

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. In this document, we set some guidelines and boundaries for this and consider the Do's and Don'ts.

We have our reservations about using standard UPS, Fed Ex, etc. for shipping clocks that won't fit into a 26" x 26" x 26" 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, 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 expensive. And, you must **DOUBLE BOX IT** or **CRATE IT**.

A great number of clocks will fit into the 26" x 26" x 26" space described earlier. Clearly a 28" long clock cannot 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 routinely or deliberately mishandle parcels; we believe they are generally careful and conscientious. But accidents do happen. Carrier trucks swerve to avoid accidents, stop quickly having been cut off, and other things. Consequently, boxes might roll or topple in trucks. It can and does happen, although infrequently, and we must prepare our items accordingly. When items are damaged, it is **ALWAYS** because of insufficient packaging.

We ship large, valuable, fully restored clocks via UPS and FedEx routinely with 100% success. Here is how:

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

IF YOU USE STYROFOAM SHEET OR PEANUTS, YOU WILL BE CHARGED A \$60 DISPOSAL AND CLEAN UP FEE. PLEASE AVOID STYROFOAM SHEETS OR PEANUTS.

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!**

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. A pendulum is a loose hammer in a shipping container.

2. If possible, leave the glass at home for larger clocks. On some clocks, such as small mantles and alarms up to 10 inches diameter, the glass should be left in place. For larger clocks such as 16–21-inch square self-winding clocks, remove the door if at all possible and keep it with you, unless you are having the case refinished here, of course.

3. We usually instruct customers to send only the movement with self-winding clocks (with hands and hand nut). 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.
- For flat glass 10" and over, place strips of blue Scotch tape (**NO OTHER KIND OF TAPE**) in a criss-cross X pattern across the outside glass. Keep tape off of painted or finished surfaces.
- Package as described below. If possible, reinforce case corners with thick cardboard.

Package the Item:

1. Put the item in a zip lock-type sealable 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 item in enough bubble wrap (**avoid paper**) to create a cushion of 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. (SMALL sections of tape—do NOT wrap the item in tape!). Bubble wrap is amazing when used correctly. For best results use the ½ inch bubbles for items over 10lbs. Most UPS and FedEx stores, for example, use Excel-Aire brand which is great. But other types work well, too.

To emphasize again, 4-5 inches thick bubble wrap all the way around an item. A couple turns of bubble wrap WILL NOT provide adequate protection!

3. Fit the wrapped item snugly in a strong cardboard box, including a **packing list** if there are multiple small items such as keys, pendulums, etc. Back fill with foam (not Styrofoam) peanuts or paper packing material (not newspaper and please, not sheet Styrofoam) 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 FedEx or UPS store, and have them box it again, with crumbled packing paper (preferred) or foam peanut fill between the two boxes maybe 2 inches all the way around. Inspect it to make sure it is securely taped shut, all around.
5. Ship the item via ground service to save cost. It is only 3-4 days transit to most parts of the US with most services.
6. For large, expensive items, consider insurance and a service with 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. Trust us, trying to file a claim and getting reimbursed for a damaged item is a serious pain that you want to avoid every way you can.

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

1. **Don't use sheet Styrofoam, Styrofoam peanuts, or shredded wood/paper. These crumble to pieces and makes a mess of your clock and our shop. Styrofoam adheres to wires and is nearly impossible to remove since it flows into it.** We will be forced to charge \$60.00 clean up and disposal fee if these materials are used in the packing process. It is not recyclable and is considered difficult to dispose of, as well as an environmental nuisance.
2. Don't ship a clock without sealing it in plastic first. It will get fill material, paper fiber, etc. littered throughout it.
3. Putting FRAGILE on the box is NOT a substitute for deliberate, sound packing. Again, it is your responsibility to pack items to account for unforeseen events.
4. Don't ship large (over 10") flat glass without reinforcing it on both sides with bubble wrap as back-fill, and criss-crossed blue tape.
5. NEVER put shipping tape directly on the item being shipped. It will flow into the finish and remove the finish when the tape is removed. If you must use tape, use Blue Scotch painters' tape only.
6. NEVER hide small parts in fill material outside the inner box (or anywhere else) without putting a packing list in the box indicating where the parts are. We have had precious parts lost this way because folks that open Ken's Clock Clinic, Updated 11-13-22

these boxes are unaware that these precious parts are hidden in the fill material. DO NOT RELY ON EMAIL COMMUNICATION, WHICH COULD BE MISSED OR NOT PRESENT DURING UNPACKING. Include a packing list inside the box indicating the list of parts in the box.

7. NEVER pack multiple clocks or clock movements together. Ship each clock separately. Generally, we do not accept multiple clocks from a single customer at a time. But in case of a rare exception, pack them separately.

8. Do NOT use sheet Styrofoam or Styrofoam peanuts. Sheet Styrofoam does not provide sufficient shock protection and will shred, leaving particles everywhere and making a mess of our shop. Styrofoam peanuts shred and leave the same mess behind as sheet Styrofoam.

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

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 fluctuation in 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 Broomfield, CO 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 weighing 30lbs will often cost over \$125.00. 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, can dramatically drive up the shipping costs.

Keep the above 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 (maybe to save cost?). Such items are often dented, badly broken or otherwise damaged. It is possible to ship a moderately large item USPS that is poorly packed and will arrive broken for \$30.00. If the damage can be repaired and we repair it, the repair cost will very likely exceed the \$80 it would have cost to ship it right in the first place. If the item cannot be repaired, then the point is moot. **Some shippers (like USPS) will require you to turn over your item before paying a claim.** To our knowledge, Fed Ex has not required this, but they will require pictures and 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**, you can file and be compensated on any damage claim without giving up your item.