



## How to create a home inventory

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In the event of a fire or other disaster, would you be able to remember all your possessions? Having an up-to-date home inventory will help you get an insurance claim settled faster, verify losses for your income tax return and help you purchase the correct amount of insurance.

### Start your home inventory *now*

It's likely that you've accumulated rooms full of personal possessions over the years, and the task of starting a home inventory might seem daunting. The trick is to simply get started. Here's how:

- **Pick an easy spot to start** — A contained area — such as your small kitchen appliance cabinet, your sporting equipment closet or your handbag shelf — is a great place to get started.
- **List recent purchases** — Whenever you purchase a household item valued at \$25 or more, snap a cellphone photo of the receipt and drop it into a “home inventory” folder on your desktop or in the cloud. Once you get into the inventory habit, you can go back and tackle your older possessions.
- **Include the basic information** — Briefly describe each item you record, and note where you bought it, the make and model, what you paid and any other detail that might help in the event you need to make a claim.
- **Count clothing by general category** — For example, “five pairs of jeans, three pairs of sneakers, ...” Make note of any items that are especially valuable.
- **Record serial numbers** — These are usually found on the back or bottom of major appliances and electronic equipment,
- **Check coverage on big-ticket items** — Jewelry, art and collectibles may increase in value over time and may need extra coverage separate from your standard homeowners insurance policy. While you're making your home inventory list, check with your agent to make sure you have adequate insurance for these special items before there is a loss.
- **Don't forget off-site items** — Your belongings kept in a self-storage facility are covered by your homeowners insurance, too. Make sure you include them in your inventory.
- **Keep proof of value** — Store sales receipts, purchase contracts and appraisals with your list.
- **Don't get overwhelmed** — Once you've started your inventory, keep going, even if you can't get it all done immediately. It's better to have an incomplete inventory than nothing at all.

## Use technology to make your home inventory easier

While a pencil and paper will suffice, the following technology options can make starting and maintaining a home inventory much easier:

- **Take pictures** — Create a photo record of your belongings. Go room by room capturing important individual items and the contents in closets and drawers. Label your photos with what's pictured, its place of purchase, make and model, and any additional details that might be helpful should you need to make a claim.
- **Videotape it** — Walk through your house or condo videotaping and describing the contents. For example, you might describe the contents of a kitchen cabinet: "Tuxedo" by Lenox, service for 12 that includes a dinner plate, salad plate, bowl, cup and saucer. Purchased in 2015."
- **Use an app** — There are many mobile app options that can help you create and store a room-by-room record of your belongings.

## Keep your home inventory up to date and safely stored

Your home inventory is useful only if it's accurate and you can access it to provide information to your insurance company in case of fire, theft or another destructive event. Whichever method you've used to create your list, take these steps to keep the information current and safe.

- **Add significant new purchases to your list** — Make it a habit to add the item information and receipts to your inventory while the details are fresh in your mind.
- **Store a copy of your paper inventory outside the home** — Keep it — along with applicable receipts and appraisals — in a safe-deposit box or at a friend's or relative's home. Make at least one backup copy of your inventory document and store it separately. An easy way to make digital backup copies of your paper list is to take pictures of it on your smartphone.
- **Back up digital files** — Keep a copy on an external drive or online storage account.
- **Understand your app** — Be sure the information you input is backed up by the app developer and that you know how to access information when you need it.

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