There are a lot of things that you need to worry about when moving. You need to think about packing your stuff, setting up new utilities, the mountains of paperwork... The list can just go on and on! However, do not worry! Even though **this may seem like an impossible task, it's not hard to do**. Finding a good moving company and planning your move in advance can not only speed up the process but also [reduce stress during a move](https://www.findcrosscountrymovers.com/how-to-reduce-stress-during-a-move/). However, for a first-time mover, it may be frightening to meet with phrases that pop up so often during this process that might not mean much to you. Learning them is a big part of a job and, today, we are here to help you with that. In this article, we talk about the differences between a binding and a non-binding moving estimate.

**What is a moving estimate?**

The *first thing you might be curious about is what even a moving estimate is*. Of course, the term might seem pretty obvious. It is a number the movers will give you when talking about the cost of your move. But what will an estimate include? How do you work it out with a moving company? At what time during the moving process does the estimate happen?



Cap: Many factors will influence the estimate.

Alt: A measuring tape and a weight scale.

Well, first, **the moving estimate should happen before you settle on a moving company**. A representative should visit your home and take a look at your items. If they insist to do this over the phone, you should beware. It is one of the red flags of [working with bad movers](https://www.findcrosscountrymovers.com/5-signs-youre-working-with-bad-movers/). Think about it - how can anyone decide how much to charge you based solely on a phone call.

The estimate, however, can include many things:

* Depending on the length of your move, the estimator might be looking at the weight of your items or their size.
* They might be checking the distance you are traveling as well as similar smaller services.
* Finally, *a moving estimate can also include additional costs that make the move difficult* - stairs, elevators, tricky driveways, etc.
* Sometimes, movers might also be charging per mover per hour.

You can read all of this in a document that the estimator will give you. Make sure you carefully look over it and see everything that is included - it can tell you a lot about the moving company. However, the most important thing to check is **whether it is a binding or a non-binding moving estimate**.

**What is a non-binding moving estimate?**

A *non-binding moving estimate is a written estimate of the moving costs*. It tells you what the estimator thinks your items will weigh and how much they will charge you. The first thing to realize about a non-binding moving estimate is what the name itself implies - this number can change over time. If you add extra stuff to your move, or if the moving condition somehow changes, then the movers can change their prices. However, they will usually give you a number that they will not surpass if nothing changes.



Cap: Read everything before you sign it.

Alt: A person signing a paper.

However, **this is not a bid or a legal document**. Because of this, the moving company cannot charge you for making it. Nevertheless, you should request the estimate in writing. The piece of paper needs to have your items written down. The services that your moving company offers to you need to be on it as well. The prices of these services need to be on separate forms called *service order* and *the bill of lading*. Remember not to sign these until the amounts the movers will charge for each form are there.

This *estimate should be attached to your bill of lading - and the company needs a copy of it as well*. A thing to keep in mind is that they will be able to refuse to move you if they think you are moving more items than the estimate notes. When it comes to any additional services, your movers need your permission for them before providing them - even when [moving to another country](https://www.findcrosscountrymovers.com/moving-to-another-country-for-a-new-collegeuniversity-yearv/). You will have an hour to decide upon service and make a deal about its costs.

**What about binding moving estimates?**

On the other hand, we have a **binding moving estimate**. Unlike the non-binding one, the movers may charge you when making a binding estimate. This is because after you get it, the company will not be able to charge you more, even when you are [sending goods overseas](https://bfslebanon.com/services/freight-forwarding-services/), if your package exceeds the estimated weight.



Cap: The movers are tied to their binding moving estimate.

Alt: A knot – just like a moving estimate ties the movers to it.

The *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association has made a list of rules about binding moving estimates* in order to [make long-distance moves easier](https://www.findcrosscountrymovers.com/tips-to-make-long-distance-moves-easier/) for everyone. First, the estimate needs to list what you are moving as well as what services the company will give you. If you have extra services - like flight charges, for example - then the company needs to bill you after the move, separately. They cannot do it when charging you while delivering your items. This is also the time they will charge you for the move - and you agreed to it by signing the estimate.

There are a couple of similarities between the estimates, though. First, the movers need to attach a copy of the estimate to the bill of lading. You will also **get your own copy of the moving estimate, and it needs to clearly state that it is a binding one**. Again, the movers can refuse to move your items if they believe you have more than you showed them. However, once they load up their truck, they agree to the estimate - and will charge you what it says on the document.

Feature:



Alt: A calculator, ready for your moving estimate.

Photos:

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