

— A FIRST-MONTH FIELD MANUAL

The Move-In Manual.

A field manual for the first thirty days in a new home — the window in which most of the lease's decisions get permanently set.



PAGES

38

SECTIONS

Six

FOR

New Movers

FORMAT

Manual

— READ THIS FIRST

The first thirty days is the *most expensive month* of the lease. The decisions you make in it become the decisions you live with all year.

Most people move twice in a decade. Some move every year. Every time, the same pattern: a frantic week, a chaotic day, a month of "we'll fix it later." A year later, the sofa is still in the wrong place. The chair you bought in week two is in storage. The cable mess behind the TV is the cable mess behind the TV.

The window for changing that is short. **About thirty days.** After that, the furniture is heavy, the routines have set, and the room you imagined has been quietly replaced by the room you accepted.

This manual is the system for using those thirty days well. A pre-move audit done two weeks out. A move-in day with a choreography, not a panic. A first week deliberately spent *not deciding*. Two weeks of real testing. A fourth week to lock in. And a printable thirty-day sprint that turns the whole thing into a checklist.

Use it once, and the next move costs less, hurts less, and ends with a room you chose — instead of a room that happened to you.

— *Dreamr*

FOUNDER · DECORDREAMR

CONTENTS

PART 01

The Pre-Move Audit

14 DAYS OUT

PART 02

Move-In Day

THE CHOREOGRAPHY

PART 03

Week One

THE DISCOVERY

PART 04

Weeks Two + Three

THE REAL SETUP

PART 05

Week Four

THE LOCK-IN

PART 06

The Resource Vault

LISTS · TEMPLATES

— A DESIGNER'S MANUAL

Set the room *before you set the routine.*

A room is a machine that produces a life. Every morning routine, every dinner, every Sunday afternoon — the room is the engine of all of it. Choose the room poorly and the engine produces a worse life. Choose it well and it produces a better one. The choosing happens in the first thirty days. *The rest of the lease is maintenance.*

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- 01 The first thirty days is the most expensive month of the lease. Wrong decisions become *twelve-month decisions.*
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- 02 Do not unpack a single box until the furniture map is on the wall. Movers will follow a plan. *They won't follow vibes.*
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- 03 Buy nothing in week one. The room you imagined isn't the room you have.
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- 04 Your moving boxes are a fitness test for what you own. What you don't unpack in thirty days, you don't need.
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- 05 Lights first, paint last, everything else in between. *The order changes the room.*
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- 06 The first guest visit is the deadline. *Design backward from that date.*
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- 07 The room sets the routine. Choose carefully — and then live in it long enough to know what to change.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Read Parts 1 and 2 before you move. Read Part 3 the night before move-in day. Read Parts 4 and 5 with a coffee on day eight. Print the entire Resource Vault (Part 6) and keep it in a folder with your lease — it's the system as a one-page checklist.

I The Pre-Move Audit

14 DAYS OUT

Two weeks before you move, the most valuable work is already in front of you. The audit is the difference between a smooth move-in day and a fourteen-hour panic.

Most people start "preparing for the move" two days before the truck arrives. By then, every important decision has already been made for them by default. The audit recovers those decisions. Two weeks out, with a tape measure, a phone, and an hour, you can prevent the four mistakes that cost most movers an entire weekend after the boxes are inside.

WHAT YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

A measured floor plan of the new space, a buy-nothing list that names every gap in your current kit, a packed-by-zone box strategy, and a First-Night Box that gets you through the first eighteen hours without unpacking anything else.

The four pre-move mistakes

- Skipping the measure.** The sofa that won't clear the door is the single most predictable disaster of move-in day. Measure twice; deliver once.
- Buying furniture before move-in.** The room you remember from the showing isn't the room you'll occupy. *Wait.*
- Packing by room, not by zone.** "Kitchen" is the wrong label. "Daily breakfast" is the right one — that box opens on day one; the rest can wait.
- No First-Night Box.** The reason move-in night ends in tears is that the bedding, toothbrush, and phone charger are in three different boxes in three different rooms.

— PROTOCOL 01

The fourteen days *before the truck arrives.*

Two weeks is the right window. Less and you're rushing; more and you're packing too early to live well in the meantime. Day Fourteen is when the audit starts and Day One is when the bed gets disassembled. Everything in between is choreography.

DAY	ACTION	WHY THIS DAY
Day -14	Visit the new place with a tape measure. Photograph all four walls of every room.	You'll forget which wall has the window. Photos are the floor plan you can search later.
Day -13	Sketch the floor plan on the worksheet (page 34). Measure each piece of current furniture against it.	Catches the sofa-won't-fit problem when there's still time to act.
Day -12	Set up utilities: power, internet, water if separate, gas if applicable.	"We'll do it the day of" never works. Saturday move-in plus Monday power activation = a weekend with no Wi-Fi.
Day -10	Begin the donate pile. Anything that won't fit the new floor plan goes now.	Easier to give away in your old home than to pay to move and store.
Day -7	Order replacement bulbs, batteries, lightbulbs in 2700K. Order any tools you don't own.	Day-of hardware-store runs eat three hours.
Day -5	Pack non-essentials by zone (not by room): "books," "kitchen daily," "kitchen rarely," "winter clothes."	Zone-packing makes unpacking instant in week one.
Day -3	Pack the First-Night Box. Label it clearly. Put it in the car last; in the new place first.	One labeled box prevents nine room-by-room searches.
Day -1	Disassemble the bed. Tape the screws to the headboard. Eat takeout in your old place.	Bed is the last thing packed and the first thing unpacked. Hardware loss is the single biggest move-in delay.

THE FLOOR-PLAN-FIRST RULE

Before you book the movers, the sketch of the new room with your furniture drawn to scale should already exist. If you can't fit your current sofa in the new living room *on paper*, you can't fit it in *real life*. Better to know two weeks out than the moment the movers are blocking your hallway.

— PROTOCOL 02

Measure twice. *Deliver once.*

The sofa wedged in a stairwell is the most photographed moving-day failure on the internet. It's also the most preventable. Five measurements take ten minutes. They prevent the single most expensive mistake of any move — paying to deliver a piece of furniture that can't be brought inside.

The five measurements that decide the move

- Doorway width and height.** Both — height matters as much as width. Measure the actual opening, not the frame.
- Stairwell turn radius.** The narrowest point on the path from truck to apartment. Walk the route with a tape measure.
- Elevator interior dimensions.** Including diagonal. A 90" sofa fits a 6'×4' elevator diagonally, not flat.
- Hallway width at every turn.** The narrowest section is the limit, not the average.
- Furniture longest dimension.** Measure each piece you're moving with the legs/feet attached. Add 2" of clearance.

THE STUCK-SOFA MATH

A typical 84" sofa with 36" depth needs a doorway of **at least 32" wide** when carried at an angle. A 90" sectional needs **36" minimum** or it has to come apart. *If your new doorway is 30" — that's the breaking point.* Measure before you load the truck.

What to do when something won't fit

PROBLEM	BEST FIX
Sofa won't clear doorway	Most sofas have removable legs (4 bolts, ten minutes). Try this before disassembling more.
Bed frame too wide for stairs	Most frames disassemble; only the box spring is one piece. Switch to a split box spring.
Refrigerator can't enter kitchen	Pull the doors off. Standard fridges lose 4–6" with doors removed.
Bookshelf taller than ceiling at turn	Tilt and turn, but only with two people. Plan the angle before lifting.
Nothing fits the elevator	Some buildings have a freight elevator. <i>Ask before move-in day — most won't tell you proactively.</i>

— PROTOCOL 03

One box, eighteen hours. *Pack it like a hotel room.*

The First-Night Box is a single labeled box (or duffel) that contains everything you need from arrival to noon the next day, with no other unpacking required. It rides with you in the car, not in the truck. It's the first thing in the apartment and the last thing to be unpacked. *Treat it like the carry-on of moving.*

The 21 items in the First-Night Box

- Bedding.** Fitted sheet, flat sheet, two pillowcases, one pillow each, one duvet or comforter — already in a clear bag.
- Pajamas.** One set per person, on top.
- Tomorrow's clothes.** A full outfit per person. Already packed.
- Toothbrush + toothpaste.** Plus floss. Plus deodorant.
- Soap, shampoo, conditioner.** Travel sizes if you have them. Don't search the bathroom box.
- Two towels each.** One bath, one hand.
- Toilet paper.** The single most-forgotten item.
- Phone chargers.** Cable + brick for every device.
- A small lamp + spare bulb.** Most rentals have one ceiling light per room. The lamp is the difference between a hotel and a depot.
- Power strip.** Outlets are never where you need them on night one.
- Tape measure.** You'll re-measure something on night one. Guaranteed.
- Pen, marker, painter's tape.** To label outlets, switches, mystery cables.
- One pot + one pan + one set of utensils.** Enough to cook one dinner before the kitchen is unpacked.
- Coffee + filter + mug.** Day one starts faster.
- Water bottles.** Two-day supply.
- Snacks for 24 hours.** Easier than ordering delivery to an address you don't have memorized yet.
- Trash bags.** Box-flattening generates trash immediately.
- Paper towels + one cleaning spray.** Wipe down surfaces before anything touches them.
- Box cutter.** The single tool that does the most work on day one.
- Phone-and-laptop chargers in one pouch.** Not loose. Not in the bedding bag.
- The lease, IDs, and keys.** The folder version. Not the photos on your phone.

— PROTOCOL 04

Sketch the room *before you sign the lease.*

A floor plan made before move-in day prevents three of the four most common mistakes — wrong-sized furniture, blocked walkways, and the dead corner. Twenty minutes with the worksheet on page 34, a tape measure, and a pencil. The single most productive act of any move.

What the floor plan does

- 01 Confirms the sofa fits — or names the piece of furniture that doesn't, while there's still time to act.
- 02 Forces a decision about *orientation* — does the sofa face the window, the TV, or the entry?
- 03 Identifies the dead corner that will swallow boxes if you don't claim it on day one.
- 04 Maps door swings, outlets, radiators. *All the constraints the listing photos hid.*
- 05 Becomes the moving-day diagram — every box gets labeled to a zone on the plan.

THREE FLOOR PLAN RULES

One. Sketch each piece of furniture to scale (1 square = 1 sqft on the worksheet). **Two.** Draw door swings as arcs — they own that space when open. **Three.** Leave at least one 30" walking path through every room. *If the plan doesn't include the path, the room won't either.*

Where to put which piece

PIECE	RULE OF THUMB
Sofa	Longest unobstructed wall, facing the room's best feature (window, view, TV).
Bed	Wall opposite the entry, with at least 24" clearance on both sides.
Dining table	Centered on the room's best light source if possible. 36" clearance behind every chair.
Desk	Perpendicular to a window (not facing or backing it). Avoid screen glare.
Bookshelf	On a wall that doesn't get direct sun (fades book spines and paper).

II Move-In Day

THE CHOREOGRAPHY

A move-in day with a choreography ends at 8 p.m. with takeout in the new kitchen. A move-in day without one ends at midnight with the bed unassembled, the lamp in storage, and the cable mess that lives for the next twelve months.

The day has a shape. Walk-through and clean. Bed and lighting first. Furniture to its zones, never to its final spot. Boxes labeled, stacked by zone, not opened. By 6 p.m., the apartment is livable. By 10 p.m., the bed is made. Tomorrow is for everything else.

THE SINGLE MOST-IMPORTANT RULE

Set up the bed before you do anything else. Whatever happens for the rest of the day, you will be horizontal at the end of it. A made bed at 11 p.m. is the difference between a victory and a casualty.

What this section covers

- Page 10:** The hour-by-hour move-in day plan.
- Page 11:** The six things that have to work that night.
- Page 12:** Where every box goes — zone, not room.
- Page 13:** What to deliberately NOT unpack on day one.
- Page 14:** The Sleep Test — the layout you'll actually live with.
- Page 15:** The night-one essentials, in order.

— THE PLAN

The hour-by-hour *move-in day plan.*

Times are anchored to an 8 a.m. truck arrival. Slide every hour forward or back if your move starts at a different time. The order is the part that doesn't change.

TIME	WHAT'S HAPPENING	WHY NOW
7:00 a.m.	Arrive at the new place 30 minutes before the truck. Walk through alone.	Verify cleanliness, take landlord photos, find the breaker box.
7:30	Wipe down kitchen surfaces, bathroom, bedroom floor.	You only get one shot at a clean floor before the boxes land.
8:00	Movers arrive. Bed and mattress are unloaded <i>first</i> .	Bed is priority one. Assemble before the rest of the furniture lands.
9:30	Furniture into rooms by floor plan. Movers leave by 11.	Big pieces only. Boxes stack on the perimeter of each room.
11:00	Lighting: replace bulbs to 2700K. Install lamps from the First-Night Box.	Light defines the room. The single most productive 30 minutes.
12:00	Lunch outside the apartment. Walk the neighborhood. Find the closest grocery + pharmacy.	Eat the food you didn't pack. Map the block.
1:00	Unpack the First-Night Box only. Set up the bathroom completely.	One room fully working anchors the day.
2:00	Unpack the daily-kitchen box. Coffee, plates, pan, utensils. Leave the rest.	Enough kitchen to feed yourself tonight.
3:30	Move heavy boxes to their final rooms. Do not open them.	Get the floor clear; commit to nothing else yet.
5:00	Make the bed completely. Linens on, pillows in cases.	The first room that feels "done." Anchor for the rest of the move.
6:00	Dinner from the neighborhood (takeout or grocery).	Cooking on day one fails. Don't try.
8:00	One soft hour: shower, sit, light the apartment with the lamps you brought.	The first "home" hour. Don't unpack through it.
10:00	Bed. Tomorrow handles everything else.	Sleep is the foundation of every following week.

— DAY ONE PRIORITIES

Six things that *have* to work tonight.

On move-in day, success is measured by what works at 10 p.m., not by what's unpacked. Six systems decide the night. Everything else can wait until morning.

-
- 01 The bed.** Assembled, sheeted, made. The bed is the difference between a hotel and a campsite.
-
- 02 The bathroom.** Toilet paper, towels, soap, a working light. *One room fully working anchors the apartment.*
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- 03 Hot water + heat or AC.** Test both within the first hour. Most landlords fix issues only on weekdays.
-
- 04 Wi-Fi.** The router needs to be plugged in and working. *Schedule activation ten days out — not for move-in day.*
-
- 05 Phone chargers in two rooms.** Bedroom and entry. You'll need them where you'll need them.
-
- 06 One light per zone.** Bed, bath, kitchen, "rest." Even if it's a single lamp on the floor — *each zone needs a source of light by night.*
-

IF ANYTHING ON THIS LIST IS BROKEN

Call the landlord *immediately*. Not Monday. The longer a problem sits without a logged complaint, the harder it gets to dispute later. Photograph the issue, send the text on day one, follow up with email within 24 hours.

— UNPACKING STRATEGY

Pack the boxes by zone. *Not by room.*

"Kitchen" is the wrong label. Half the kitchen is daily; the other half is once-a-year. Zoning the boxes — by frequency of use, not by room of origin — turns unpacking from a marathon into a sprint with a known finish line.

The four zones

ZONE LABEL	CONTAINS	OPENED BY
Z1 · Daily	Daily kitchen, daily bath, work clothes, current-reading books, immediate-use linens.	Day 1
Z2 · Weekly	Cooking gear used weekly, second outfit set, pantry staples, the rest of the bath.	Day 3–5
Z3 · Monthly	Serving pieces, off-season clothes, decor objects, books not currently in rotation.	Day 10–14
Z4 · Storage	Holiday décor, archive boxes, things you "might" use someday.	Day 30 — or not at all

Label every box **Z1 / Z2 / Z3 / Z4** on three sides plus the top. Stack them in their destination room in *reverse* order — Z4 on the bottom, Z1 on top — so the boxes you need today are the easiest to access. *Movers will follow labels. They won't follow vibes.*

THE Z4 TEST

A Z4 box that's still sealed thirty days after move-in is a box you don't need. **Open it once** to confirm — then send it to donation without unpacking the contents. The system is its own filter.

— DAY ONE RESTRAINT

Don't unpack the room *you don't live in yet.*

Move-in day is a marathon, and most people sprint through the first ten miles. The boxes most worth leaving sealed on day one are the boxes most worth opening on day eight — once you know the room. Every premature decision becomes a permanent one.

Leave these sealed on day one

- 01 **Art and framed photos.** You don't know yet which walls are right. Walls have an opinion that you only hear after a week of living in the room.
- 02 **Decorative objects.** Vases, ceramics, candles. They get arranged in week two — *once you know where surfaces actually are.*
- 03 **Books that aren't being read this week.** Books are placed; not piled. Wait for the shelf, then place.
- 04 **Off-season clothing.** Closet space is precious in week one. Off-season clothes can sit in a closed bin until week three.
- 05 **"Just in case" anything.** The candle you might use, the gadget you might need, the extra throw. *The Z4 box is for them.*
- 06 **Mail and paperwork.** Set up a single inbox at the entry. Sort weekly. *Do not unpack the old paper pile into the new home.*

THE WAIT-A-WEEK RULE

Any decision that involves a hole in the wall, a piece of furniture in its final spot, or a "this is where it lives" commitment — **wait a week.** The seven-day rule is the cheapest insurance against a year of regret.

— LAYOUT DIAGNOSTIC

The first night tells you *where the bed should go.*

Put the bed where the floor plan says it goes — and then sleep there one night before you commit. The bed's "right" wall is rarely the wall the floor plan suggests. It's the wall that produces the best version of waking up and the calmest version of falling asleep.

The five signals to read on night one

- 01 **Where the morning light hits.** A bed in direct east-facing sun wakes you at 6 a.m. whether you want to be woken or not.
- 02 **Where the streetlight bleeds in.** Some windows turn a bed wall into a billboard at midnight.
- 03 **What you hear.** Door-facing bed = every hallway sound is a wake-up. Bed perpendicular to door = quieter.
- 04 **The radiator schedule.** Radiators hiss; HVAC vents click. *The bed should be the farthest piece of furniture from the loudest one.*
- 05 **The temperature gradient.** Beds against an exterior wall are colder. Beds under a vent get blown on all night.

IF NIGHT ONE WAS WRONG

Move the bed on day two. **The bed has to move while it's still easy.** Day fourteen is too late — the rest of the room has organized itself around the bed's original position. *The sooner the move, the cheaper the move.*

The bed is the only piece of furniture worth re-testing in the first week. Everything else can wait until you've slept through a full cycle of mornings, evenings, and a Saturday afternoon in the room.

— 10 P.M. INVENTORY

The first night, *in order.*

By 10 p.m. on move-in day, the apartment should pass a five-system test. If any of these are missing, fix them before bed — they get harder, not easier, in the morning.

The 5-system night-one inventory

- 01 **Lit.** Every zone has at least one light source. A lamp on the floor counts. *A dark room reads as an empty one.*
 - 02 **Wired.** Phone charging in the bedroom. Wi-Fi password saved. Power strip in at least two rooms.
 - 03 **Locked.** All entry locks tested. Window locks checked. Spare key tucked in a known place (not under a mat).
 - 04 **Sealed.** All foodstuffs in a closed container or fridge. Boxes far enough from any vent or radiator. *Pest control starts on night one.*
 - 05 **Bedded.** Sheets on. Pillow cases on. One light by the bed. The book or kindle. The phone charger.
-

TOMORROW MORNING'S ANCHOR

Before you sleep, leave one mug, one spoon, the coffee, and the kettle/coffee maker out on the counter. The single greatest gift you can give your day-two self is **a working coffee setup, ready before you wake up.**

If you've checked all five, the apartment has passed its first night. Everything that comes next — Week One discovery, weeks two and three of testing, week four's lock-in — runs on the platform you just built.

III Week One

THE DISCOVERY

The first week is for learning the room — not designing it. Most regret moves trace back to a decision made on day three. Resist the urge. The room you imagined is not the room you have, and the room you have is teaching you things you can't learn any other way than by living in it.

Week One has one job: collect data. Sit in every chair. Walk the rooms at different hours. Note where the light lands. Note what breaks. Note what's missing. The list of buys and changes you'll make in Week Two is being written by the room itself in Week One — *you just have to listen.*

"Buy nothing in week one. The list of what to buy in week two is being written by the room itself."

What this section covers

- Page 17:** Sit in every chair before you commit to layouts.
- Page 18:** The Light Walk — hour-by-hour shadow map.
- Page 19:** What breaks first, and how to triage.
- Page 20:** The Box Quarantine.
- Page 21:** What *not* to buy yet.
- Page 22:** The Week One inventory + gaps list.

— DIAGNOSTIC 01

Sit in *every* chair. Test every angle.

A sofa placed parallel to the wall and a sofa placed at a slight angle look identical on the floor plan. They feel completely different to sit in. The only way to know is to live in both — for an evening each, with a book and a drink, at the time you'd actually use the room.

The Week One sitting protocol

- 01 **Sit in every chair in the apartment** for at least 10 minutes. *What does your eye land on?*
- 02 **Try the sofa in two orientations** (parallel to wall vs. floating 6" off) before committing.
- 03 **Eat a full meal at the dining table.** Test the chair, the lighting, the sightline to whatever's playing in the background.
- 04 **Work for one full day from each potential desk position.** Glare, foot space, distance to outlets — only revealed by use.
- 05 **Lay in bed at the times you'd actually lay in bed.** Morning. After work. At midnight. *Each tells a different story.*

THE SIGHTLINE INVENTORY

From every seat, write down the first three things your eye lands on. If any of them are a tangle of cables, a stack of mail, or a refrigerator side panel — *that's the seat that needs a redesign first.* The seats with calm sightlines are the seats that win the lease.

By end of Week One, you'll know which chair is the best chair. Which is rarely the chair you bought it to be — and is almost always a piece of furniture that surprised you.

— DIAGNOSTIC 02

Hour by hour. *Map the light.*

Light is the only feature of a room that changes hourly — and the one most likely to embarrass a furniture layout that ignored it. The Light Walk takes one Saturday: a phone, a notebook, and a check-in every two hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The 12-hour light walk

HOURLY	NOTE	WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR
8 a.m.	Where direct sun lands	The wall that will fade fabric, art, and books
10 a.m.	Brightest room in the apartment	The reading chair belongs here, eventually
12 p.m.	Glare on screens (TV, monitor)	Re-orient the desk if you haven't already
2 p.m.	Hottest spot in the apartment	Don't put houseplants here unless they want full sun
4 p.m.	The "golden hour" wall	The wall that earns the best piece of art
6 p.m.	Where ambient natural light fails first	Lamp goes here, on a timer
8 p.m.	Walk the rooms with all lamps off, then on	Test the artificial lighting circuit — the three layers, ambient/task/accent

THE 2700K MOVE

Before the Light Walk, replace every bulb in the apartment with 2700K dimmable. *Mixed-temperature bulbs make the diagnostic impossible* — half the room reads cold, half reads warm, and you can't tell what's the room versus what's the bulb. Match all bulbs first; then walk.

— DIAGNOSTIC 03

The first week is *a triage room*.

Every apartment has things that work. Every apartment has things that don't. Week One is when both lists get written. Most renters either ignore the broken things (and pay for them at move-out) or panic about them (and waste a Saturday). The fix is a triage — and a single email to the landlord with everything in it.

The Week One triage list

ISSUE	TRIAGE	ACTION
Outlet doesn't work	Test other outlets on same wall (likely shared circuit)	Email landlord; document in writing
Door doesn't latch	Check strike plate; minor adjustment usually fixes it	Try yourself first; landlord if needed
Sink drains slowly	Hair clog 90% of the time. Drain snake \$4.	DIY first; landlord if it's bigger
Window won't open	Often paint-stuck from prior tenant	Utility knife along seam; report if structural
Smoke detector chirps	Battery (10 min) or full replacement (landlord)	Replace battery yourself; report dead unit
HVAC noisy or weak	Filter may be missing or 2 years old	Change filter (\$8); report if no help
Mold or pest signs	Don't try to fix; document with photos	Email landlord same day. Photograph everything.
Lock feels loose	Safety issue. Don't wait.	Demand fix in writing; cite lease habitability clause if needed.

THE SINGLE EMAIL

Send *one* consolidated email to the landlord at the end of Week One. Bulleted list, photos for each issue, "please confirm receipt and the planned timeline." A single email is harder to ignore than seven separate texts — and is the document that becomes your evidence if disputes arise at move-out.

— DIAGNOSTIC 04

The boxes are a *fitness test*.

By day seven, the Z1 boxes are unpacked. Z2 is half-open. Z3 and Z4 sit in a corner. The Box Quarantine is the rule that turns those leftover boxes into a productive editing exercise instead of a guilt monument.

The Quarantine Protocol

- 01 Any box not opened by **day seven** moves to a designated quarantine corner. *Not unpacked. Not opened. Just relocated.*
- 02 At **day fourteen**, open each quarantined box. For every item, ask: "would I buy this today?"
- 03 If the answer is no, the item goes to a donation pile — *without leaving the box.*
- 04 At **day thirty**, every donation box leaves the apartment. Drop-off, pickup, or sale.

THE HONEST MATH

The average mover discards 12–18% of what they moved within the first three months — *but* only after they've paid to move it, paid to store it, and lost the closet space for it. The Quarantine accelerates that math from three months to thirty days. **Less space wasted, less guilt held.**

What goes in the quarantine

LIKELY CONTENTS	LIKELY FATE
Kitchen gadgets used twice a year	Donate — friend's home is the right place for these
Books read once, won't read again	Donate to library or Little Free Library
Clothes "for someday"	If unworn in last 12 months, donate
Sentimental but never displayed	One box, labeled, in storage — not in active rooms
Duplicate household items	Keep the better one; donate the rest

— RESTRAINT PROTOCOL

Week One is for *not buying*.

The single most expensive temptation in any new apartment is the urgent purchase. The chair that "would look perfect there." The rug that "ties the room together." The bookshelf that's on sale this week. *None of these decisions are urgent.* Most of them are wrong.

The Week One blacklist

- 01 **Any large piece of furniture.** Sofas, beds, dining tables, bookshelves. *The room hasn't finished telling you what size it needs.*

 - 02 **Area rugs.** A rug locks in the seating zone before you know if the seating zone is right. Wait until week three.

 - 03 **Window treatments at retail prices.** Cheap curtains as a bridge are fine. *Custom or expensive curtains wait until week four.*

 - 04 **Decorative pillows, throws, "vibe" items.** The room sets its own palette in the first two weeks. Buy after, not before.

 - 05 **Anything you bought because of a promo email.** The urgency is the marketing, not the apartment.
-

What you *can* buy in Week One

- 2700K dimmable bulbs.** Replace every bulb. The cheapest, fastest, most transformative buy.

 - Surge protectors and power strips.** Cable management starts now, not later.

 - A shower curtain + rod if the rental didn't include them.** Bath functions on day one.

 - Basic kitchen supplies you don't own.** Trash bags, sponge, cleaner, soap, paper towels.

 - The single most-broken thing in your old place that you'd buy again.** Replace what you knew was missing.
-

— SYNTHESIS

By day seven, *the room has a list for you.*

If Week One has been spent listening — sitting in chairs, walking the light, triaging issues, quarantining boxes — by Sunday night, a quiet list will have emerged. The room has told you what it needs. The job in Week Two is to act on the list, in order.

The five questions to answer at end of Week One

- 01 **Where does your eye keep landing that you don't want it to?** *That's the first thing to fix.*
- 02 **Which seat do you keep choosing?** That seat earns priority — the lighting, the table beside it, the art it faces.
- 03 **Which room is the darkest after sunset?** The lamp upgrade goes there.
- 04 **Which surface keeps collecting clutter?** Either give it a job, or remove it. *Clutter on a surface is a signal that the surface has no role.*
- 05 **What did you walk past three times today meaning to fix?** *That's the first task on Saturday.*

THE SINGLE NOTE

Before bed on day seven, write one sentence per question above. Five sentences total. **The Week Two and Week Three plan is now written** — and it was written by the room, not by an Instagram feed.

IV Weeks Two + Three

THE REAL SETUP

Two weeks of listening, then two weeks of acting. This is when the room becomes the room — not the room you imagined, but the better one the room itself proposed.

5

FIRST BUYS

Small, high-impact,
deployable in a weekend

×3

LIGHT LAYERS

Ambient · task · accent —
installed now

1

CABLE PASS

One full evening; do it
once, do it right

+30

DAYS TO GUESTS

Design backward from the
first dinner

Weeks Two and Three are the highest-leverage window of the lease. The floor plan is set. The room has shown you its constraints. The boxes are mostly unpacked. *Now you can spend money usefully.*

— HIGH-IMPACT SPENDING

The first five buys. *None of them is the sofa.*

Most movers blow the budget in Week One on the sofa. The sofa is the most expensive, lowest-impact decision in a new apartment — because you already have one, and the second one rarely arrives within a month anyway. The first five buys are smaller, faster, and change the room more.

- 01 **2700K dimmable bulbs, in bulk.** Twenty bulbs, \$30. Replace every bulb in the apartment. *The most transformative purchase in any first month.*
- 02 **One floor lamp for the dark room.** Week One named the room without a lamp. Buy it now. \$40–120 well spent.
- 03 **One small table lamp for the bedroom.** Replaces the overhead-only lighting that makes every rental bedroom feel institutional.
- 04 **A real shower curtain + curved rod.** The bathroom upgrade that compounds for the entire lease.
- 05 **A simple entry shelf or hook rack.** Stops the keys-and-mail pile from setting up shop on the kitchen counter.

What's *not* on the list

Sofa. Dining table. Bed. Bookshelf. Coffee table. *All of these can wait until Week Four or beyond.*

They're large, they commit you to a layout, and the layout isn't fully tested yet. The five purchases above are reversible, portable, and immediately useful. **That's what the first month is for.**

TOTAL BUDGET · UNDER \$300

The five buys above clock in at roughly \$250–300 combined. Compare that to the average mover's first-month spend (around \$800), almost all of which is regretted within 90 days. *Slower is cheaper.*

— WALL COMMITMENT

Hang the art *only after the room is lit.*

Art on an unlit wall reads as decoration in a dark room. Art on a well-lit wall reads as a statement in a designed room. The light comes first. Then the art finds the wall — not the other way around.

The Week 2–3 art protocol

- 01 **Identify the room's vista wall.** The wall opposite the entry, or the wall in the longest sightline. *This is where the best piece goes.*
- 02 **Test placement with painter's tape first.** Paper or cardboard cutout, taped to the wall, lived with for two days. Hang only after the cutout passes the test.
- 03 **Hang at 57" to center.** Every gallery in the world centers art at average eye level. Not 65". Not "where it feels right." *57 inches, every time.*
- 04 **Use Command strips or Velcro for renters.** No drilling on day one. The painter's-tape test passes; then the reversible install goes up.
- 05 **One large piece beats five small ones.** Resist the gallery wall in week two. Start with a single statement; layer later if it wants more.

WHEN TO DRILL

If you rent: never in Week Two. Drilling commits the wall. Wait at least to Week Four — by which point you'll know the wall's role. *If you own:* wait until Week Four anyway. The wrong hole in the wrong wall is a year of regret.

The art that survives the move is the art that earns its wall. Week Two is the audition. Week Four is the contract.

— INFRASTRUCTURE

Do the cables once. *Do them right.*

The cable mess behind the TV that lives for the entire lease is almost always the same cable mess that was set up on day one. The fix is a single evening of intentional setup, with the right small tools, before any furniture is permanently placed. *One night now saves four years of looking at it.*

The cable management kit

- Velcro cable ties** — reusable, gentle, won't damage cables. A bag of 100, under \$10.
- Adhesive cable clips** — for running a cable cleanly along a baseboard or wall.
- Cable raceway / channel** — for groups of cables in visible runs. Paintable; renter-friendly.
- A power strip with surge protection** — at every furniture zone with electronics.
- One white braided extension cord** — long enough to reach the next outlet without going visible.
- Cable labels** — masking-tape flags, written in pen. Every cable identified.

The single-evening protocol

STEP	WHAT YOU'RE DOING
1 · Survey	Walk to every cable zone. Note all cables, both ends.
2 · Label	Tape-flag every cable at both ends. <i>You'll forget which is which by next Sunday.</i>
3 · Group	Bundle cables that travel together with Velcro ties. Loose enough to remove one without redoing all.
4 · Route	Cables along baseboards or behind furniture, fixed with adhesive clips every 12".
5 · Conceal	Cable raceway over any segment that crosses the open floor or wall.
6 · Test	Run every device. Confirm no cable is under tension or being pulled by furniture.

— THE DEADLINE TRICK

Set a date. *Design backward.*

The single most effective Week Two move is to invite four friends over for dinner on day 25. *Just put it on the calendar.* Suddenly, the home has a deadline. Suddenly, the boxes get unpacked. Suddenly, the bathroom gets cleaned. Suddenly, you discover what the room actually needs, because you're about to ask other people to use it.

The dinner-party-deadline cascade

- 01 The bathroom must be guest-ready. *Buys a bath mat, a hand soap, a real towel set.*
- 02 The kitchen must produce a meal. *Forces the unpacking of every cooking tool you'll actually need.*
- 03 The dining area must seat four. *Reveals whether you actually have a dining area, or just an aspirational one.*
- 04 The living zone must look intentional. *The last boxes get put away; the room gets curated.*
- 05 The entryway must welcome. *The cheapest, fastest upgrade in any home — the moment a guest walks in.*

THE MAGIC OF AN AUDIENCE

A home with no scheduled visitors stays "in progress" for a year. A home with friends coming on day 25 is finished — at least the public parts — by day 24. *Use the deadline.* Even if the dinner gets canceled at the last minute, the apartment will be better.

The point isn't the dinner party. The point is the audience. The audience makes the room real. And the room becomes — finally — *a home.*

✓ Week Four

THE LOCK-IN

Three weeks of audit, choreography, discovery, and setup land in a final week of consolidation. Week Four is when the temporary decisions become permanent — by design, not by default.

The work of Week Four is simple: **walk the home. Name what works. Name what doesn't. Commit to the working things; replace the broken things.** The lease is now thirty days old. The honeymoon is over. The room is the room — and from here, every change costs more than it would have in week one.

TWO PAGES ONLY

Week Four is short on purpose. Two diagnostics on pages 29 and 30 — the Walk-Around, and the 30-Day Inventory — close the first chapter of the lease. *The rest is maintenance.*

The Week Four commitments

- Furniture in final positions.** The bed, the sofa, the desk, the dining table — locked in for the rest of the lease.
- Permanent storage zones.** Every category of object has a home it returns to.
- The 30-Day Inventory.** What got used; what got ignored; what should leave.
- Donation pickup scheduled.** Quarantined boxes and edited items *physically leave* the apartment.
- The list of remaining purchases.** Now ranked by impact, not urgency.

— FINAL DIAGNOSTIC

Walk the apartment. *Name what's working.*

The Walk-Around takes an hour. Phone, notepad, every room in order. The format is honest: what works gets named (and protected); what doesn't gets named (and assigned a fix); what's missing gets named (and added to a single, prioritized list).

In every room, answer these three questions

- 01 **What's working?** Specifically — the lamp, the angle of the bed, the chair you keep choosing, the way the light hits at 4 p.m. *Name it so you'll know to keep it.*
- 02 **What isn't?** The cable still showing. The dead corner. The piece of furniture that looks oversized. The bulb that's the wrong color. *Each gets one line in the notepad.*
- 03 **What's missing?** The rug the seating zone wants. The art the empty wall wants. The lamp the dark corner wants. *The list is now the Month Two shopping list.*

THE THREE-LIST OUTPUT

By the end of the Walk-Around, you have three short lists: **Protect** (the working decisions), **Fix** (the cheap repairs and reorganizations), and **Add** (the upcoming purchases, ranked). *Pin them inside the lease folder. Re-read at month three.*

The Walk-Around order

Start at the front door. Walk the apartment exactly the way a first-time guest would. **Entry → main living zone → kitchen → bedroom → bathroom → back to the entry.** The order is the order you actually experience the home in. Diagnostics that follow the lived path catch things diagnostics done room-by-room miss.

— EDITING DIAGNOSTIC

Thirty days in. *What did you actually use?*

The most reliable filter for what to keep is what you actually used in the first thirty days. Not what you intended to use. Not what you packed. Not what you bought. *What you touched.*

The four-bucket inventory

USED HOW OFTEN	BUCKET	FATE
Daily	Bucket A — Anchor	Place permanently; protect the spot
Weekly	Bucket B — Active	Keep in an easy-access zone
Monthly	Bucket C — Reserve	Closed storage; bring out when needed
Never touched in 30 days	Bucket D — Exit	Donate, sell, or move out by day 60

Bucket D is the one most people resist. The objects in it are the ones you moved, paid to move, found storage for, and then ignored for a month. **The honest answer is they don't earn the space.** Better to know now than in year two — when they've been quietly compounding into a closet that won't close.

THE HARD-EDIT RULE

Bucket D items move to the entry on day 30. By day 35 they leave the apartment — donation, sale, or curb. *If a Bucket D item makes it past day 60 in the apartment, it's defaulted into permanent residency.* Don't let that happen. Set the date.

By the end of Week Four, the apartment has been audited, set up, tested, locked in, and edited. The first thirty days are over. **The lease can begin.**

VI The Resource Vault

LISTS · TEMPLATES · WORKSHEETS

Every page in this section is built to be printed and kept. Take the Vault to a print shop, three-hole-punch it, and slide it into the folder with your lease. The Manual becomes a system the moment the pages live next to your tape measure.

PRINT SPECIFICATIONS

All Resource Vault pages are designed for US Letter at 100% scale. Print on the heaviest stock your printer allows — 32lb works. The floor plan worksheet (page 34) prints best on grid paper, but reads cleanly on plain stock too.

What's in the Vault

- Page 32 · The Move-In Master Shopping List.** Every item, with quick links.

- Page 33 · The 30-Day Move-In Sprint.** Day-by-day, printable.

- Page 34 · The Floor Plan Worksheet.** Quarter-inch grid for sketching the room.

- Page 35 · The First-Night Box Checklist.** Twenty-one items, printable.

- Page 36 · The Pre-Move Audit Checklist.** The Part 1 diagnostic in one page.

— VAULT 01 · PRINTABLE

The move-in *master shopping list*.

Pre-Move (Days -14 to -1)

- [Moving boxes](#) · variety pack, small/medium/large · 20-40 depending on apartment size
- [Packing tape + dispenser](#) · 6 rolls minimum
- [Bubble wrap + packing paper](#) · for fragile items
- [Chisel-tip markers](#) · label every box on three sides
- [Furniture sliders](#) · save your floors and your back

Move-In Day Essentials

- [Basic tool kit](#) · screwdriver set, hammer, pliers, measuring tape, level
- [Box cutter](#) · the day's most-used tool
- [Surge-protected power strips](#) · two minimum, one for bedroom, one for living
- [Cleaning supplies](#) · cloths, spray, paper towels, trash bags

Week One Upgrades

- [2700K dimmable LED bulbs](#) · multi-pack · replace every bulb in the apartment
- [Floor lamp for the dark room](#) · adjustable, 60"+ tall, 2700K
- [Bedside table lamp](#) · replaces overhead-only lighting in bedroom
- [Curved shower rod](#) · buys back 6" of shower space
- [Hotel-grade shower curtain](#) · white waffle or linen
- [Entry hooks or wall rack](#) · for coats, bags, keys

Cable Management Kit

- [Velcro cable ties](#) · reusable · 100-pack
- [Adhesive cable clips](#) · for baseboard and wall runs
- [Cable raceway / channel](#) · paintable, renter-friendly
- [White braided extension cord](#) · for clean long runs

— VAULT 02 · PRINTABLE

The 30-day *move-in sprint*.

Print this page. Pin it to the inside of a kitchen cabinet. Cross off as you go. By day 30, every box is checked or consciously deferred.

Pre-Move (Days -14 to -1)

- Day -14:** Visit new place with tape measure. Photograph all four walls of every room.
- Day -13:** Sketch the floor plan. Verify every piece of furniture fits.
- Day -12:** Schedule utilities + Wi-Fi for activation 1 day before move-in.
- Day -10:** Begin donate pile. Anything that won't fit the new plan goes now.
- Day -5:** Pack non-essentials by zone (Z1-Z4 labels on three sides + top).
- Day -3:** Pack the First-Night Box. Label clearly.
- Day -1:** Disassemble the bed. Tape screws to the headboard.

Week One — Discovery

- Day 1:** Move-in day choreography. Bed and lighting first. First-Night Box only.
- Day 2-3:** Replace every bulb with 2700K. Run the triage list.
- Day 4-5:** Sit in every chair. Eat one full meal at the table.
- Day 6:** The Light Walk. Map shadows hour by hour.
- Day 7:** Send the consolidated maintenance email. Box Quarantine begins.

Weeks Two + Three — The Setup

- Day 8-10:** Buy the first 5 (bulbs, 2 lamps, shower upgrade, entry hooks).
- Day 11-14:** Open quarantine boxes. Donate Bucket D items.
- Day 15-18:** Test art placement with painter's tape; hang only what passes.
- Day 19-20:** Cable management — single evening, all rooms.
- Day 21:** Send the dinner party invite for day 25.

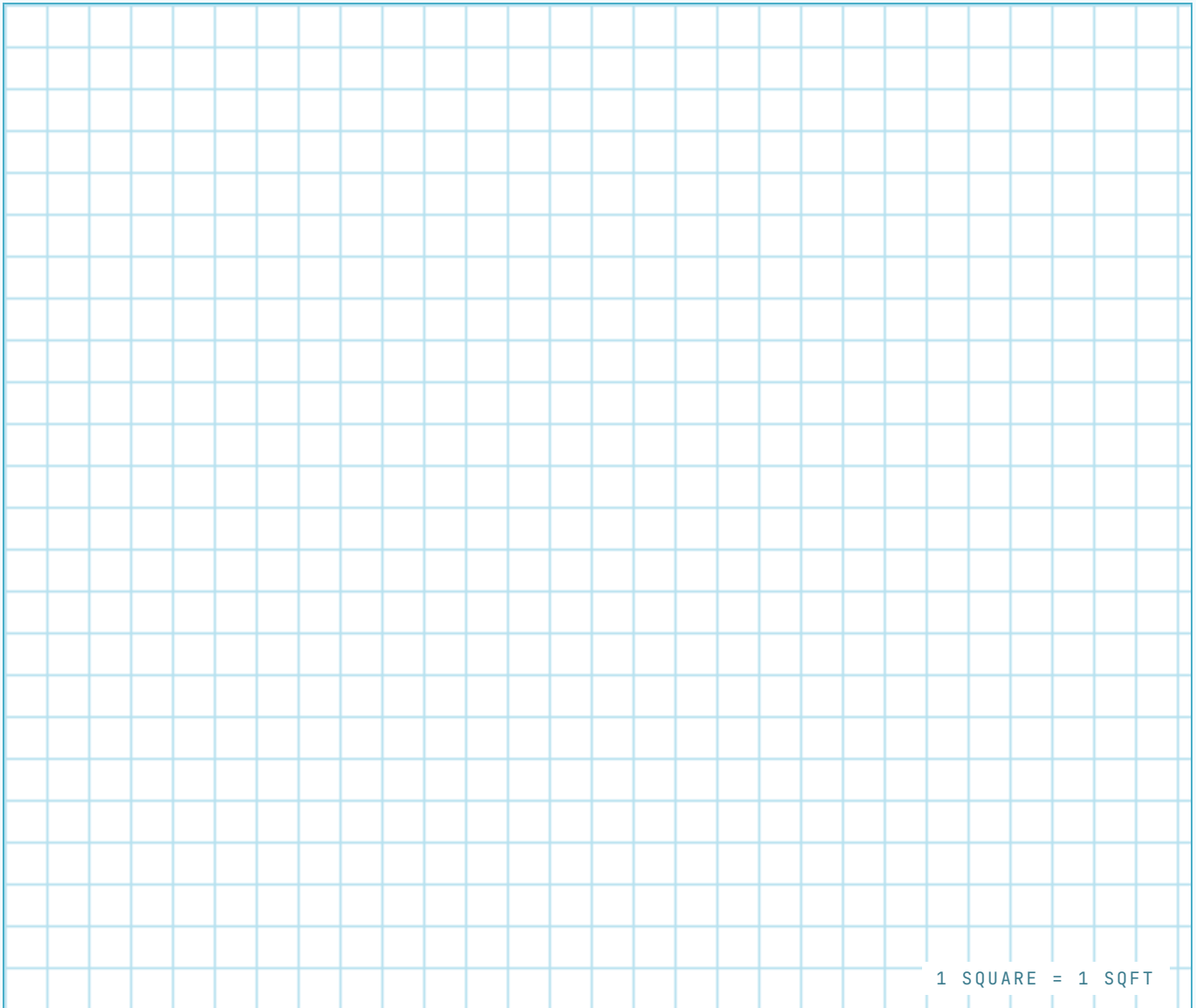
Week Four — Lock-In

- Day 22-24:** Final positions. Furniture committed. Storage zones permanent.
- Day 25:** Dinner party. The home is now a home.
- Day 26-28:** The Walk-Around. Three-list output (Protect / Fix / Add).
- Day 29:** The 30-Day Inventory. Buckets A through D.
- Day 30:** Bucket D leaves the apartment. The lease begins.

— VAULT 03 · PRINTABLE

Floor plan worksheet · *quarter-inch grid.*

Each square = 1 square foot. Sketch your room outline first. Mark every door swing, window, radiator, and outlet. Then draw furniture footprints to scale before the truck arrives.



ROOM DIMENSIONS

Length: _____ ft · Width: _____ ft
Ceiling: _____ ft

FURNITURE TO FIT

Sofa: _____ × _____ in
Bed: _____ × _____ in
Other: _____

PATH CHECK

Narrowest doorway: _____ in
Narrowest hall: _____ in
Stair turn: _____ in

— VAULT 04 · PRINTABLE

First-Night Box · *printable checklist.*

Pack this box last; unpack it first. Twenty-one items, in one box (or duffel), that ride with you in the car — not in the truck. Tape this list to the lid so the contents are visible at a glance.

Sleep

- Fitted sheet · flat sheet · two pillowcases
- One pillow per person
- Duvet or comforter (in a clear bag)
- Pajamas

Bathroom

- Toothbrush · toothpaste · floss · deodorant
- Travel-size soap · shampoo · conditioner
- Two towels per person (one bath, one hand)
- Toilet paper · the single most-forgotten item

Kitchen

- One pot · one pan · one utensil set
- Coffee · filter · mug
- Two days of water · snacks for 24 hours
- Paper towels · cleaning spray · trash bags

Tools + Tech

- Tape measure · pen · permanent marker · painter's tape
- Box cutter
- Phone + laptop chargers (in one pouch, not loose)
- Power strip with surge protection
- One small lamp + spare 2700K bulb

Personal + Documents

- Tomorrow's full outfit per person
- Lease, IDs, move-in paperwork (folder, not phone)
- Keys · spare keys · landlord contact info
- Cash for tips (movers, delivery)

— VAULT 05 · PRINTABLE

Pre-Move Audit · *printable checklist.*

The Part 1 diagnostic in a single printable page. Run on the visit two weeks before move-in. Tape measure, phone, this page.

01 · Measurements

- Wall length corner-to-corner, all rooms · longest dimension noted
- Ceiling height at three points (center, corner, under soffit)
- Window dimensions + sill height for every window
- Every door swing measured + arc marked on floor plan
- Radiator, HVAC, electrical panel clearances
- Every outlet mapped on floor plan

02 · The Path

- Building entry → unit door · narrowest width measured
- Stairwell turn radius measured (if applicable)
- Elevator interior + diagonal measured
- Each interior doorway in the unit measured
- Largest furniture piece compared against narrowest path point

03 · Floor Plan Done

- Room sketched to scale (1 square = 1 sqft on worksheet)
- All current furniture drawn to scale on the plan
- Door-swing arcs drawn
- At least one 30" walking path through every room verified
- Any non-fit furniture identified · sold / donated / replaced before move-in

04 · Pre-Move Logistics

- Utilities scheduled for activation 1 day before move-in
- Wi-Fi router or hotspot ordered + scheduled
- Movers booked + freight elevator reserved (if applicable)
- First-Night Box packed
- All boxes labeled Z1–Z4 on three sides + top

— THE DECORDREAMR LIBRARY

The next moves *beyond this manual.*

The Move-In Manual handles the first thirty days. Three companion products extend the system into the lease itself — the rental constraint, the small-space constraint, and the deeper architecture of how a home shapes daily life.

4-BOOK BUNDLE · \$69 · SAVE \$23

The Renter's Complete Library

This manual + Small Space Codex + Rental Reset + Budget Decor Blueprint. The four-product system covering every constraint of renting — time, size, ownership, and budget. From move-in day to the move-out deposit, and every styling decision in between.

→ DECORDREAMR.COM/PRODUCT/THE-RENTERS-COMPLETE-LIBRARY

3-BOOK BUNDLE · \$49

The Full Rental Stack

Small Space Codex + Rental Reset + Budget Decor Blueprint. For renters past the first month.

FLAGSHIP · LEVEL 02

ÆTHER · An Atlas of Atmospheric Intention

The masterclass — Neural Atmosphere Mapping™ and the science of how a room shapes nervous system, mood, and daily rhythm.

— THE LAST PAGE

Set the room. *Set the routine.* And use the next *eleven months* well.

You now have the system. Two weeks before the truck. A day choreographed hour by hour. A week of listening. Two weeks of doing. One week of locking in. And the printable Vault that turns the whole thing into a one-page checklist anyone could follow.

01

FLOOR PLAN FIRST

Sketch the room two weeks out. Every other decision is downstream.

03

BUY NOTHING IN WEEK ONE

The room writes its own shopping list. Wait seven days; spend better in week two.

02

BED BEFORE BOXES

Move-in day, the bed goes up first. Lighting goes up second. Everything else is the rest of the week.

04

AUDIENCE MAKES A HOME

Schedule a dinner party for day 25. The deadline finishes the apartment.

Complete the system with

**The Renter's Complete Library —
\$69 at the DecorDreamr store.**

DECORDREAMR.COM