

Building Rome In A Day, or How Not to Move

By Holly Lisle

Somewhere along the way, someone told me something was impossible.

Actually, I know exactly where and when.

It was my first day of seventh-grade art class, and my art teacher told me that the gray in the center of the color wheel, that color representative of what you got when you mixed all the colors, could not actually be made without the use of either black or white.

I said I bet I could do it, and she said if I could, she'd give me an A for the year.

I set out to prove her wrong, mixing colors madly, and ending up with a very nice gray.

Of course, I realized later, I had mixed it all on white paper, so while I got extra credit for the day for having taken on the challenge (and ended up earning an A for the year anyway), I discovered to my chagrin that I had failed to conquer that challenge.

I haven't tried it since. Some part of me is holding on to the, "Oh, yes, I can," of that moment, and not wanting to believe it can't be done.

I hate the word "impossible." To me, it means both "oh, yeah, just watch me," and "just one more attempt and I'll have this."

So I figured that we could do a quick, painless, efficient move, and I'd be back up and running at full steam in a week.

I gave myself two weeks just as a buffer.

Nobody I had ever known had done this, but I was willing to bet I could.

Ha!

We started the move on February 23rd.

TODAY is the first day that I can actually sit down at my desk and write.

So, for those of you who might be considering a move, here are ten DOs and DON'Ts to help you achieve the rumored-to-be-impossible... the quick and painless move.

- **DO assume that the one thing you need the most when you get where you're going will be the ONE thing you cannot get done with any kind of speed, no matter whom you tip, bribe, beg, or hire.** FOR EXAMPLE: If Internet is your single biggest potential point of failure, scope out every Internet cafe, internet provider, and Internet alternative you can BEFORE you move, and don't rely on the people you hired to provide it doing so in anything resembling a timely manner.
- **DON'T assume that the place where you want to rent your truck will also have boxes**—in fact, figure that you will have to travel to at least five different locations to scavenge boxes because the Air Force Base in your area is in the midst of a major personnel transition, and boxes cannot be had for love or money unless you have a secret source.
- **DO cultivate black-market sources of boxes.** Former employers and former employees, friends, neighbors, and places where you notice a lot of Fedex and UPS deliveries but not a lot of pick-ups are all possibilities.
- **DON'T think you're brain will be able to do anything creative while you're moving.** You're stressing about

bills, mailing addresses, transferring all your catalogues, magazines, and mail, stuff breaking, stuff getting lost, packing, unpacking, throwing things out, work, school, and food. Any plotting you do will be limited to figuring out how to get your house wired for internet. (Or whatever YOUR big disaster turns out to be.

- **DO realize you're going to forget something major that you need.** For me, it was the special ergonomic keyboard tray with which I'd modified my desk. We brought two of the three desks in the house. The one we left behind was mine.
- **DON'T think you'll be able to replace that major thing you need in a simple or sensible fashion.** The keyboard tray I own is no longer manufactured. I did manage to find another one, but whereas I'd paid \$30 bucks for mine at Office Depot (about the same price I paid for my desk), I discovered that when you can finally find it, the only alternative that now exists costs \$114, which is simply ridiculous.
- **DO have your truck lined up well in advance of your move date.** Otherwise you'll discover that a large military population shift has made trucks harder to find than boxes.
- **DON'T move prior to doing your taxes, especially if the tax deadline is upon you.** I spent two days after we got here frantically tracking down all the boxes in which I'd put all my tax stuff, and eight hours a day for three days organizing the mess into something I could take in to my accountant.
- **DO rent a dumpster before you move and throw out everything you haven't used in a year or more.** DO give away or get rid of 5000 lbs of your 10,000 lbs of books. You're going to have to carry all those suckers down one set of stairs and up another, and if you only keep the books you love madly, adore endlessly, and can no longer replace, your back, your legs, and all those bruised

spots on your arms will thank you. DO give Goodwill half your yarn. Are you even going to live long enough to knit up the other half? DO realize that psychic space and physical elbow room are the things you will yearn for most when you are navigating your way between boxes, and the fewer boxes you take, the fewer you have to unpack.

Less is a whole lot more when you're moving.

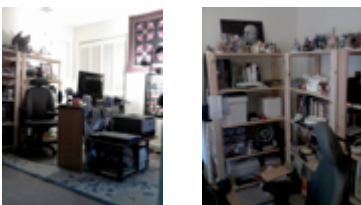
- **DON'T kill, maim, or batter anyone in the first month after the move.** Sooner or later, everything will be hooked up and working, and your sanity will come back with it.

As much as you had to begin with, anyway.

So, no, moving is not impossible. Having fun while doing it may be. Doing it in the timeframe you allotted for it may be. But prepare for everything, assume nothing, and remember that redundancy is nature's way of ensuring survival and have redundant support for everything critical. You'll get through it.

Finally, here's my Rome—not built in a day, but worth the effort.

My New Office



My New Window



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