

How to Vet a Long-Distance Mover Before You Book

A short guide to comparing interstate movers with more clarity and confidence.

A little homework goes a long way.

If you're planning an interstate move, there are a few simple things you can do to compare movers more confidently and avoid common problems before move day. Federal consumer materials consistently point customers toward the same core habits: verify registration, understand whether you're dealing with a mover or a broker, read the documents carefully, and do not rely on a verbal quote alone.

Start with these five checks

- 1 Check FMCSA registration**
Look the company up in FMCSA's mover search and confirm that you're dealing with a registered interstate mover or broker.
- 2 Confirm whether they are a mover or a broker**
That is not a small detail. A mover transports your household goods. A broker arranges transportation by another company and does not transport the shipment itself.
- 3 Read reviews in more than one place**
Do not rely on one review platform. Look for patterns, not perfection. Pay attention to how the company communicates when something goes wrong, not just how friendly the sales process feels.
- 4 Be cautious with unusually low estimates**
A very low quote can look good at first and cause problems later if the inventory, labor, weight, or services were not estimated honestly upfront.
- 5 Pay attention to how they answer basic questions**
A good company should be able to clearly explain who they are, how the estimate works, what kind of move you're booking, and what documents you're receiving.

HELPFUL TOOL

Verify with FMCSA

A quick check goes a long way. FMCSA's mover search tool lets you confirm whether a company is registered and whether it is acting as a mover or a broker.

[Check a company with FMCSA →](#)

Red flags worth slowing down for

- They will not clearly say whether they are a mover or a broker.
- They are vague about registration or U.S. DOT information.
- They push hard for payment before answering basic questions.
- Their quote is far lower than everyone else's.
- The estimate feels fuzzy or incomplete.
- They are easy to reach during sales, then hard to reach afterward.

A red flag does not automatically prove bad intent. It simply means it is worth verifying more before you move forward.

Mover or broker? Know who you're actually hiring.

Mover

A mover is the company responsible for transporting your household goods.

Broker

A broker arranges for transportation by another company. A broker is not the mover actually transporting the shipment.

That distinction matters. If you're comparing long-distance estimates, make sure you know whether you're speaking with the company doing the move or a company arranging it.

A few important things your estimate should make clear

Is the estimate binding or non-binding?

Your estimate should clearly say which one it is. That affects how charges are handled and what you should expect on delivery day.

Was the estimate based on a visual survey?

For interstate moves, estimates are generally based on a visual survey of the household goods, which may be done in person or virtually, unless the shipper waives that requirement in writing.

Did someone explain your valuation options?

Your estimate and moving paperwork should address valuation options, including Full Value Protection and the option to waive it in favor of the released-value level described in federal materials.

Do you know how claims and disputes are handled?

Customers should have information about claims, complaint handling, and arbitration procedures before key move documents are signed.

Common questions about interstate moving protections

Are these protections only for interstate moves?

Yes. FMCSA household-goods consumer protections apply to interstate moves, not purely in-state moves. Rules for intrastate moves may be different depending on the state.

What documents should I receive with my estimate?

For interstate moves, customers should receive a written estimate and the required FMCSA consumer documents, along with other required disclosures.

What is the difference between a mover and a broker?

A mover transports your goods. A broker arranges transportation but does not transport the shipment itself.

Can I verify a company myself?

Yes. FMCSA provides a mover search tool so consumers can verify registration and review company information.

Questions about your long-distance estimate?

We're happy to walk you through the estimate, the required documents, and what interstate moving protections mean in plain English.