

Booking a moving company is a big decision, and if you're like me—a former moving crew lead turned home services writer—you know there's more to it than just picking the first name that pops up on OCNJ Daily or Thumbtack. With local moves ranging from a quick 50-mile drive to [flat rate movers vs hourly](#) nearly 100 miles, understanding exactly what you're getting, what the pricing means, and which services are included is key. Even This Old House stresses the importance of due diligence before hiring pros to handle your move.

Understanding Local Moves: What Counts as “Local”?

Before diving into the nitty-gritty questions to ask potential movers, you should confirm what counts as a local move. Generally speaking, a **local move** is under 50 to 100 miles of travel. Official definitions vary, but most moving companies consider anything within this radius as local. If your move exceeds 100 miles, you're likely entering the realm of long-distance moves, which involve different pricing structures and regulations.

Local moves involve simpler logistics but require careful planning around packing, furniture handling, and scheduling. Your moving crew will typically:

- Pack up your items if requested
- Load furniture and boxes onto the truck
- Drive to the new location within the allowed mileage
- Unload and place furniture where you want it

Having this framework keeps your expectations realistic and helps when comparing quotes.

Key Questions to Ask Before Booking a Moving Company

Once you know what a local move generally covers, it's time to get to work asking the right questions. These fall into a few categories—pricing, services, logistics, and insurance. Below are the crucial questions to ask every moving company you consider, including those you find on platforms like Thumbtack or local listings featured by OCNJ Daily.

1. What Does Your Hourly Pricing Include?

Most local moving companies charge by the hour, which can be tricky if you don't get clarity upfront. Be sure to ask:

- **Is there a minimum number of hours?** Many companies have a 2 or 3-hour minimum, even if your move is quick.
- **Are driving and waiting times included in the hourly rate?** Some movers count everything, others separate drive time or have a different rate after a certain time.
- **How many movers are included per hour?** Prices often vary depending on the crew size; confirm if you're getting 2, 3, or 4 movers per hour.

Pro tip: I always ask for an estimate based on a walk-through of the property or a detailed inventory list. That's far better than vague “half-day” promises.

2. Are There Additional Fees for Stairs?

The infamous **stairs fee question** is non-negotiable in my checklist. If you or your movers have to navigate stairs, you should expect a potential surcharge. Ask:

- Is there an extra charge per flight of stairs?
- How do you charge for stairs if the elevator is out or there is no elevator?
- Will the fee apply at both pickup and drop-off locations?

Stairs drastically increase the workload and the risk of damage, so it's reasonable that movers charge more. Just make sure the fee is transparent in writing before booking.

3. How Do You Handle Long Carries?

Long carry fees come into play when movers must transport your items from your door to the truck over a considerable distance—usually more than 50 or 75 feet. Ask the moving company:

- What counts as a “long carry” for your team?
- What is the fee per foot or per set distance?
- Are these fees charged at pickup, drop-off, or both?

This fee can add surprising costs to moves involving apartment complexes, gated communities, or homes set back from the street.

4. What Are Your Charges for Bulky Item Pricing?

Bulky items—think pianos, armoires, large dressers, or pool tables—require special handling and usually extra charges. Questions to ask include:

- Do you charge differently for bulky items?
- If yes, what is the pricing structure?
- Do you disassemble and reassemble these items as part of the service, or is it extra?

This Old House highlights the importance of confirming these details to avoid frustrating surprises on moving day. Bonus points if the company includes basic assembly services.

5. Do You Provide Furniture Protection and Basic Assembly Services?

Furniture protection is critical to prevent scratches, dents, and other damage during a move. Movers should wrap couches, tables, and dressers properly with pads or shrink wrap. Ask:

- Is furniture protection included in your price?
- Do you supply moving blankets, shrink-wrap, or other materials?
- Do your movers handle basic disassembly and reassembly of beds, desks, and shelving?

Basic assembly can save you hours of frustration. You want a company that takes the time to disassemble large items so they can fit through doorways and then put them back together correctly.



6. Are You Licensed and Insured?

This is non-negotiable. Always ask to see proof of insurance and any required licenses. This protects you in case of accidents or loss. Many movers advertise on platforms like Thumbtack, but not all carry proper coverage.

Also, ask:

- What is your liability coverage for damaged goods?
- Do you offer additional insurance options?

If the company hesitates or refuses to show documentation, walk away.



Sample Checklist of Questions to Ask Your Moving Company

Category Question Pricing What is your hourly rate and do you have a minimum? Are driving and waiting times included? Stairs Do you charge a stairs fee? If so, how much per flight? Long Carry What are your long carry fees

and what distance qualifies? Bulky Items Do you charge extra for bulky items? Is disassembly/reassembly included? Furniture Protection Is furniture protection included? What materials do you use? Licensing & Insurance Can you provide proof of insurance and licensing? What liability coverage do you offer?

Final Tips: Getting It All In Writing

As a former moving crew lead, I can't stress this enough: **get everything in writing**. A verbal quote or estimate is worthless if it's not backed with a written contract or estimate that clearly states what's included and what fees apply. Platforms like Thumbtack allow you to request written quotes, and some local news sites like OCNJ Daily often highlight trustworthy local movers who provide clear estimates.

Before booking:

1. Review the contract or estimate thoroughly
2. Confirm the hourly rate, estimated hours, and any additional fees (stairs, long carry, bulky items)
3. Ensure proof of insurance and licensing is received
4. Ask if there are cancellation or rescheduling policies in writing

Moving is stressful enough without last-minute fees or disputes over what was promised. If the moving company is transparent and professional upfront, your move will be that much smoother.

Wrapping Up

Navigating the maze of local moving companies can be confusing, but armed with the right questions—and keeping an eye out for sneaky extras like stairs fees, long carry fees, and bulky item pricing—you'll be well-prepared for a stress-free move. Whether you find your movers on Thumbtack, OCNJ Daily, or through trusted recommendations from This Old House, the key is to insist on clear, detailed, and written answers before you say "go."

Remember, a great moving company doesn't just move your belongings—they protect them and respect your time and budget from start to finish.