

# How to Pack a Clock or Clock Movement for Shipping

We're often asked what the best way is to prepare a clock or clock movement to assure safe shipping. First, we must consider the size and weight of the clock in question.

We have our reservations about using standard UPS, USPS, Fed Ex, etc. for shipping clocks that won't fit into a 24" x 24" x 24" inch space. While it can be done, and we've seen it done, the probability of success drops off dramatically. So, for example, shipping a 48" x 16" x 10" 90lb self winding wall clock is going to be more successful using a shipping or freight service that is accustomed to this work. For an item that large, we need a service that is familiar with shipping antiques and furniture, and will handle it accordingly. That is beyond the scope of this particular instruction sheet, and we'll leave that up to freight services to advise you. But if you are going to do it anyway, keep in mind that it will be extremely expensive. And, you must **DOUBLE BOX IT!!!**

A great deal of clocks will fit into the 24" x 24" x 24" space described earlier. However, it doesn't mean that a 23" long clock should be shipped that way. The key to success is that the item, once packaged, must be able to survive a drop from about 3-4 ft in height without damage. This is important. We don't feel that the carrier services deliberately mishandle parcels. In fact, we believe they are reasonably careful and conscientious. But, accidents do happen. Carrier trucks swerve to avoid accidents, stop quickly having been cut off, and other things. Conveyor belts within the distribution centers can tumble items. Consequently boxes might be rolled or toppled somewhere along the way. It can and does happen, probably more frequently than we realize, and we must prepare our items accordingly.

We ship large, valuable, fully restored clocks via numerous carriers routinely with very high success. We prefer UPS and FedEx because they provide tracking. Here is how we achieve our success:

**Again, keep in mind that you must pack the item so that when you are done, it can be safely dropped from 3-4 feet without damage.**

## **Prepare the Item for Packaging:**

1. Remove any large, heavy, or loose items such as batteries or pendulums and ship them separately. **NEVER SECURE A PENDULUM WITH TAPE!! DO NOT LEAVE BATTERIES INSTALLED!** In shipping, large, heavy objects are like hammers and will destroy anything in their way, including the large, heavy object itself.

We've received clocks where pendulums were secured with tape. Nothing was left of the pendulum except fragments of wood and a dented up pendulum bob, along with a damaged clock movement and case. This dramatically increases the cost of restoration.

2. If possible, leave the glass at home. On some clocks, such as small mantles and alarms, the glass should be left in place. For larger clocks such as 16-18 inch square self winding clocks, remove the door if at all possible.  
3. We usually instruct customers to send only the movement with self winding clocks or medium-sized wall or mantle clocks. If the entire clock requires restoration, then do the following, especially if the glass is flat. (Convex glass survives shipping much better than flat glass.)

- Follow above first, then place a sheet of bubble wrap between the clock hands and the dial.
- Place enough layers of bubble wrap between the dial/hands and the glass so that when the door is closed, the bubble wrap is **VERY LIGHTLY** compressed. This helps cushion vibration and prevents the glass from breaking.
- Close and lock the door/glass.
- Apply 3M blue masking tape to the glass. **DO NOT USE ANY OTHER TAPE!**
- Package as described below.

## **Package the Item:**

1. Put the item in a zip lock-type bag if small, and a clean, large plastic trash bag if large. Seal the bag shut. This helps keep the item dry and free of lint and other contaminants in shipping materials.
2. Wrap the item in enough bubble wrap to create a cushion of about 4-5 inches all the way around it. Wrap 2+ inches one way, then turn the bubble wrap 90 degrees and wrap it again, 2+ inches thick in each direction. Tape down the bubble wrap to itself SPARINGLY. Bubble wrap is amazing when used correctly. For best results use the ½ inch bubbles for items over 10lbs. Most UPS stores, for example, use Excel-Aire brand which is great. But other types work well, too. **PLEASE TAPE BUBBLE WRAP VERY SPARINGLY.** Short 2 inch squares of tape at the seams are all that is necessary.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** As of October 2011 we will charge an additional \$50.00 unpacking fee for any clock packed in bubble wrap that is subsequently wrapped in shipping tape. This is NOT NECESSARY and creates a significant project for our un-packing. It is nearly impossible to cut through this mess without damaging the clock. Small, 2 inch pieces of tape are all that is needed to secure the seams of bubble wrap. **AGAIN, WE WILL CHARGE FOR UNPACKING IF THE TAPE WRAPS AROUND THE ITEM.**

**We want to emphasize again, 4-5 inches thick bubble wrap all the way around an item. A couple turns of bubble wrap WILL NOT DO ANYTHING!!**

3. Fit the wrapped item snugly in a strong cardboard box. Back fill with Styrofoam peanuts if necessary to keep the item snug. Seal box with clear adhesive shipping tape. Use plenty of tape on all seams.
4. Take the boxed item to a shipping store, such as a UPS store, and have them box it again, with Styrofoam peanut fill between the two boxes, maybe 1-2 inches all the way around. Inspect it to make sure it is securely taped shut, all around.
5. Ship the item ground to save cost. It is only 3-4 days transit to most parts of the US with most services. USPS offers Priority service for a very reasonable rate (use ONLY on smaller, less valuable items) which gets items there in 3 days or so. We routinely ship our battery products this way, with good results.
6. For large, expensive items, consider alternatives that give you tracking service. We like this because if something goes wrong you'll know where to start looking. See below for more information.
7. Ship insured, for your own peace of mind. But don't blame the shipping company if you didn't pack it according to the above. Insuring an item is NOT a substitute for thorough packing. Trying to file a claim and getting reimbursed for damaged item is a big pain that you want to avoid every way you can. And, if you don't pack it adequately, you may not get reimbursed anyhow. This is because on a damage claim, the shipping company will want to inspect the packing materials.

## **Here are some "Don'ts" about shipping valuable items.**

1. Don't use paper as a packing material whether it be crumbled newspaper or shredded paper. Don't waste your time with sheet Styrofoam. It does not fit the contour of clocks and provides very little if any cushion from impact.
2. Don't ship a clock without sealing it in plastic first. It will get fill material, paper fiber, etc. littered throughout it.
3. Don't waste your time putting "Fragile" on the box. Invest your time in proper packing. It is your responsibility to pack items to account for unforeseen events.
4. Don't ship flat glass without reinforcing it on both sides with bubble wrap as back-fill AND blue 3M tape.

5. With the exception of using 3M blue tape on glass, NEVER put tape directly on the item being shipped. It will flow into the finish and remove the finish when the tape is removed.

**Selection of Carriers.** We prefer to use a carrier (UPS or FedEx) that can track shipments for rare, irreplaceable or expensive items. Not all shippers offer this. For expensive or irreplaceable items, we strongly encourage you to use a service that tracks shipping. Simply being able to confirm delivery is not the same as tracking. If the item turns up missing, the first question will be, "OK, so it was delivered, but where?"

Services like **Craters and Freighters** will charge over 2x the price that UPS charges. But they will handle the item with incredible care. It will not be tossed or dropped. We have had good luck with them. So, consider them for large or highly valuable items that can't be tossed or dropped, or cannot be packed in any way that will allow them to survive a drop.

Keep in mind that USPS will require you to sign over the item if damage results in an insurance claim, before they will pay the claim. If your item is a one-of-a-kind, **DO NOT USE THE USPS POSTAL SERVICE.**

**Cost.** We are often asked to quote cost of return shipping at the time of the estimate. This is difficult without having it packed the way we will pack it. We also need to know where it is going. Even then, the estimate will not be exact.

Carrier shipping costs have been on a very deliberate rise in the past few years due to the cost of fuel. In some cases we have been surprised by the costs. These factors have accounted for the majority of the surprises:

1. Item being shipped far from our location. A clock sent from Austin, TX to New Jersey or Washington is going to cost on the order of 2x more than one being shipped to Oklahoma or Alabama. For example, an item that might cost \$35.00 to send to Oklahoma will cost almost \$70.00 to get it back to its New Jersey home.
2. The cost of shipping large items has escalated. A 24" x 24" x 16" box will often cost over \$125.00 even if it is light. The carriers have a "size equivalent" conversion that increases the cost per pound.
3. Even small items will often need to be double boxed if there is glass involved. This means that the item may end up falling into the issue described in (2) above even if it is physically smaller un-packed.
4. Remote locations in the country, on rural routes out of the city, will dramatically drive up the shipping costs.

Keep these items in mind BEFORE deciding to send us your item. The time to be surprised and upset about the return shipping cost is NOT after we have worked so hard and completed the full restoration and are returning the clock to you. At this point, there is nothing we can do. We do everything we can to keep the packages small and economical to ship, but the shipper will largely decide the return cost, not us.

Our packing costs are moderate. We obtain packing materials in bulk to save you money. These costs are a minute fraction of the overall shipping costs, which will be dominated by the service.

**Final Note.** We sometimes receive items shipped to us from customers that don't follow the above directions. Such items are often dented, broken or otherwise damaged. This is done to save cost. It is possible to ship a moderately large item USPS which is poorly packed and will arrive broken for \$20.00. If the damage can be repaired and we repair it, the repair cost will very likely exceed the \$66 it would have cost to ship it right in the first place. If the item cannot be repaired, then the point is moot. **AGAIN, USPS REQUIRES YOU SIGN OVER THE ITEM TO THEM BEFORE PAYING A CLAIM.** UPS and Fed Ex do not require this, but they will require inspection of your packing materials.

**Bottom line:** Pack conservatively. You will pay more to send it UPS or FedEx, but you will know where it is and if you pack properly, can file and be compensated on any damage claim without giving up your item.