Simplify Your Life

A Guide to Downsizing

Advice in a Time of Transition

Organizing a Lifetime of Treasures

Lighten Your Load

After living in the same home for 30 years or more, after raising a bustling family and going deep with all the essentials and non-essentials of life, it's small wonder our houses become stuffed with stuff!

Some of it represents the very best life has to offer: *relationships, miracle moments, priceless keepsakes and mementos.*

Then again, much of it if we take a discerning look is clutter: objects that no longer propel us forward but hold us back. Even quality items, when piled, maligned and crammed, lose beauty and function. Now that you've decided (or know you *need* to decide) to move, this monstrous pile must be tackled.

Be encouraged: the rewards of downsizing are many, and not just in a physical sense. You will be amazed at the emotional benefits of living a more simplified life.

This is a Team Sport

Moving is an enormous job that involves big-picture management and attention to detail. No one should attempt it alone

If your budget allows, entrust parts of your residential transition to professionals such as home organizers, expert packers and move managers who can ease your burden and empower you through the process.

Just as welcome on the team are friends and family, those who can keep you on task, pacing the project rightly and giving you the perspective you need to separate the trivial from the vital.

Eyes on the Prize

Through it all keep your eyes on the prize. A smaller home, perhaps one in a senior community like MorningStar, gives you an ease and flexibility long missed. Finally, it's someone else's turn to take on peripheral responsibilities while you breath deep and take up a more relaxed gait.

Declutter Before You Pack

If your move is marked on the calendar, your path to freedom is even more clear. Start the countdown immediately so you can tackle the To-Dos at a sane pace.

But before you even think about packing, take a studied look at your possessions and begin the critical first step of decluttering. This process takes longer than you think. But, take heart. Order will bless you. Always.

Rules to Declutter By

- Sort one room at a time; don't zig-zag through the house
- Start with the most visible items eventually looking in every drawer, cabinet, closet
- Identify the category of each item...

Keep, because of...

- Functional Use
  - Furniture: Select pieces you touch and use every day. Then measure. Will these items fit your new accommodations?
  - Artwork and other wall hangings: what has the most meaning and will fit your new space?
  - Consult MorningStar's "A Few of My Favorite Things," for a list of practical items most residents find of universal use
- Beauty or inspiration (gives pleasure, boosts energy, evokes memories)
- Comfortably fits
- True treasure

As for the rest, let it go and feel the release. The fewer things you retain, the more precious each will be to you, while the things you release can bless the next owner.

If can't identify the essential from frivolous, the necessary from the redundant, you may need a second set of eyes to help you make the cut. This is where an emotionally detached professional or friend can serve.

Collections: Winnow to only the best crafted, most unique; how many of these items do you really need to express your message?

Gifts from Others: Keeping or releasing them has no effect on that relationship. For the real gift from that person is the love, experience, wisdom, friendship you share. Sell the gift for charity. Re-gift it to someone who will love it. Take photo of item or miniaturize it (take a piece and display).

Sell

If you prefer that someone else deal with the items you don't want to keep, consider hiring an estate sale company. It will present your items for sale, give you a small percentage of the profits and help you dispose of the rest. Consignment shops and online resale is another easy option.

Give to Family

Start a Treasure Box for each person.

Storage?

Resist assigning items to this category for stored items can still be a drag on your soul and pocketbook. We use only 20% of what we store.

Trash

Useless, Mate-less, Broken, Worn, Junky, Health Risk...it's gotta go. If you have lots of trash, consider renting a dumpster. You won't have to worry about bagging and can typically rent the dumpster for flexible periods.

Recycle/Donate

Junk removal companies (1-800-GOT-JUNK) accept and coordinate distribution of almost everything—trash, donations, recycling, yard waste, large appliances, furniture and more. You won't feel relief until items are actually out of the home. Once the unwanted are gone, you'll have more space to focus on what you're keeping.

Now the Move Itself...

Create a Moving Binder

Creating a moving binder can help you stay organized, door to door. Here you will keep:

- Checklists
- Moving contracts and receipts
- Donation receipts
- Floor plans
- Design/decor ideas
- Contact information for real estate agents, packers, movers, inspectors, utilities
- Tasks/Calendar: real estate agent meetings, packing deadlines, moving dates, inspector visits, donation pickups, trash removals, utility cancellations and set-ups

Assemble Packing/Moving Supplies

Together with your Moving Binder, build a kit containing:

- Boxes, variety of sizes
- Clear Packing Tape
- Rolls of colored masking tape
- Utility knife/scissors
- Permanent marker
- Ballpoint Pen
- Plastic bags
- Blankets for padding
- Bubble wrap and/or newspaper
- Handcart/Dolly

Packing the Keepers

Once you have completed The Great Sort, and identified The Keepers, you can begin to organize the packing process.

Start as soon as you can. The more you can pack ahead of time, the calmer and more organized the rest of the journey will be.

Use up everything you can before you move

Start packing non-essentials right away, items you *won't* need in the weeks leading up to your move

Pack similar items together. Don't mix! No miscellaneous allowed.

Establish a "Do Not Pack" zone where daily essentials are placed, to be packed last. Cleaning Supplies can go here too.

Labeling Boxes

Number each box and record the number on a master spreadsheet in your Moving Binder. This will keep track of the total number of boxes to be moved and easily identify any that get lost.

List the contents of each box on the spreadsheet and the box itself more generally (short, descriptive labels such as "Baking Supplies" or "Summer Shorts and T-shirts").

Use color-coded labels, dots or masking tape, assigning a color to every boxes according to its designated room/category. Yellow tape to the kitchen, pink tape to the bedroom, etc.

Label the Tops and Sides of boxes so their identity is clear even when boxes are stacked.

Preprinted FRAGILE stickers will save you time in handwriting. Stickers may also be easier for the movers to see. Or put these items is a stack that you will personally move.

High-value items

Add to your spreadsheet an inventory of high-value items. Most moving companies consider anything worth more than $100 high value. Quality jewelry, valuable comic book collections, art collections, sterling flatware and currency are in this category.

Be sure to complete the high-value inventory form provided by your moving company so that if anything happens, you have the best chance of being covered for the full value of your loss.

The Unboxable

Stack and group all picture frames, mirrors, wall decor too large to be packed. Having everything grouped can be helpful when it comes to loading the moving truck. Chances are these things will need to be placed in a particular space for fragile items.

Keep Securely With You

- Important documents (passports, deeds and trusts, birth certificates, Social Security cards)
- Medications
- Mobile phone and charger
- Electronic devices and chargers, such as work laptops
- Cash
- Checkbook
- Credit and ATM cards
- Keys
- Valuable, sentimental and irreplaceable items

You Did It!

Congratulations on setting out on new adventures along clear pathways. You are moving ahead to forge new relationships and memories.

The most elegant space is spartan and select. The most relaxing space is clutter-free. Thanks for your diligent efforts, this can now define your new residence.

"The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places." Psalm 16:6

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SENIOR LIVING