

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR VEHICLE FOR TRANSPORT

A Step-by-Step Checklist for a Smooth, Worry-Free Experience

There are more steps to transporting a vehicle than simply handing over the keys. Proper preparation helps protect your car, ensures a smooth transport process, and prevents unnecessary delays or surprises.

Use the checklist below to get your car transport-ready.

One Week Before Pickup (or as soon as transport is scheduled)

- **Clean Your Vehicle Inside and Out**

Wash the exterior and clean the interior thoroughly. A clean vehicle makes it much easier to spot and document any existing scratches, dents, or paint chips during inspection. Dirt and debris can hide damage, which may complicate inspections or claims later.

Helpful tip: Pay extra attention to bumpers, door edges, wheels, and the roof—these areas are often overlooked.

Remove All Personal Belongings

Remove everything from the cabin, trunk, glove box, door pockets, and center console. Most carriers do not insure personal items, and loose belongings can shift during transit, potentially damaging the interior.

This includes:

- Phone chargers and electronics
- Sunglasses, paperwork, and valuables
- Tools, emergency kits, and loose accessories

Snowbird note: Even items you “don’t need right away” are best removed—seasonal routes are busy, and minimizing weight and clutter helps avoid delays.

Remove or Secure Exterior Accessories

Fold in mirrors where possible, retract or remove antennas, and take off roof racks, bike racks, or cargo boxes. Aftermarket or loose exterior parts may be damaged or interfere with loading if not properly secured.

Two to Three Days Before Pickup

- **Document Your Vehicle’s Current Condition**

Take clear, time-stamped photos of:

- All four sides of the vehicle
- Front and rear bumpers
- Wheels and roof
- Interior condition

Capture closeups of any existing damage. These photos serve as your official record should questions arise after delivery.

Perform a Basic Mechanical Check

Your vehicle should be in safe, operable condition unless you've arranged transport for a non-running vehicle. Check the following:

- Battery is charged
- Tires are properly inflated
- Brakes function normally
- No active fluid leaks (oil, coolant, fuel)

Addressing small issues ahead of time helps prevent pickup delays and ensures safe loading and unloading.

Adjust Fuel Level to About ¼ Tank

Leave approximately a quarter tank of fuel. This provides enough fuel to load and unload the vehicle while avoiding unnecessary weight that can increase costs or create safety concerns.

The Day Before Pickup

- **Disable Alarm Systems**

Turn off any factory or aftermarket alarm systems. Alarms triggered during transport can drain the battery and cause unnecessary delays.

Remove Toll Tags and Parking Passes

Remove EZ-Pass, SunPass, or similar toll transponders. Active toll tags may result in charges while your vehicle is in transit. Also remove parking passes or garage access devices.

Prepare Keys and Special Instructions

Have at least one full set of keys ready for the driver. If your vehicle has special considerations—such as low clearance, custom modifications, or unique starting instructions—make sure these are communicated in advance.

Pickup Day Checklist

- **Be Available for the Vehicle Inspection**

At pickup, the driver will perform a walk-around inspection and note the vehicle's condition on the Bill of Lading. Review this document carefully before signing and compare it with your photos.

Upon Delivery

- **Inspect Before Signing**

Once your vehicle arrives, inspect it thoroughly—again comparing it to your pre-transport photos. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, document it immediately and note it on the delivery paperwork before signing.

A Final Word for Snowbirds

Seasonal auto transport routes can be especially busy in the fall and spring. Preparing your vehicle properly—and early—helps ensure your transport stays on schedule and stress-free during peak snowbird season.