

TIPS ON CREATING A VIDEO INVENTORY

Imagine a situation none of us want to face, but far too many of us do. Your house has been destroyed by fire. Your homeowners insurance will cover all of your losses - but you need to provide your homeowners insurance company with a full list of everything that was destroyed by the fire. Can you do it?

Few people can list off all of their belongings. Most will recall the major things - the widescreen high-def television and the computer and the stereo set. Can you name the brand and model of your kitchen range? How about your living room furniture? The lamps? Unless you are able to list those things when you make your insurance claim, your insurer will make an estimate of what it costs to replace the furnishings of your home - and chances are that the estimate will fall far short of the replacement value of your belongings. What's a body to do?

No one fancies sitting down for a few hours - or more - to make a handwritten list of all of their belongings. There's a far easier way, though. Just pick up your video camera and take a walk through your house, listing off all of your belongings as you go. A little preparation in advance and a friend (or spouse, of course) to work with you can make things run smoothly and leave you with a video record of your belongings that most insurance companies will happily accept as proof of your ownership.

The Camera

Don't own a video camera? Most mobile phones take several minutes of video, though it's really not your best option. These days, though, it's easy and cheap to pick up a simple point and shoot video camera for less than fifty quid. When you consider what you can gain from having a full video inventory of your belongings for a future insurance claim, it's a small investment. And chances are once you have the thing, you'll find lots of uses for it. Pics of the kids for grams, anyone?

Setting the Stage

We alluded to a little bit of preparation in advance. This could be the hardest part of the whole process. Start by getting out your receipts bin - you do keep one of those, right? Sort through the receipts you've kept for any major purchases and lay them out alongside the item. That will give a clear indication of what you paid for the item and allow you to film both the item and its proof of value in one easy step.

Some of the things people don't think about until they have to replace them:

- your kitchen appliances
- small electrical appliances
- your living room suite
- your bedroom suite
- furnishings in other rooms
- the draperies and window dressings
any collections
- your craft and hobbies materials
- your clothing and accessories

You don't have to prepare a script, but it does help to think about your progress through the house. Where will you start and where will you go from there? Take a short walk through without the camera first so that you know what you're doing and you can simply proceed through the house without pausing between to decide which room you'll go to next.

Lights, Camera, Action

If you're not camera shy, have a friend hold the camera and follow along while you point out your belongings during your house tour. It's not necessary, though. You can easily just walk through yourself and talk while filming. Some of the high points you might mention are:

1. **Kitchen:**

Capture appliances with receipts wherever you can. Be sure to get model names and numbers if possible. Don't forget the small appliances - the cost of replacing your toaster oven, blender, electric mixer and coffee maker can add up surprisingly quickly. The same goes for your dinnerware and cookware, especially if you're the type that values quality and buys top of the line.

2. **Living/Entertainment Room**

Be sure to check with your insurer about maximum coverage for high ticket items like stereo audio equipment, home entertainment centers and televisions. If you've invested in top of the line electronics, you might be best served with a rider on your insurance policy to cover them specifically.

3. **Hobby/Workshop**

If you're a crafter or woodworker or hobbyist, chances are good that you've acquired quite an inventory of specialized equipment and materials for your crafting. It could easily cost you a few hundred quid to replace all of it. Be sure to capture anything you don't want to lose on camera so you'll have a record of it.



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When You're Done

All your work won't do you any good if the only place you've stored the video file is on your computer - that was destroyed in the fire. There are many online services that will allow you to store files for easy retrieval over the internet, including many free ones. If you're not comfortable storing a record of your belongings online, you can save it to your SD card or to a portable drive and store it somewhere outside your home.

Be sure to update your video regularly, especially if you make a new major purchase for your home. That way, you'll always have a record of your belongings in case of emergency.

<http://www.compuquotes.com/making-video-inventory-your-homeowners-insurance.html>