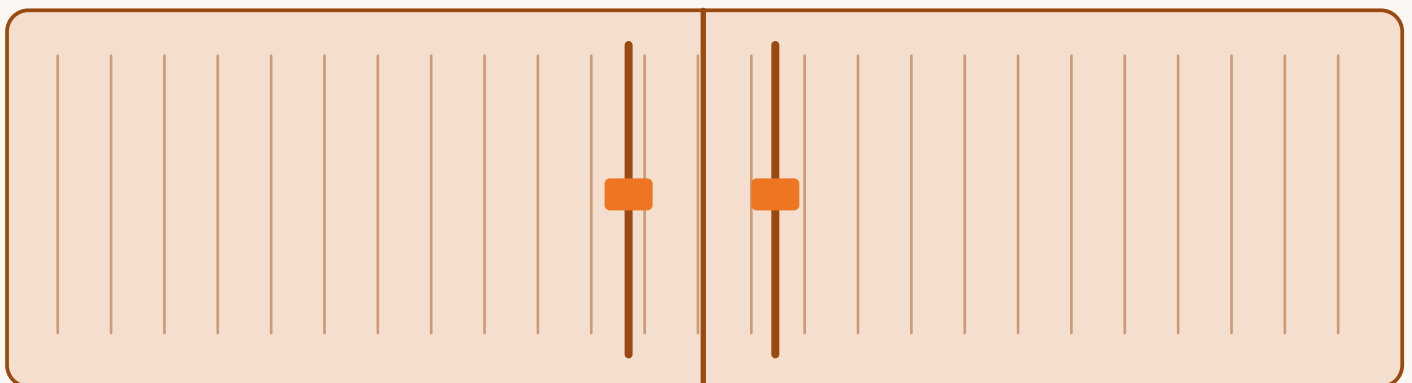


The 7 things you need to know before you use self storage

Everything you need to know about storing your goods securely, quickly and easily so you can make the right decision about self storage.

Secure, convenient self storage

Straightforward service. Practical prices.



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The 7 things at a glance

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INTRODUCTION

Before you choose self storage

Thinking about moving into self storage? Or more likely - don't have a choice but to move some goods into self storage? Well, you're in the right place! Before you go any further, you need to get all the facts in order to make a good decision. The information and insights in this report have been gained from over 20 years of dealing with customers who have stored their goods with us at Sunshine Self Storage.

As a result, we've learned just about everything there is to know about storage. Sometimes we've learned the hard way and had to pick ourselves up and start again. Often, our customers will tell us what they think and we will put it away for future use. A lot of the time we're just doing things over and over again and refining our service and offering as we go.

You see, most people do not actually use self storage more than once or twice. In fact, if you are reading this, there is a very good chance you have NEVER used self storage before! Most of the time when someone uses storage, it's because they are moving house, or going on a long trip - things that don't happen a lot in life! If this is you, this report will give you a lot of the information you need in order to understand the traps and pitfalls.

Once you have read it, you will be better equipped to make an informed choice about self storage - that's a pretty good start! It's taken us quite a while to gather the information to develop this report - in fact, it's taken the years since we commenced in the self storage business.

OUR CUSTOMERS

The people who use self storage

Along the way, we have had all sorts of customers:

- Families who are moving house;
- Young couples renovating their homes;
- Men who have been told by their wives that they need to "get rid of it before I throw it out!";
- Women who have a stay-at-home business and need to store inventory;
- A leading retail chain that didn't have enough room for its stock;
- Builders and other tradespeople who needed a place for their tools;
- Divorcees who have been "kicked out" of home;
- People going overseas for the trip of a lifetime;
- An electrician who needed three containers to hold all his stock;

- A guy who ran international conferences and trade shows;
- Car enthusiasts;
- People with items they didn't have room for but didn't want to throw out;
- A marketing company storing tools and gifts;
- A dentist selling dentures!

And many, many more from all walks of life.

Some of these people have been really good to deal with, some have been difficult to deal with, but all have added to our education about what you really need to know when it comes to self storage.

There are many things we could have put in this report, because the information and stories we could share are extensive. But at the end of the day, we have refined the information down to these critical pieces of information that you need to consider before you find a place to store your goods and move in.

A NOTE FROM NED

Why did I write this report?

It might seem strange for someone from the storage industry to "tell all" and give you the information that is contained here. There were two main reasons for me to do this:

01 I wanted people to understand what they should look out for in storage. In particular, I wanted my customers to read this so they know what to expect - this makes my life easier!

02 Secondly, I want to pass on my knowledge. The storage industry has been a fascinating ride for me and I have learned a lot. If someone else can gain from this - whether they decide to use our storage facility or not - then I've done something useful for someone else. I believe that by helping others you help yourself in one way or another.

I hope you find this information useful and worthwhile. If you have any questions about what I've written here, you can contact me on 0433 136 832 or via email at ned.coten@sunshineselfstorage.com.au.

You don't have to be a customer - you can just call and ask for advice!

So, here are the 7 things you really do need to know before you use self storage.

01 SECURITY

Make sure your goods are safe and secure

The number 1 reason you're storing your goods is because you want to keep them for use at a later date. So it makes a lot of sense to ensure that your goods are stored safely and securely in an environment that you can trust. You should ensure that the storage facility you choose has all of the relevant security features in place. It should have an automated gate system with card or pin code access.

This ensures that only people who have a card or who know the code can enter the facility. Your unit should be an individual unit that you secure with your own padlock. Keep your key and control who you authorise to access your goods. At Sunshine Self Storage, your padlock sits inside an anti-theft lockbox.

Read the storage agreement so you understand access, security and the responsibilities of both parties. Operator access may be permitted in circumstances set out in the agreement or required by law, including emergencies. Ask what notice and procedures apply rather than assuming access is never permitted.

The facility should have a monitored alarm system in place. This means that an alarm can be reported to a monitoring service for a response. At Sunshine Self Storage, security includes your own access card and alarm code, back-to-base alarms, cameras monitored 24/7, high fences and an anti-theft lockbox on each container.

It's always a good idea to look around the facility and see how secure it looks. Check the cameras and access points to ensure that your goods will be safe and sound.

02 ACCESS

Access should be easy and straightforward

Easy, drive-up, ground-level access to your storage unit is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, when you move in it will be important that you are easily able to get to your storage unit and to store your goods quickly and without trouble. Ideally you will be able to drive right up to the door and load items into your unit directly from your car, trailer, truck, or other vehicle.

Every time you have to 'double handle' items, you lose time, money and expend more energy. If you have moved as many times as I have, you will know that saving energy for the things that are really important is critical - you don't want to waste it by double handling at the storage facility! If you have a professional removalist moving your items this will also save them time and therefore it will save you money!

Your storage unit should have large doors and easy access for larger items that you might need to move. This might seem straightforward but many storage facilities have quite difficult access. At Sunshine Self Storage, we use industrial shipping containers for our storage. Not only are they safe, weather-resistant and fitted with rubber door seals, but you can drive up to the door of your container and unload (or load) items directly into it.

The times that you can access the storage facilities are also important. You should be able to access your facility 7 days a week, every day of the year. At Sunshine Self Storage you have access between 5am and 9pm, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. Plan your visits within these access hours. There's nothing worse than remembering that you need to get something from your storage facility and not being able to access it over a weekend or during a holiday period.

Ask the question when you are inquiring about your storage. What are the access hours and how easy is it to get your goods in and out of self storage?

03 COST

Make sure you are paying the right amount

Cost is an important consideration when you're making a choice about self storage. The charges for self storage vary greatly and the most expensive is not always the best! Equally, the cheapest is not always the worst by any measure. What you need to look for is a storage facility that meets your needs. If you think about storage, all that you're doing is putting goods in a safe, secure place so that you can get them at a later point.

You don't need to go and see them every day. You don't even need to think about them. The sole objective of storing your goods is to get them back in the same condition at a later date, end of story. Your storage facility should be well organised and good in appearance - this is always an indication of just how good a facility is. But sometimes storage facilities charge for all the 'bells and whistles' that you just do not need.

Things like having staff on call at all hours of the day when you really don't need it. If you want to go and look at your goods every day and talk to someone or have someone to make you a cup of tea while doing it then a staffed facility may suit you, where there are other people around and you can talk all the time.

But in our experience most customers don't want this and it's a waste of money for them. What they really want is a safe, secure place where they can put their goods so that they can get them back again at a later date in exactly the same condition. When we started our business we used to be on site all the time. What we quickly found was that people didn't come to see us... People didn't want to come and watch their goods - they're getting on with their lives!

So we decided that our facility would not have a person on call at all hours of the day and we would reduce our cost accordingly. As a result, we've been able to make the cost of our storage facility super-competitive and substantially better while still offering nearly exactly the same level of service in a safe, secure and easy-to-access environment. Our customers love the fact that they can drive up to their storage container, have access 365 days a year and don't have to pay for the cost of fancy facilities or staff wandering around at all hours of the day.

03 COST CONTINUED

Pay for the storage you need

We have a variety of storers at Sunshine Self Storage. Some people do visit the site every day to move goods in and out of their container or to get things for home at various times of the day. These people are usually business owners who have to be there to collect goods. Other customers deliver their goods and don't come back for 12 months. My record for not seeing a customer is 6 years!

When I first bought the business, this man was a customer already in storage. He had two shipping containers with a full aeroplane cut up into pieces and stored, along with a range of machinery and car parts. When he finally came to get his items, the place was totally different to when he first moved in. He did not care! The surroundings made NO difference - he just wanted his stuff.

My point is this - don't pay for over-the-top services, fancy offices and all sorts of other things. Just make sure you get secure, well-maintained storage that protects your goods from the elements in a convenient location! Compare current prices for the space, access and terms you need. A more elaborate site may cost more without providing features that matter to you. Check current unit prices on our website before you decide.

Paying for anything over and above this is a waste of your resources, your time and your money. That doesn't mean that you should necessarily take the cheapest option but it certainly doesn't mean that you should pay for things that you don't need. So when you are storing, really think about the cost you're paying and what the benefit is that you're getting. For our current price list, visit sunshineselfstorage.com.au/units-and-prices/.

In relation to cost, you should also consider insurance for your goods. Ask whether your existing home and contents policy covers items in storage, or whether you need separate storage insurance.

Sunshine Self Storage does not insure your goods. Arranging insurance is your responsibility. Ask an insurer about suitable cover, limits, exclusions and any conditions that apply to the items you want to store.

03 INSURANCE

Arrange insurance for your goods

Insurance deserves its own place on your storage checklist. A secure facility and careful packing reduce risk, but they do not replace an insurance policy.

Sunshine Self Storage does not insure your goods. Insurance is up to you. Self Storage Insurance Australia is one option; visit ssia.au or call 1300 477 662 to ask about current products and eligibility.

Before you move in, make an inventory and consider the replacement value of your goods. Keep photographs, serial numbers and purchase records for valuable items. Store a copy of this information somewhere other than your container.

If you already have home and contents insurance, ask your insurer whether it covers goods away from home and in a shipping container. Do not assume that your existing policy extends to storage.

When comparing cover, check the insured events, exclusions, excess, insured value and any limits for particular items. Read the relevant policy documents and ask the insurer to explain anything you are unsure about.

Whether a storage operator sells insurance is not, by itself, proof of how safe the facility is. Assess its security, maintenance and agreement separately, and choose cover that suits your goods and circumstances.

04 INDUSTRY MEMBERSHIP

Choose a member of the SSAA

The peak body for self storage in Australia is the Self Storage Association of Australasia. This industry group does a wonderful job of supporting the self storage industry. The great benefits they offer to storage owners include legal forms for storage, support of insurance and better management of facilities, help with ways to store unusual items and many other things. The association provides standard storage agreements and guidance to help operators explain the terms of storage clearly.

To be a member of the association, a storage facility has to adhere to certain standards and ensure that they have the interest of their customers at heart all of the time. Membership is worth checking directly with the association when choosing a facility. It's also an indication of just how well run a facility is and what the management and governance of the business is like.

The last thing you want is for the business to go broke. If this happens you may not be able to access your goods for some time. You can contact the SSAA through selfstorage.org.au to verify membership. Sunshine Self Storage has been a member of the Self Storage Association of Australasia (SSAA) since 2004. Our membership number is 51399.

05 TESTIMONIALS

Ask for customer testimonials

Despite everything that we say in this report, you don't really know us from a bar of soap! Because you have not dealt with us (or anyone else) before, it can be difficult to make a decision. Therefore, before you move in you should view the testimonials of other customers who have stored at the facility in the past. At Sunshine Self Storage we've had hundreds of happy customers and there are many testimonials available for you to view.

We aim to be honourable, easy to deal with, cost effective, fun, friendly and get the self storage job done for you. One of the best ways to test a storage facility is by seeing these testimonials to see what other people who stored with the business say. If there are no testimonials it may mean that people are not willing to give them and that they haven't had a good experience storing with that facility.

Whoever you store with, please make sure you see, hear or watch the testimonials they have from their happy customers - this is the best proof that you will get what you are expecting!

06 ORGANISATION

Get organised

Before you start your search for self storage, it is important that you are organised and aware of what you need so you can ensure that you get the best deal and find the best location for your storage. One of the most common things that I find when people call me to ask about self storage is that they don't know how much space they need for their goods.

This is frustrating for them and for me particularly because it is actually very easy to determine how much space you need. On our website, the container size guide will help you compare 10ft, 20ft and 40ft options. Make a list of what you plan to store, measure large items and call us if you need help choosing a size. If you require access to your goods, you should also allow some additional room to put a small corridor through your storage area so that you don't have to wade through boxes and furniture and other goods to find the one item that you are looking for.

Once you have or know the amount of space that you need, you should ensure that you have this handy with you when you are making queries about self storage. You should also know how far you are willing to travel to store your goods. It may be that you have a storage that is quite close but a lot more expensive or without drive-up access which actually means that it is more time consuming and more expensive to store your goods there than it would be at another location.

Ideally you will also know the time and the day on which you wish to store your goods. This makes it easier for you to get organised and easier for the storage facility to ensure that you are well catered for. In addition, you should consider if you are going to move your goods yourself or if you are going to engage a removalist to help you.

I always encourage people to consider getting someone to help them with their move unless it is just a small number of items. While it may seem a little more expensive to do this I have observed many times people struggling to move their own goods. In the end it takes so much longer and it's so much more frustrating than if they had just hired someone to help in the first place.

06 PLANNING YOUR MOVE

Plan your move and budget

Ask removalists for a current written quote rather than relying on an old hourly rate. The cost depends on the truck size, crew, distance, access, volume of goods and the time needed for loading and unloading.

Generally, removalists may have a minimum charge time and may include travel time in their charges. Ask what the quote includes, whether there are additional fees, and how waiting time or delays are handled.

In my experience, the time needed to move a house varies considerably. A smaller apartment may take less time than a family home, but stairs, parking, heavy items and travel can make a big difference. Discuss your circumstances with the removalist so you can plan the time and budget before deciding where to store.

If you would like help finding a removalist, please contact us. At Sunshine Self Storage, we do not make additional money from recommending a removalist, but we can help put you in touch.

As with many things in life, being organised will save you time, money and frustration. Use our House Moving Checklist to help you prepare. Confirm the date, access arrangements, packing requirements and contact details before moving day.

07 HELPFUL PEOPLE

Choose people who are easy to deal with

It may seem logical that anyone who has a business would be easy to deal with! They should be able to solve your storage needs quickly, easily and with a smile on their face. Sadly, in our experience this is not always the case. Over the years of running our storage facility we've had numerous examples of people coming to us and saying that they're moving to our facility because they just have so much trouble with someone else.

Things like ensuring easy access when you need it, simplifying the move-in and move-out process, answering your needs, and providing help when you need it are all important. In addition, the storage facility should be able to provide advice if you require it on finding people to help you move, insuring your goods, how to pack your goods, and provide helpful tips on things that you might need to know about storage.

A good way to understand this is to have a good chat with your storage management when you're inquiring about your self storage. Have a look at the website and see if it's professional and well organised and if all of the information you need is available. This will be a good indication of whether the storage facility has its act together. They should be able to provide all of the forms that you need and answer all of your questions thoroughly.

Your facility should be large enough and well organised enough to be flexible in your storage needs. If at some stage you need more storage than you currently have the storage facility should be able to accommodate this quickly and easily. Some facilities are constantly booked out and don't really care if they help you or not. You need to ensure upfront that if you do need more storage at any stage that this will be organised for you without any hassle.

If you're looking for a facility with a secure environment, drive-up access and fun, friendly people, then Sunshine Self Storage can help you. Give us a call today to find out more about your options and booking your storage container.

OUR APPROACH

About Sunshine Self Storage

We offer convenient, secure, drive-up storage in Albion, in Melbourne's west. You have access to your container from 5am to 9pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

We use strong shipping containers with rubber door seals to store your goods. You store it, you lock it and you keep the key. We are an owner-run business with over 20 years of experience, and we pride ourselves on providing clean, dry, secure storage that you can drive up to.

We keep prices low because we know there are people who need storage but don't want to pay a fortune for it. How do we do this and still offer a great service? There are a few reasons:

01 We offer a no-frills, down-to-earth, simple storage facility. We don't hire out trailers or sell boxes or packing materials. We cover the basics for secure, strong, convenient self storage.

02 We have low overheads. We don't sit around all day waiting for the phone to ring. Phone and email support is available from 8am to 5pm, and meetings at the yard are by appointment. Much of the information you need is on our website.

03 We offer 10ft, 20ft and 40ft containers. Our size guide helps you compare the options. Even if you need less space, compare the full price and convenience before deciding.

04 The minimum stay is three months, paid when you sign up, followed by monthly billing. There is no deposit or setup fee. Give 30 days' notice before moving out.

05 If you are looking for glitz and glamour, we may not be for you. Our facility is clean, secure and convenient. You are paying for storage space and practical access.

06 We are not for everyone and we don't try to be. Read about our business, check the current units and prices, and decide if Sunshine Self Storage is right for you.

Thanks for reading this report. Good luck on your storage journey.

Ned Coten Managing Director, Sunshine Self Storage

LET'S FIND YOUR STORAGE SPACE

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Container access: 5am to 9pm, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Phone and email: 8am to 5pm. Meetings at the yard by appointment.

Pick a container and book online. You are not charged until we have checked your booking.