

The Basics of How to Downsize

Step 1: Create a Plan

- First, assess your needs - example is “I want to clear out my basement”, or “I am moving to a place that is ½ the size of my current home, so need to determine what I can keep and what to let go of” or “I know I will be moving at some point and I want to start downsizing now”
- Do a walkthrough of all your spaces that you intend to downsize to get a sense of the space and contents - you may not have looked in your attic in a while, what’s up there?
- Next, do you know exactly the space you are moving to, or an idea of the type of space? Will you be moving to a home that has a smaller kitchen, less bedrooms, no dining room, no basement or attic? If you have an exact floor plan you can best determine what will fit into your new space, if you don’t know exactly you can estimate for now using either the % of change in square footage or in # of rooms. Make sure to consider the storage areas you may be losing.
- Set a date for completion and work backward from there on how to accomplish it. For downsizing it is helpful to have a year, or at least a few months. The sooner you begin, the lower the chances are of being completely overwhelmed.
- Lastly - give notice to your family members so they can pick up any of their childhood belongings.

Step 2 : Sorting System Setup

- Setting up a sorting system will help you feel organized, focused, and you will be able to see quick results.
- The sorting area is set up for items to **Keep/Pack, Donate, Gift, Sell, and Trash/Recycling**

- The sorting supplies you need are: Boxes (get them at the COOP or other stores, wine boxes make excellent book boxes and are easy to handle), a box of trash bags, a box of zip lock baggies, markers, painters tape, and totes and labels if you'd prefer to store your things in totes.
- Ideally, the sorting area would be an area that you can set up a sorting table and chair, and also has room to put sorting boxes around you SAFELY.
- Again ideally, you could also have a designated area for the larger items that can be labeled with painters tape as to where it's going. Sometimes we use a tarp on the ground to do this, or clean out a corner of the room.
- Sort by Category or by Room?? That is a personal choice of what feels best to you. Sometimes it feels better to take all the clothing, books, kitchenware, or tools where you can see it all together and make clear decisions. Sometimes, it's better for you to see a completed area as you go for motivation, so going room by room might work for you.
- Either way it is best to start small and with non-sentimental items and acclimate yourself to the decluttering process, and work up to harder hitting stuff when you are ready.
- No 'Maybe' bin/pile -this can be really hard for some to hear, if you are not sure, that usually means you truly do not need or want it. And procrastination will only make it more difficult for you. Of course there are exceptions to this, but do your best to stick with this rule.

Step 3 : Dispersement/Move sorted items out

This is the confidence booster, feel-good task. As you go, or as soon as it makes sense, make regular trips to donation centers, Casella, put out free piles, list it for sale or better yet, free on FPF- it does take extra effort now but this will help you see the progress and motivate you to keep going, and it will get easier as you go! Get rid of that super heavy treadmill in the basement now, list it on FPF for

free and rehome it to someone who not only will use it, but will do the labor to get it out of your basement! Alternatively, if you are inclined to hold a yard sale, you may stockpile items in a designated area.

How to decide what to keep?

- Again, look at your new space or have an idea of what will fit in your next home
- Live in the present and consider your lifestyle going forward - are you moving to a place where you no longer have to cook/clean /or do maintenance? Are you moving to warmer weather? Are you still using recreational and hobby equipment such as camping, skiing, gardening, scrap booking? Consider what you will use going forward,
- It may be helpful to make an inventory list of the larger items such as furniture and rugs you wish to take with you, and the sentimental items that you are definitely keeping, such as certain art pieces
- Questions to ask yourself :
 - Have I used this in the last year?
 - Will I use it in the future?
 - Does it still work?
 - Would it fit and look good in the new home?
 - Does it hold sentimental value?
 - Would you want a loved one to have it?

How to get rid of what you don't want?

Donate, Sell, Gift, Trash

- What is **donatable**? Almost everything! If you are not a regular at Resource, Goodwill, Salvation Army (if they are open again), you might be surprised at what they will take and surprised at what they won't take. If in question, try to donate, you never know what they will accept. Many times what they take is dependent on the employee who is helping

you. ExamplesDirty bird feeder, yes, dirty book, no. Lamp with broken wiring, yes, broken/cracked ceramic bowl, no.

- Prepare a list of **resources** for donating. You may have personal favorite places such as your church, non-profit, shelters, schools, etc. Know when they are open and are taking donations - the hours and days can change, so you may want to call ahead if traveling far. They also can fill up on days and stop taking donations anymore that day.
 - Most second hand donation centers have lists of what they accept and cannot accept, so familiarize yourself with them before you head over.

- Consider **gifting** special items to family and friends. Prepare a list of items you would like to gift - if you can part with the item and the person can take it now, consider gifting it now - you will get to fully enjoy them receiving something special - and if appropriate, add a note/the story of why the item is meaningful

- **Selling** will take time and energy and can be frustrating, so consider if the item in question is worth the trouble.
 - If it's not antique, or collectible, but is still really nice and worth over say, \$500, like a set of almost new tires, or dining table, you may try selling the item on FPF. That is the safest bet, but it will still involve communication and coordination for appointments at your home, price negotiations, and taking payments.
 - You can sell an item yourself on Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist as well, but please be aware these platforms attract more scammers. So if you are not familiar with them, you may want to ask someone for help.

- If you have valuables and collectibles, there are some local dealers that may be interested. Sometimes they will speak over the phone about what you have, sometimes they would like you to send photos. And if they are interested, then they will make an appointment to come to your house, see the items and make an offer on the spot.
- If you have a house full of valuables, you may want to contact an estate or auction company
- Make sure you are not trying to sell items last minute during your move - this can be chaotic and timely.
- Be aware that sadly many valuables and collectibles have lost their value. You can look on Ebay or other auction sites and sometimes find items or similar to find an approximate current value.
- Sorting the **Recycling and Trash** : take care to sort and responsibly dispose of recycling and trash. Expired medicine, metal, e-waste, hazardous, specialty recycling for ARCC(batteries, light bulbs, paint, etc) are all examples of special sorting . This means more sorting bins in the garage or somewhere out of the way.
 - Be prepared to pay for recycling and trash - especially for old appliances, tires, hazardous waste, mattresses, building materials

About Letting Go

- If you are feeling anxiety, stress, and guilty about what to do with sentimental items - here are questions to ask yourself :
 - Do I feel burdened by this item?
 - Why do I feel the need to keep it?
 - Do I love it or is it because it has good memories attached to it?
 - Why would I feel guilty about letting it go?

- Give yourself grace, take your time, there are no rules, touch and talk about the item, find a balance that works for you.
- Also, this is usually really hard to do by yourself - so you should ask a friend or relative, however, be discerning as to who will actually be of help. Many times a parent/child dynamic doesn't work in this scenario, or the friend that means well but wants to control and take over too much
- Keep one or two of your favorite items from meaningful sets and collections and pass along the rest
- Knowing that the item will be rehomed and loved by another may help. No one wants to put their beloved treasures in the dumpster!

Items that can be emotional

- Books - they can be the hardest to part with - a lot of you have accumulated mini libraries and are moving to a place where you no longer have the space - so culling, donating, recycling, even trashing is going to be painful at first, but will get easier as you go
- Photos and Paper items such as documents, letters, and recipes
- What to keep, what to shred and recycle - culling these items can be a tedious task, set aside time outside of your designated downsizing time
 - Digitizing can greatly reduce clutter - scanning items can also be time consuming, so be selective. You can hire a company to do this as well

Words of Wisdom

- Don't be hurt if your children do not want your stuff
- Downsizing takes more time than you think
- It's never too soon to start
- Don't move more that will fit, try and make sure you have space enough for each item

- We highly recommend listening to Marilyn Skoglund talk about downsizing on Vermont Public/The Frequency/Small Time from Oct 24, 2023

Senior Move Managers

We offer as little or as much help as you need during your downsizing and housing transition.

When should you call us

- You feel overwhelmed and paralyzed - and do not know how and where to start
- Help to make a plan for breaking down an enormous project into manageable tasks
- You cannot physically or safely do the work
- Your resources of family and friends are not available or when they are, they “are not helping”
- You want company to help you do the work, stay focused and on track
- You are running out of time before your move
- You want to sort items versus everything packed by a Moving Company, or everything trashed by Junk Hauling Company

Our services can include:

1. A free consultation and walk through
2. Creating the overall plan with timeline with you
3. Preparing home for sale (decluttering and staging)
4. Sorting belongings with you - deciding what to keep, gift, sell, donate
5. Arranging to sell or donate unwanted items
6. Help pack and unpack your belongings, responsible for all packing materials used and recycled
7. Find moving contractors
8. Preparing for new home with floor layout

9. Arranging shipment and storage of belongings
10. Setting up the new home
11. Move Day oversight
12. Facilitating all additional services such as cleaners, trash haulers, full clean outs
13. Inventory for items to be re-homed, can be helpful for equitable family distribution