

Make Certain Your Antiques Are Properly Insured

Many Americans own valuable antiques, which are often inadequately insured under a standard homeowners policy. Homeowners policies may contain restrictive limits and coverage for these valuable items, and the valuation may only be provided on an actual cash value basis. Even if the personal property replacement cost endorsement is added to a homeowners policy, the endorsement explicitly lists antiques, fine arts, paintings, and memorabilia as ineligible properties. Coverage is also restricted to a limited number of perils. For example, the homeowners policy does not provide any personal property coverage for breakage or accidental scratching. If you possess extensive and valuable antiques or fine arts, the following tips may prove helpful.



Properly inventory and document your antiques and other collectibles. Videotaping should also be utilized; be sure to videotape the item from every angle.

- Arrange an appointment with your insurance agent to review your antique and fine arts coverage. Bring as much information about your portfolio as possible, including photos and any appraisals.
- Consider utilizing the services of an experienced appraiser who specializes in antiques. Some antique and fine art dealers perform free general value assessments online for lesser-value pieces if acceptable photos and descriptions are provided. For extremely valuable items, most appraisers want to personally inspect the piece, which normally involves a fee. All appraisals should be prepared in accordance with the codes and requirements of the American Society of Appraisers and the American Appraisers Association. High-quality appraisals normally include a description and comment on the antique, an auction value of the item, and a replacement value.
- For valuation assistance on less valuable or more common items, consider visiting eBay and other Internet auction sites to help establish various items' market value. An examination of the item's closing price, not its initial asking price, is more representative of its true value.
- Ask your agent about procuring a personal inland marine policy or endorsement that can be added to your homeowners policy. This policy/endorsement allows you to schedule your items on an agreed valued basis established by the appraisal and gives you much broader coverage than the homeowners policy provides. Note that this special coverage may also have a breakage exclusion, which may be eliminated for an extra premium.
- Take steps to safeguard your collection, with adequate security precautions and appropriate storage.