes, paper, tape, helpers, time off work, injury risk, and possible damage.

Professional movers cost more upfront because you are buying labor, speed, equipment, skill, load strategy, and accountability.

A hybrid move can sometimes be the best balance: pack yourself and hire movers for loading, furniture, heavy items, appliances, or unloading.

What should be on your official quote

A useful moving quote should identify the company, customer, addresses, move date, service type, crew size, hourly rate or pricing method, travel fee or service fee, minimums, material charges, packing services, additional stops, access assumptions, specialty items, payment terms, deposit terms, cancellation policy, and what could change the price.

The quote should also match the sales conversation. If the salesperson promised something, it should appear in writing.

Questions to ask before approving an estimate

Ask: Is this local, statewide, or interstate? Is it hourly, flat-rate, binding, non-binding, or estimated? What exactly is included? What is excluded? What can increase the price? What inventory is this based on? Is the box count included? Are packing materials included? When does billable time start and stop? What crew size is planned? What happens if the job takes longer? What is the deposit? Is the deposit refundable? What is the cancellation policy? What valuation or damage coverage applies? Who do I call if the move changes?

Final takeaway

A good pricing conversation protects both sides. The customer understands the cost structure before moving day. The mover understands the work before assigning a crew.

Moving prices are not just about rates. They are about inventory, time, access, preparation, distance, materials, service level, and risk.

The best estimate is not always the lowest estimate. The best estimate is the one that explains the job clearly enough that moving day does not become a surprise.

Source Notes

- Moving Buddies homepage: free no-obligation estimate and move calculator language - <https://www.movingbuddiesaz.com/>
- Moving Buddies customer handbook: hourly rate, service/travel fee, billable time, deposits, materials request, and scheduling policy - <https://www.movingbuddiesaz.com/customer-handbook>
- Moving Buddies contact FAQ: local hourly rate plus travel charge, quarter-hour proration, long-distance jobs calculated primarily by weight, in-person evaluation, and booking timelines - <https://www.movingbuddiesaz.com/contact>
- Moving Buddies move calculator: estimates time, volume, and weight based on move conditions and furniture values - <https://www.movingbuddiesaz.com/move-calculator>
- FMCSA Protect Your Move: consumer resources for household goods moves - <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/protect-your-move>
- FMCSA estimating charges: non-binding estimates and final charges for interstate household goods moves - <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/protect-your-move/how-to/subpartD>
- FMCSA binding estimate definition - <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/consumer-protection/protect-your-move/what-binding-move-estimate>
- United Van Lines moving quote and virtual survey resources - <https://www.unitedvanlines.com/moving-quotes> and <https://www.unitedvanlines.com/moving-quotes/virtual-survey>
- Mayflower moving planner and FAQ resources - <https://www.mayflower.com/moving-tips/moving-planner> and <https://www.mayflower.com/moving-tips/faq>

Publishing note: This guide explains Moving Buddies pricing concepts for customer education. The official written quote, invoice, service agreement, customer handbook, and applicable law should control actual pricing, terms, and charges.