

## **Crating — Do It Yourself Primer**

### **Safe Packaging**

Could your packaged work withstand a “gentle” drop kick during handling? If you’re shipping your work across the province or country, all your money and effort will be wasted if it arrives damaged. You must take great care to pack your work properly to withstand the shipping process. Some parcel delivery companies offer tips on their Web sites, as does CanPar at <http://www.canpar.com/shipping> , but here are some tips gained from craftspeople’s experience.

### **The Container**

Use rigid corrugated cartons, and do not exceed the gross weight limit printed on the bottom. Consider double boxing, which is to use two sizes of box, one inside the other, with a two-inch gap between them. Stuff this gap with such packing materials as styrofoam peanuts or scrunched newspaper.

### **Inside the Container**

Wrap your work in shipping foam, bubble wrap or other packing materials. Make sure your work doesn’t touch the inside of the box; leave two inches of room. Pack all the empty space within the box, to make sure that nothing moves. If your piece is oddly shaped, protect it thoroughly in bubble wrap. If you have several small glass objects or containers, separate them with the corrugated dividers used in boxes for liquor shipments. Seal any containers of liquid in plastic bags or containers. Does your work need to be protected from heat or cold? Cargo holds of aircraft get very cold, while enclosed trucks can get toasty in the bright sunshine.

Include a detailed packing slip inside with your work. This is a useful copy of what’s been shipped, if anything on the outside of the parcel becomes illegible, and lets the receiver confirm receipt of what’s been sent.

### **Outside the Container**

Wrap the whole carton with packaging paper and packing tape. Provide clear and complete addresses of sender and receiver. Leave room for shipping and insurance forms to be added, and if you’re shipping across borders, the necessary customs papers. Put “fragile” stickers on each side of the carton, and possibly “This side up” notices.

Realize that if the carton is undamaged, you will not be able to claim insurance even if your work arrives broken. If your carton shows damage, keep it for your insurance claim.

### **Keeping Packaging Costs Down**

Scrunched newspaper is the cheapest, most effective packing material for all but very delicate or uniquely-shaped objects. Carpet underlay provides good padding, if you can find a free or cheap source of scraps. Packing tape and brown wrapping paper can be bought in bulk if you ship a lot. Ask at galleries and stores whether used packaging materials can be saved for you. Bubble wrap and styrofoam peanuts can be reused indefinitely. Bookstores in particular receive a lot of small strong boxes and packing materials. Some people will be happy to give you what they regard as garbage.

As you can tell from all these tips, doing a thorough job of packaging your work takes time. Make sure you leave plenty of time to pack before your scheduled pick up. You don’t want to be rushing while the delivery person waits. Try to factor this packing time into your cost structure, for it really does take longer than you might think.

*Our thanks to Diane Sullivan of Calgary for some of these ideas.*