



CREATE A HOME INVENTORY

Our homes are filled with valuables: furniture, jewelry, dishes, electronics, clothing, etc. If something happened to these items, would you be able to describe them in detail including the manufacturer, model, cost, and the year you purchased the item? Most people cannot. That's why creating a detailed home inventory of your belongings is so important. It will save you time, energy and aggravation. A home inventory will also determine the right amount of insurance coverage you need.

This may seem like a daunting task, but once you get started, you may find it cathartic. It is a good time to throw out things you don't use or need.

A comprehensive home inventory list catalogs your belongings and should include the *item description; make, model, value, purchase date and any other information that helps identify it*. If there is a serial number, document that as well. If your house is broken in to, and valuables recovered, it is easier to prove ownership if you can identify them by number.

For easier referencing, give each item on your list a unique ID number and write that number on a photo of the item as well. The more details you can provide about your belongings, the easier it will be to replace or repair them. If you have a way to record, you can walk through your house filming and describing the contents as you go. HINT: If you have receipts, you can include them in the photo or video to help save time.

Spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel or OpenOffice is a free and easy way to keep a household inventory. You can easily update the information, and a copy of the file can be stored in the cloud, so you don't risk losing the data if something happens to your computer. Google Drive is a free option that allows you to keep spreadsheets online, storing your data on a secure remote server. There are also apps for both android and iPhone that are worth checking out.

A good rule of thumb is to keep multiple back-ups in different places and formats, so you're prepared for anything. Whenever you update your virtual version, print a copy as well. It will be easier to use as a checklist and can be accessed whether you have power or internet access.

Try to update your list annually or anytime you acquire or discard items of value.

Now is the time to act...before you have a claim.



A Few Basic Tips:

- Look for items in your shed, garage, basement, porch, attic, and outdoor areas (like pools and decks). Patio furniture and tools really add up.
- Don't forget seasonal items like skis, tennis racquets, skates, surf boards, bikes, barbeque grill, etc.
- Group smaller items by category and quantity. For example, "10 pairs of shoes" or "100 books", estimate the total cost for each category.
- If you have high-ticket items like fur coats, antiques, and jewelry, take a picture and write down details (brand, year, price, description, authentication). If you have gotten an appraisal, keep a copy with the photo. You may want to check with your agent to make sure that you have adequate insurance for these items; they may need to be insured separately.
- If you do not have the receipt for an item take pictures of the serial number (ie. windows, doors, countertops, appliances, sinks, bathtub). When you are getting replacement cost for your items, you want to be able to purchase (at today's prices) what you lost.
- If you have intricate craftsman work or decorative plaster work, take pictures. These things could be worth a lot of money. If you do not document it now, you will have no way to prove it ever existed.
- People often forget their utility systems, like air handler and water heater; there should be a sticker with the year on it somewhere on the item.

