

## Self-Storage Facility Tips

### CHOOSING A SELF-STORAGE FACILITY

The first thing you need to consider is which self-storage facility to use. Visit a few local self-storage facilities before you make a decision. It's always best to remember that you're planning on storing your own items in the facility and you want it to remain in the condition you left it in. By the time you make your choice you should be confident of the following:

The self-storage facility has adequate security measures.

You can access your self-storage unit when you want to.

The units offered in the self-storage facility are the right size for you

You could cope with any future needs you might have to increase or decrease the space you rent.

The self-storage facility offers units that will suit the goods you want to store - for example, if you're storing valuable items you want an enclosed unit with concealing walls so that nobody can see what's inside.

The climate control in the self-storage facility is adequate for your needs - particularly important if you're looking to store upholstered items, business goods or archive documents

The storage units are tidy and well-maintained - professional self-storage facilities are well kept and clean.

Pest control shouldn't be an issue - the self-storage facility should be able to tell you what types of measures they take.

The small print of the contract for the self-storage facility has no hidden surprises.

If you're planning on storing a large amount, check that the self-storage facility has adequate access for the removal vehicle you've chosen. Many self-storage sites don't have the space or access for large removal trucks.

### PACKING FOR SELF-STORAGE

Unless you plan on paying the storage unit to pack for you, you'll have to box things up yourself. Before you begin, you'll need to put some thought into the packing process. After all, one of the primary advantages of using a self-storage facility is the fact that you can continue to access your items even in storage.

The first thing to remember is to pack in such a way that you can find things at a later date quickly and without unloading absolutely everything you've put away. Make an inventory of what you've packed and where it is as you go along. Other packing and storage preparation tips include:

Make an estimate of the replacement value of each item you store to help with accurate insurance policies and in case of unforeseen damage in the self-storage facility.

Invest in quality, sturdy boxes and packing materials. If you buy boxes of similar sizes it'll be easier to stack them securely in the self-storage facility and will save you space.

Box everything that you can. Everything that is left unboxed in a self-storage facility will get dusty and potentially dirty.

Fill boxes to capacity wherever possible to avoid breakages but don't make them too heavy - remember you'll have to be able to lift them. You can use materials such as paper or towels special packing materials to fill spaces if necessary. Depending on the space you opt to rent from your self-storage facility, you might be stacking boxes on top of each other and the lower levels need to be sturdy enough to take the strain. Boxes that are only partly filled may tip over or collapse.

Label all boxes clearly so you can identify the contents and keep an inventory. Label them on more than one side so you can see what's what quickly. Mark 'Fragile' on any boxes containing breakable items.

Don't be tempted to fill large boxes with heavy items such as books as they'll quickly become impossible to carry and may break. You can buy small

book boxes from your self-storage facility that will do the job just as well. If you do pack heavy items in a large box put in just a few and then fill the box up with lighter items or filler.

Don't pack items into sealed plastic bags, since humidity can cause mildew. Don't store wet items in a self-storage facility as they can cause water damage, mold and mildew.

Large appliances need care before placing in a self-storage facility. Make sure you defrost fridges and freezers thoroughly before storing them, to avoid water damage. Tie doors up for the move, but leave them slightly ajar once in storage to stop condensation forming and help ward off bad odors. Drain washing machines before storing them and tie down hoses etc. Appliances should be clean and dry and it'll be worthwhile to wipe the insides with bicarbonate of soda before storing.

Wrap all fragile items and breakables such as dishes, glasses, and ornaments separately. Paper will do but bubble wrap is a good investment. Pack them tightly into strong boxes, filling any gaps with paper or filler. Try to avoid putting heavy items on top of fragile ones in a self-storage facility.

If you're going to be storing clothes think about buying wardrobe or clothes boxes so you can simply hang the clothes in them and they'll keep their shape. It's not wise to simply put your clothes in bin liners in a self-storage facility as moisture can get trapped inside when they're sealed and your clothes could be ruined.

For the best protection for mirrors and pictures in a self-storage facility, wrap them in a protective covering such as bubble wrap and stack them on their ends. Mirrors and pictures should never be stored flat. Mark them as 'Fragile'.

Separate lamp bases and lampshades and wrap them for protection.

If you're storing upholstered products such as mattresses and sofas in a self-storage facility it might be a good idea to invest in covers, bags or sheeting to give them some additional protection. Stand sofas and mattresses on end wherever possible to save space and don't stack too much on top of soft furnishings. Mattresses are best stored on the long end and should be ideally raised above floor level or laid on protective sheeting.

If you're storing a few items of furniture on top of each other a simple dust sheet or cover placed between items will minimize scratching and damage.

You'll save space if you can dismantle furniture such as beds and tables before you store them. Wrap and cover furniture sections and keep them together, clearly marked, for quick retrieval. You can put components such as screws and bolts together in a plastic bag, mark them clearly and tape to the relevant piece of furniture. Store large pieces of furniture vertically to save space.

Chairs can be stacked seat to seat to save space. Cover chair legs with protective wrapping for extra protection.

Spray your wood furniture with a quality furniture spray before storing it to give it some added protection.

Electrical equipment such as TVs, stereos and computers should be packed in their original boxes if possible. If this isn't possible, pack them into boxes that are the right size making sure that you pack gaps with paper etc. Make sure you tie down the player arm of a record player and secure your turntable.

If you're storing items with fuel tanks such as lawn mowers and cars etc in a facility, expect to drain the tanks before you put them in storage. Fuel is one of the few things that you CANNOT store in a self-storage facility.

Wipe down metal objects and tools with a little oil before storing to avoid rust formation.

You can tie tools and long-handled items in bundles. Don't store a brush resting on the bristles.

Don't store vacuum cleaners with the bag, throw it away before you store them.

Treat leather items with a leather conditioner before you store them.

Think hard about whether you really want to store photographs in a self-storage facility. If you do store loose photographs, place them between pieces of clean cardboard and tape them together to avoid curling. Photographs will suffer temperature damage and, if the facility you have chosen is not

climate controlled, you might want to keep them out of storage to avoid losing them.

Think creatively and you'll make more space. Plan to use furniture drawers as an extra box (they are especially good for fragile items) and you can use the inside of wardrobes to store boxes. Kitchen appliances such as stoves and fridges can also be used in this way.

Seal all your boxes with packing tape before you put them in a self-storage facility - this will help keep dust out of the contents.

## ORGANIZING YOUR STORAGE UNIT

It's worthwhile to take some time to plan exactly how to pack your items into the unit. Unit sizes are determined by price so you can save money by assessing what you have to store and planning to pack it in efficiently - a smaller and well-packed unit will be cheaper than a larger one that is badly organized.

There are two key things to remember when organizing your self-storage unit. Firstly, you need to make sure that you can easily access the items you've stored in the facility when you want them. Secondly, you must take care of your things when storing - these are your belongings and there are measures you can take, apart from careful packing, that will help protect them during their time in storage.

If you're worried that the floor space in the facility is not clean enough and might cause damage to your items, put down protective sheeting or boards.

If you're storing heavy items or boxes check with the facility to see if they have trolleys or other machinery you can use. Some self-storage companies will offer these free of charge.

In all but the smallest units, try to create an aisle and leave enough room to be able to get around the back.

Store your largest items first. If you're stacking your unit high with boxes, always make sure to put the heaviest boxes at the bottom to avoid damage.

Stack boxes and similarly sized items together to save space.

Try not to lean furniture against outside walls. If you're storing metal objects avoid resting them against items susceptible to damage.

Try to assess what you'll need to access frequently and keep it at the front of your unit.

Fill anything that's hollow - i.e. wardrobes, drawers, washing machines and fridges with small boxes and other items to maximize your available space.

Make sure to stack boxes and containers so you can see the labels you put on them.

Wedge the doors of all kitchen appliances whilst in the facility open to avoid bad odors and mildew etc., building up.

Don't store anything in the facility you're not sure is sturdy vertically; if it seems wobbly store it horizontally.

If you're worried about the atmosphere/environment in the unit put down moisture absorbers, deodorizers and vermin bait.

## About the Author

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