

Characteristics to Look for in the Best Removalist Company

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Introduction

Planning a successful move involves much more than placing household items in boxes and loading them onto a truck. Whether a person is relocating across town or moving to another state, careful preparation can prevent delays, unexpected expenses, damaged belongings, and unnecessary stress. It is rarely wise to wake up one morning and decide to move without first arranging transport, packing materials, access to both properties, utility connections, and professional assistance.

Choosing the right removalist company is one of the most important decisions in the moving process. A dependable removalist can organise the transport of furniture, protect fragile possessions, manage heavy items, and complete the move within an agreed schedule. An unreliable operator, however, may arrive late, charge unexpected fees, mishandle valuable belongings, or fail to complete the work as promised.

Finding a trustworthy interstate removalist can be particularly challenging. Every company describes itself as professional, affordable, and reliable, but an attractive website does not prove that the business will deliver a high-quality service. Consumers must look beyond advertising claims and examine a company's registration, experience, insurance arrangements, pricing, reputation, equipment, communication, and complaint-handling process.

Under the Australian Consumer Law, service providers must perform their work with "due care and skill," provide services that are fit for the stated purpose, and complete them within a reasonable time when no particular time has been agreed (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC], 2025). These protections are important, but customers can reduce the likelihood of a dispute by investigating a removalist carefully before signing a contract.

Why Choosing the Right Removalist Matters

Moving house can be expensive. A household may need to pay a rental bond or property deposit, cleaning expenses, utility connection fees, travel costs, packing supplies, temporary accommodation, and the removalist's charges. Damage to furniture or an unexpected increase in the moving bill can place additional pressure on an already limited budget.

A removalist also handles possessions that may have both financial and emotional value. A damaged

television can be replaced, although doing so may be costly. A family photograph, inherited piece of furniture, personal document, or handmade item may be impossible to replace. The cheapest quotation is therefore not always the best option.

Consumer Affairs Victoria has previously warned customers about reported problems involving unreliable service, overcharging, damage to belongings, failure to follow contract terms, and poor responses to complaints. These concerns show why customers should examine the complete service rather than choosing a company solely because it advertises the lowest hourly rate (Consumer Affairs Victoria, 2023).

1. A Verifiable and Legitimate Business

A professional removalist should operate under a verifiable business identity. The company should clearly provide its legal or registered business name, Australian Business Number, physical or postal address, telephone number, and email address. These details make it easier for customers to confirm who will be responsible for the move.

Customers can search the Australian Securities and Investments Commission business names register to identify the person or organisation that holds a registered business name. The register may also show the business's ABN, registration date, renewal date, location, and whether the registration is current (Australian Securities and Investments Commission [ASIC], n.d.).

Business registration alone does not guarantee excellent service. A registered company can still perform poorly. Nevertheless, the absence of verifiable details should be treated as a warning sign. Customers should be cautious when an operator communicates only through social media, requests payment into an unrelated personal account, refuses to provide a business name, or changes company names frequently.

A reliable removalist should have no difficulty explaining who owns or operates the business. It should also provide documentation using the same business identity that appears in its advertising and official records.

2. Appropriate Industry Accreditation

Industry accreditation can provide an additional level of confidence. In Australia, the Australian Furniture Removers Association, commonly known as AFRA, represents removalist businesses that agree to meet specified operational, training, safety, equipment, and insurance standards.

AFRA states that applicants are screened and accredited members are regularly audited. Its members are expected to follow association procedures, maintain public liability insurance, use appropriate equipment, and meet workplace health and safety requirements (Australian Furniture Removers

Association [AFRA], n.d.).

AFRA membership is not the only measure of quality, and a company should not be selected solely because it displays an accreditation logo. Customers should verify the membership through the association's directory rather than relying on a symbol copied onto a website.

Accreditation is especially useful for an interstate move because the removalist may be responsible for belongings over a long distance and for several days. If storage, subcontractors, depots, or multiple vehicles are involved, accountability becomes even more important.

3. A Detailed and Transparent Quotation

A trustworthy removalist should provide a clear written quotation before accepting the booking. The quotation should explain how the price will be calculated and what services are included.

Some removalists charge an hourly rate, while others offer a fixed price based on the volume of goods, distance, access conditions, labour requirements, and additional services. Neither pricing method is automatically better. What matters is whether the calculation is clear and suitable for the move.

A useful quotation should identify:

- the collection and delivery addresses;
- the agreed date or estimated delivery period;
- the number of removalists supplied;
- the size or type of vehicle;
- the hourly rate or total fixed price;
- the minimum booking period;
- travel time and call-out charges;
- fuel, toll, ferry, or interstate transport fees;
- charges for stairs, elevators, long carrying distances, or difficult access;
- packing and unpacking fees;
- storage costs;
- fees for dismantling and reassembling furniture;
- charges for heavy or unusual items;
- cancellation and rescheduling conditions; and
- applicable taxes.

A vague promise such as “the move should cost around \$800” is not enough. The final amount may increase sharply if the business later adds travel, fuel, stair, waiting-time, or oversized-item fees.

Customers should ask whether a fixed quotation can change and, if so, under what circumstances.

They should also confirm whether an hourly charge begins when the truck leaves the depot, arrives at the property, or starts loading.

4. Fair and Realistic Pricing

Affordability matters, but an unusually low price may not represent good value. A removalist must pay trained workers, maintain vehicles, purchase protective equipment, cover fuel and insurance expenses, and allow enough time to handle belongings safely. A quotation far below competing estimates may indicate that important costs have been excluded or that the company intends to increase the price later.

Customers should obtain written quotations from at least three suitable removalists and compare the same services. One quotation may appear more expensive because it includes packing materials, insurance options, travel time, and furniture assembly. Another may look cheaper because those costs are not shown until the final invoice.

The best quotation is not necessarily the lowest. It is the one that offers a reasonable balance of price, service quality, accountability, and protection.

A customer should also be cautious if a company demands the entire payment in advance. A reasonable deposit may be required to secure the booking, particularly during busy periods. However, the contract should clearly explain the deposit, the remaining balance, the payment deadline, and the circumstances in which money may be refunded.

5. Suitable Insurance and Clear Liability Arrangements

Insurance is one of the most misunderstood parts of hiring a removalist. Customers sometimes assume that every item is automatically covered for its full replacement value. That may not be the case.

Public liability insurance generally relates to certain claims involving injury or property damage connected with the company's operations. It should not automatically be treated as complete insurance for every household item being transported. Goods-in-transit cover, storage insurance, accidental-damage protection, and other arrangements may have different conditions, exclusions, limits, and excess payments.

AFRA reports that its accredited members maintain public liability insurance and that many can arrange additional goods-in-transit insurance for customers (AFRA, n.d.). Customers should still request written details rather than relying on a verbal statement that the move is "fully insured."

Before agreeing to any insurance option, ask:

- What events are covered?
- Does the cover apply during loading, transportation, storage, and unloading?
- Are owner-packed boxes covered?
- Are fragile items, jewellery, artwork, electronics, plants, or antiques excluded?
- Is compensation based on replacement value, market value, or a fixed limit?
- Is there an excess?
- Who handles a claim?
- How quickly must loss or damage be reported?
- What evidence must the customer provide?

A professional company should answer these questions clearly and provide relevant documents. Customers should also check whether their home and contents insurance offers any protection during a move.

6. A Strong but Credible Reputation

Online reviews can reveal how a company treats its customers, but star ratings should not be accepted without question. The ACCC warns that businesses must not create or arrange fake or misleading reviews. Warning signs can include a sudden cluster of extremely positive ratings, repeated wording, vague comments, and numerous reviews that provide no specific information about the service (ACCC, n.d.).

A useful review usually includes details. It may mention the locations involved, communication before the move, punctuality, the care taken with furniture, the final price, or how the company handled a problem. A mixture of positive and critical reviews is often more believable than hundreds of perfect ratings.

Customers should examine several independent platforms rather than relying only on testimonials published on the removalist's own website. They should also pay attention to how the company responds to criticism. A calm response that offers to investigate the matter demonstrates more professionalism than an aggressive reply that blames the customer.

No removalist will satisfy every client. Delays, misunderstandings, and accidental damage can occur even in a well-managed business. The important question is whether negative experiences reveal an isolated problem or a repeated pattern involving lateness, price increases, missing items, rough handling, or ignored complaints.

7. Relevant Experience

Experience is valuable, but the number of years a company has operated is not the only consideration. The removalist should have experience with the specific type of relocation the customer is planning.

An interstate move is different from transporting a few pieces of furniture within the same suburb. It may involve long-distance scheduling, secure loading, overnight transport, storage, access to depots, delivery windows, and coordination across state borders.

Customers with pianos, pool tables, large safes, antiques, artwork, medical equipment, or delicate electronics should ask whether the removalist has handled similar items. A company should not learn how to move a valuable piano on the customer's moving day.

Customers living in apartment buildings should also look for removalists familiar with loading docks, elevator bookings, parking restrictions, height limits, narrow corridors, and building-management requirements.

An experienced estimator should ask detailed questions about the move. A company that provides an immediate fixed quote without asking about the volume of belongings, stair access, parking, heavy items, or delivery conditions may not have enough information to price the service accurately.

8. Trained and Professional Staff

The attitude and ability of the moving team can determine whether the day proceeds smoothly. Removalists enter the customer's home, handle personal possessions, move heavy objects, and work around children, neighbours, property managers, and other service providers. Professional conduct is therefore essential.

Reliable staff should arrive in suitable clothing, introduce themselves, inspect the property, confirm the plan, and identify items requiring special care. They should use safe lifting methods, protect floors and doorways, and communicate before dismantling or moving valuable furniture.

Customers may ask whether the business uses permanent employees, casual workers, subcontractors, or a combination of these. The use of subcontractors is not automatically a problem, but the customer should know who is responsible for supervising the work and handling a claim.

A reputable company should train its team in safe lifting, packing, loading, vehicle security, customer service, and workplace safety. Staff should not pressure a customer into signing new conditions after the move has already begun.

9. Proper Vehicles and Moving Equipment

Professional removalists should have equipment appropriate for the task. Depending on the move, this may include:

- enclosed and well-maintained trucks;
- moving blankets and protective pads;
- straps and tie-downs;
- trolleys and dollies;
- ramps or hydraulic lifts;
- mattress protectors;
- wardrobe cartons;
- floor coverings;
- corner and doorway protectors;
- tools for furniture assembly; and
- suitable packing materials.

The truck should be large enough for the estimated load without encouraging unsafe overloading. Belongings should be secured to prevent shifting during transport.

The company should also have a plan for mechanical failure. A customer moving out at the end of a lease cannot always wait several days while the removalist searches for another vehicle. Asking about backup trucks and contingency arrangements is reasonable, particularly for an interstate relocation.

10. Good Communication and a Willingness to Help

A helpful removalist listens before giving advice. The company should ask about the customer's priorities, explain the moving process, and respond clearly to questions.

Good communication begins before the booking. Emails and calls should be answered within a reasonable period, and quotations should be written in understandable language. The customer should know whom to contact if circumstances change.

In the days before the move, the company should confirm the date, arrival window, addresses, contact details, parking arrangements, inventory, and any special instructions. For a long-distance move, it should also explain whether the delivery date is fixed or estimated.

A company that is difficult to contact before receiving payment is unlikely to become easier to reach after a problem develops. Poor communication at the quotation stage should therefore be taken seriously.

11. Flexibility Without Making Unrealistic Promises

Moving dates sometimes change because of property settlement delays, lease requirements, weather, illness, or problems with access. A good removalist should have a clear process for rescheduling and should make reasonable efforts to accommodate the customer.

Flexibility, however, should not be confused with making promises that cannot be kept. An interstate removalist may provide a delivery window rather than an exact time because road conditions, vehicle problems, and earlier jobs can affect the schedule.

The company should explain possible delays honestly and provide updates when circumstances change. Under Australian consumer protections, services must be supplied within the agreed period or within a reasonable time when no period has been set (ACCC, 2025).

Customers should book early during weekends, public holidays, the end of the month, school holidays, and summer. These periods may be busy, and leaving the booking until the last moment can reduce the number of available options.

12. A Written Contract With Clear Terms

A professional removalist should provide written terms and conditions. Customers should read them before paying a deposit rather than waiting until moving day.

The agreement should identify the parties, services, price, payment terms, cancellation rules, liability arrangements, insurance options, delivery period, excluded items, storage conditions, and procedure for reporting damage.

Customers should ask for clarification when a clause is difficult to understand. They should also save copies of the quotation, contract, inventory, receipts, messages, photographs, and insurance documents.

A written agreement protects both parties. It records what the customer requested and what the company promised. Without it, disputes may depend on conflicting recollections of a telephone conversation.

13. Careful Inventory and Packing Procedures

A good removalist should help the customer understand how belongings will be recorded and protected. For an interstate move, an inventory can reduce confusion when goods are loaded into a shared vehicle, stored temporarily, or transferred between depots.

Boxes should be labelled by room and contents. Fragile items should be marked clearly, although a label does not replace correct packing. Customers should photograph valuable belongings and record identifying information for electronics or appliances.

The removalist should explain whether it accepts responsibility for damage inside boxes packed by the customer. If the company provides professional packing, the quotation should identify the materials and labour included.

Prohibited or restricted items should also be discussed. Removalists may refuse to transport dangerous chemicals, flammable liquids, gas cylinders, perishable food, illegal goods, or certain high-value possessions. The customer should receive this information before packing begins.

14. A Clear Complaints and Dispute-Resolution Process

Even a careful removalist may occasionally damage an item or miss an agreed delivery window. A strong company does not prove its quality by claiming that problems never happen. It proves its quality by responding responsibly when they do.

The business should provide a clear complaints process and a contact person with authority to investigate. Complaints should be acknowledged, documented, and answered within a reasonable period.

When a service does not meet Australian consumer guarantees, a customer may be entitled to an appropriate remedy. Depending on the circumstances, this could include correcting the service, a refund, or compensation for reasonably foreseeable loss or damage (ACCC, 2025).

A customer should first contact the removalist in writing, describe the problem, provide evidence, and state the requested solution. If the dispute cannot be resolved, assistance may be available from the relevant state or territory consumer-protection agency.

Warning Signs to Avoid

Several warning signs may indicate that a removalist is unsuitable:

- no verifiable business name or ABN;
- no written quotation;
- pressure to pay the full amount immediately;
- a price far below every competing quote;
- unclear insurance statements;
- refusal to explain additional charges;

- repeated complaints about damaged or missing goods;
- demands for unexpected cash payments before unloading;
- no physical business details;
- poor or aggressive communication;
- copied or suspiciously repetitive reviews;
- unwillingness to provide written terms;
- frequent changes of business name; or
- promises that appear impossible to meet.

One warning sign may have an innocent explanation, but several together should encourage the customer to choose another company.

Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Removalist

Before confirming a booking, ask the company:

1. What is your registered business name and ABN?
2. Are you an AFRA-accredited removalist?
3. Do you have experience with interstate moves of this size?
4. Is the quotation fixed or estimated?
5. What additional charges may apply?
6. When does the hourly charge begin and end?
7. Are travel time, fuel, tolls, stairs, and waiting time included?
8. What insurance or liability protection applies?
9. Are owner-packed boxes covered?
10. Do you use employees or subcontractors?
11. How many workers and what type of vehicle will be provided?
12. What happens if the truck breaks down?
13. Is the delivery date guaranteed or estimated?
14. How are belongings recorded during an interstate move?
15. How should damage or missing items be reported?
16. What is your cancellation or rescheduling policy?
17. Who will manage a complaint if something goes wrong?

A professional removalist should answer these questions without becoming defensive or evasive.

Removalist Selection Checklist

Characteristic	What to Look For	Warning Sign
Business identity	Current registration, ABN, address, and consistent company details	Unverifiable or constantly changing identity
Accreditation	Verifiable industry membership and professional standards	Unverified accreditation logo
Quotation	Detailed written breakdown of services and charges	Vague verbal estimate
Pricing	Competitive and realistic price	Extremely low offer with unclear exclusions
Insurance	Written explanation of cover, exclusions, limits, and claims	General statement that everything is “fully insured”
Reputation	Detailed reviews across independent platforms	Repetitive or suspiciously perfect reviews
Experience	Evidence of similar local or interstate moves	Little understanding of the type of move
Staff	Trained, respectful, and appropriately equipped team	Unprofessional conduct or no clear supervision
Communication	Prompt answers and written confirmation	Calls and emails repeatedly ignored
Contract	Clear terms covering payment, timing, and liability	Pressure to sign incomplete documents
Equipment	Suitable truck, blankets, straps, trolleys, and protective materials	Damaged vehicle or insufficient equipment
Complaints process	Clear contact and dispute-resolution procedure	Refusal to accept responsibility or respond

Conclusion

The best removalist company is not simply the business with the lowest advertised rate. It is a company that combines transparent pricing, professional conduct, suitable equipment, trained workers, reliable communication, and clear responsibility for the customer's belongings.

Before booking an interstate removalist, customers should verify the business, compare written quotations, examine genuine reviews, ask about insurance, read the contract, and discuss all possible charges. They should also consider whether the company has experience with the distance, property access, and special items involved in the move.

Early planning allows customers to make a reasoned decision rather than hiring the only removalist available at the last minute. A careful selection process may take additional time, but it can protect valuable possessions, reduce unexpected expenses, and make the moving day considerably less stressful.

Ultimately, a reputable removalist should make the customer feel informed rather than pressured. Its representatives should be willing to answer questions, put promises in writing, explain risks honestly, and handle possessions with the same care that the owner would expect. These characteristics provide the strongest foundation for a safe, efficient, and successful move.

References

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