

Packing For College: Where To Begin

(NAPSA)—It can be overwhelming: packing for college. Every year, millions of families are faced with the task of gathering items from home and buying supplies for what will constitute their student's new living space at college. Knowing what to pack can save time and money.

"Make your list and check it twice," says Martha Holler, spokesperson for Sallie Mae, the nation's leading provider of student loans. "Getting organized well in advance of move-in day will reduce the number of key items you forget."

She offers the following tips for students and families who are readying themselves for the start of college:

• **Investigate your future dorm room beforehand.** Contact the school's housing office and determine the actual size and dimensions of your dormitory room. It may be much smaller than you think. Also, find out if the dormitory is equipped with elevators; this will help you decide on the number of boxes to bring and the weight of each.

• **Ask your college or university for a "packing" checklist.** Most schools distribute checklists for parents and students in advance of the new academic year. Make sure the list covers key questions about dormitory life, such as if its facilities have central air-conditioning. If not, are window units permissible? Can rooms be modified aesthetically? In other words, are you allowed to paint the walls, install drapery, and have refrigerators or microwave ovens? How "wired" is your future living space? Can it safely accommodate computers, printers, scanners, DVD players, television hookups



and so on?

• **Be creative.** A pair of patterned sheets can be transformed into decorative curtains. By drilling holes into a small metal trash can, you can create a trendy, inexpensive lamp shade.

• **If you've been assigned a roommate, contact him or her in advance of your move.** Among other things, find out what your roommate plans on bringing to the dorm. You may be able to save time and money by not duplicating efforts in packing larger items like desk consoles or televisions.

"When it comes time to send your child off to college, do your homework and get organized early on," says Holler. "Keep a running checklist of items to pack, and start to gather items in a specific area of your home. This way, when the moment of leaving arrives, students and parents will have what they need and packing for it will be a snap."

For more suggestions on packing for college, visit the award-winning planning-and-paying-for-college Web site at www.CollegeAnswer.com. Students and families will find an array of college information and resources, including a section where students share stories of their packing-for-college experiences.

Note to Editors: This article is one in a series of articles on college preparation and financing from Sallie Mae, the nation's leading provider of education funding and the largest consolidator of student loans.