

RIGHTSIZING TIPS

1. Plan Ahead and Start Now.

If you have the luxury of time, think about beginning to declutter before a move is on the near horizon. Six months or a year prior to moving is not too early to start this process, regardless of where you are planning to move, or even if you are still deciding. You'll be surprised at how much you can eliminate before you get into the emotional quandaries of dealing with prized possessions.

2. Determine your goals and timeframe/make calendar.

Try to dedicate blocks of time on a regular basis.

3. Have patience and empathy.

Be patient and allow time at this stage for you to talk about memories, to reminisce about family activities or relatives no longer with you, to acknowledge emotions. This can be a nice opportunity to remember the stories and incidents that are part of your history and that make each family unique.

4. Create an important document folder.

Collect and keep together important papers: deeds, wills, Durable Powers of Attorney, medical records, military records, diplomas and degrees, birth certificates, passports.

5. Get the family involved.

This is the time to designate items to be given to specific people. Let them choose items and make a list. Try not to allow grown children to use the home as a storage unit or museum. They need to claim their keepsakes—old sports trophies, CDs, posters, school projects--and remove them from their parent's house.

6. Avoid tackling the whole house in one go.

Tackle one room or area at a time and start with the simplest room first.

7. Have sorting tools ready to go.

Be ready with aprons, boxes, bins, sharpies, bags, stickers, post-it notes.

8. Keep sorting sessions short.

Try to keep sorting sessions to around two hours.

9. Create a floorplan for the new space.

Measure furniture and exactly how much closet or cabinet space the new place has (assisted living communities will provide this information if you ask). Make decisions on what to take based off the available space.

10. Decide on what “go” means.

It may sound silly, but “this goes” can mean you are getting rid of it or taking it with you. To avoid confusion, decide what “go” means and use it consistently.

11. Avoid the need for a dumpster.

Through use of family, friends, donation sites, recycling and upcycling options, selling options, and junk removal services, the goal is to avoid the need for a dumpster.

12. Banish the “maybe” pile.

Relocation experts call it the OHIO rule: Only handle it once. It’s Keep, Sell, Donate, or Dispose. Use colored tags or stickers to indicate in which category items belong, e.g., blue = keep (goes with you), green=sell (on your own or through service), yellow=donate, other color= family or friend item.

13. Save the photos and paperwork until later.

These are the two exception to the OHIO rule – put all the photos and paperwork aside for now. Piecing through these can bog down your momentum during the day, but can be thoughtfully looked through during evening quiet time. If you are not sure what documents to keep, ask an accountant or tax person what records need to be retained, and then shred the rest.

14. Focus on most-used items (and let the rest go).

Be patient and follow yours or your parent’s use of items — what seems old and useless to you may be a source of great comfort and joy and therefore worth moving. Newer does not equal better.

15. Pack representative bits of favored items (not the whole kit and kaboodle).

Photos, memorabilia, and collections typically take up far more space than the average assisted-living quarters can accommodate. Many services digitize images and papers for you for reasonable prices. Pick key prints to display on the walls; large tabletop displays take up too much precious space.

16. Cull a collection by asking, “Which is your favorite piece?”

Assure that one or two “best” items can have a highlighted location in the new home. Take photos of the rest of a collection and present them in a special book. No, it’s not exactly the same as owning, but it’s a space-saving way for a collector to continue enjoying.

17. If it’s meant to be a gift or legacy, encourage giving it now.

Do not wait for the next holiday, birthday, or other milestone to bestow; Ask, “Why not enjoy the feeling of giving right now?”

18. Think twice before selling items on your own.

Craigslist, eBay, Front Porch Forum, and other self-selling options can be time-consuming when you’re selling individual items and trying to process a houseful of goods. There are services available for easy selling and liquidating.

19. If there are several items of high value, consider an appraisal.

Go through the entire house; the appraiser will only come out once and is more interested in relatively large lots. Check with the auction houses, antique dealers, and consignment shops.

20. Understand how donation and recycling sites work.

The main donation outlets include Goodwill, ReSource, and Habitat for Humanity. There are also several agencies and faith-based donation sites, such as the Salvation Army. Check in with each organization to see what items they take or do not take.



21. Target recipients for specialty items.

It's time-consuming to find willing recipients for everything, but it may be worth the effort for items that you would be relieved to see in a good home. Examples: Schools may welcome musical instruments, old costumes, or tools. Auto repair shops and community maintenance departments may take tools and yard tools.

22. Try the "free books" tactic.

In some communities, setting items on the curb with a sign that says "Free! Help yourself!" will make items miraculously disappear. This works great for books. Posting free items on Front Porch Forum is another option.

23. For a price, you don't have to haul it away yourself.

Services like 1-800-Got-Junk will take everything away, and smaller local junk dealers may haul things away for free if they see items that they'll be able to sell.

For a free consultation with a Senior Move Manager at Lighter Moves, call (802) 595-5550