

How To Move And Protect Paintings Safely | Packing & Moving Tips

Canonical: <https://www.fragileremovals.com.au/moving-tips/how-to-move-and-protect-paintings/>

Details:

Choose a packing plan for the particular painting, frame, glazing and condition before removing it from the wall. An unframed canvas, a painting behind glass and a work with a fragile decorative frame may need different protection. Valuable, damaged or especially sensitive work should be assessed by an art-handling specialist or conservator before travel.

The aim is to support and protect the work throughout handling, transport and unpacking. A generic box, an extra layer of bubble wrap or a fragile label does not establish that the painting is ready to move. Tell the removal company about artwork when requesting the quote so it can confirm the service and preparation required.

Identify the work and record its condition

List each painting with its approximate dimensions, frame type and whether it has glazing. Note any existing damage or loose parts without attempting a repair. Photographs can help record visible condition and identify the work at delivery; keep those records accessible during the move.

Explain any known fragility or previous handling instructions. If you do not know the medium, surface condition or frame construction, say so. Do not infer that a work is robust because it has travelled before or because the paint appears dry.

Confirm who will remove the painting from its current hanging position and who will prepare it for transport. Large or awkward works may need particular handling arrangements. Keep household helpers and the moving team working from the same agreed plan rather than attempting an unplanned lift when packing begins.

Separate surface protection from outer cushioning

Possible packing materials include moving boxes, corner protectors, paper or plastic sheets, protective cardboard or bubble wrap and tape. Each material has a possible role, but suitability depends on where it contacts the work and what support is needed. A common household packing product is not automatically suitable against a painted surface.

The Canadian Conservation Institute's painting-wrapping guidance assumes the painting has been assessed for travel and is in good condition. It emphasises keeping wrapping away from the paint surface and using appropriate support where the frame does not provide that separation. Consult a conservator when the work's requirements are uncertain.

Do not wrap kitchen cling film directly around exposed paint or press bubble wrap against the image on the strength of a general moving tip. Ask the specialist to select the contact materials, support and outer packaging. Protecting the outside of the parcel does not solve a harmful contact inside it.

Make a glazing decision before using tape

An X of masking tape across glass is not a universal protection method. The conservation guidance distinguishes glazing types, coatings and appropriate low-tack materials, and notes that tape does not guarantee prevention of damage if glass breaks.

Ask the art-handling specialist or conservator whether any glazing preparation is appropriate. Follow the relevant glazing manufacturer's directions where applicable. Never apply tape to exposed paint or assume ordinary masking tape is suitable for every glass treatment or frame finish.

Keep the decision with the packing instructions so the person unpacking knows what was applied and how it should be removed. A protective step that cannot be safely reversed can create another handling problem at the destination.

Choose frame and corner support deliberately

Check whether the frame is sound enough for the proposed handling and whether delicate decoration can tolerate contact with corner protection. Do not force a standard protector over a projecting or fragile feature. A specialist may need to select a different support arrangement.

Plan the front, back and edges together so the artwork cannot shift into unprotected contact during the journey. Rigid protection must support the intended shape without sagging onto the painting. This page does not provide a construction specification for a travel frame or crate.

Use a box or case suited to the packed work and the planned transport. Allow for the complete protective arrangement when checking dimensions. Do not assume two paintings can share a box simply because the outer dimensions appear to fit; the support and separation need assessment as well.

Prepare the handling route and identify the package

Make the route from the hanging position to the packing area and vehicle available. Tell the team about stairs, narrow turns and access restrictions. Prepare a clean, suitable area for the agreed packing work and avoid placing other household packing tasks in that space at the same time.

Mark the package with its contents and the relevant orientation and handling instructions. Identify the destination room and keep unpacking instructions accessible. Discuss keeping other goods off the artwork package; the load plan must protect the package from pressure and shifting.

The fragile-item guide covers broader household packing, while packing materials describes available formats. Those pages do not replace artwork-specific assessment. Confirm whether the moving service includes the specialist packing required by your work.

Plan delivery and any waiting period

Know who will receive the work and where it will be placed before collection. If the new property is not ready, discuss an appropriate arrangement before dispatch. General storage descriptions do not establish the temperature, humidity or other conditions suitable for every painting.

Keep the condition record and package identification with the delivery contact. Agree who will unpack and whether professional help is needed to hang the work. Do not turn a transport booking into an assumption that wall fixings, installation or conservation work are included.

Discuss insurance and cover before travel, including the declared value, policy conditions and reporting procedure. Neither a fragile label nor a description of careful handling guarantees cover or an undamaged outcome.

Stop and seek advice if something is wrong

If the work is loose in its package, protection presses against a delicate area or the case is damaged, pause the affected handling and contact the person responsible for the packing plan. Do not add pressure or adhesive to conceal the problem.

At delivery, record concerns and notify the moving company promptly. If paint, glazing or the frame appears damaged, avoid improvised cleaning or repair and seek appropriate specialist advice.

Preserve the relevant records and packaging details for follow-up.

Call us on 1800 500 584 to discuss the artwork and the move. We will need the dimensions, condition, access and specialist preparation requirements to confirm what can be provided.

Can I put kitchen cling film directly against a painting?

Do not assume kitchen cling film or another household wrap can safely touch a painted surface. The conservation guidance cited in the article emphasises keeping wrapping away from paint and using support appropriate to a work assessed for travel. Identify the medium, frame and condition and seek artwork-specific advice where uncertain. Ask the specialist to choose contact materials and outer protection together. A cushioned exterior does not solve harmful contact inside the package, so settle the method before wrapping begins.

Does an X of masking tape guarantee protection if glass breaks?

No. The suitability of tape depends on the glazing, coatings, finish and planned removal, and tape cannot guarantee that broken glass will not damage the work. Ask an art-handling specialist or conservator whether glazing preparation is appropriate for this piece. Never apply tape to exposed paint or assume ordinary masking tape suits every surface. Keep the preparation instructions with the package so unpacking is also planned, rather than adding a measure that creates another problem at the destination.

Can several paintings always share one box?

No. Several works fitting inside the outer dimensions does not establish safe packing. Each painting needs appropriate support and separation for its frame, glazing, surface and condition, without pressure from another work. Provide dimensions and details to the art-handling or packing specialist and agree the box or case after that assessment. Identify each work and its destination, and keep unpacking instructions available. Use individual or shared packaging only as supported by the actual handling plan.

What if the painting or frame is already fragile or damaged?

Arrange assessment by a suitable conservator or art-handling specialist before packing or moving it. Record visible condition and any loose components without attempting an improvised repair. Tell the removalist about the concern so the quote and schedule allow for the required preparation. Existing fragility may affect whether travel, a particular packing method or storage is appropriate. Keep the specialist's instructions accessible to the people preparing, transporting and receiving the work, and reassess if its condition changes.

What information should I give the mover about artwork?

List each work's dimensions, frame and glazing details, known condition and any existing handling instructions. Explain the route from its hanging position to the vehicle and its intended position at the destination. Agree who removes, packs, transports, unpacks and hangs it; those are separate tasks.

Keep condition photographs and identifiers with the receiving contact. Discuss declared values, cover and any storage requirements before travel so the arrangement reflects the particular work rather than a general fragile-item label.