

HELP! I HAVE TO DOWNSIZE!!

You are moving to a smaller place and all your "stuff" just will not fit.

Whether you are shifting from 5200 sq. feet to 1600 sq. feet or from 900 sq feet to 500 sq. feet, the squeeze will be tight.

Friends and family, (who aren't facing this task) often suggest: "Just get rid of everything!"

Even if you WANT to "get rid of everything," it is not as easy as it sounds. And you may not be the only person with 'stuff'; your spouse and children, even if grown, will want input into what to keep.



And you may have friends or relatives who may want some of the 'stuff'. A good place to start is by asking them if they want things they may have admired in the past. Do your children or siblings want some things? Are there items you have saved for years (baby bed, grandmother's silver) that you hope your children will want?

Special note: if the downsizing has been occasioned by a family crisis such as having to move an elderly relative to a smaller home or care facility, you may be interested in the following website: www.yellowpieplate.umn.edu. This site presents advice on distributing personal property.

So...now that you have started thinking, you may ask: "JUST how does one downsize?"

There are several steps and they all take longer than you expect. However, when done thoughtfully, downsizing can even be liberating and allow you to see your 'stuff' in a new way. You may discover new tastes and create a fresh start. Perhaps a new bed will require bright new linens. You may also suddenly like colors, styles and art work you never considered before.

➤ Begin to downsize as SOON as you know the change is REALITY. (Even giving things away, takes more time and planning that you realize).

- If moving to a different climate, you may need different clothing.
- Find out the size difference between your current home and the new one.

For example: 1800 sq. feet to 600 sq. feet means that you can only keep ONE-THIRD OF YOUR "STUFF!"

- As early as possible, obtain room dimensions and placement of windows and doors for your new home. Measure the furniture you hope to keep. Then a quick internet search using the phrase "room layout" or "room design" will give links to many software products to assist you. Also searching "furniture placement" presents links to articles and information about this topic.

- If rooms are different sizes, some furniture may not fit at all.

- If there is a small (or no) dining area, will you be able to use your formal china and large dining room furniture?

- Sound like too much trouble (and who has the time?)? At the very least, consider the placement of the largest piece of furniture in each room. Perhaps making a rough sketch to help your ideas become more visible. The extra effort and time you spend planning will make life a lot easier on moving day.

Downsizing is not just about the BIG stuff. If the China Cabinet won't fit, what happens to everything in it? Do you really use and enjoy every glass, plate, pitcher in that cabinet?

Now is the perfect time to hang on to only the things you love and use; from furniture to kitchen gadgets. Everything you own should pass this test: Do I use it? Do I Love it? If the answer is "NO", it must find a new home.

The longer you have lived in your current home, the longer it will probably take to go through everything and decide what you will need in the new place.

Your emotional attitude toward the move is also a key factor. If you WANT to move, the whole process will be that much easier. If you don't WANT to move, and can't imagine living without some or much of your "stuff," the stress you create for yourself will be significant.

So now you realize that you are going to have to get rid of some things, or a lot of things even after family and friends have taken what they want. Where do they go?

Your next choice is to sell things. How, to whom, for how much? Consignment shops, antique or furniture dealers, eBay sellers, and auction houses are just a few

suggestions. Keep it mind that you will NOT (in most cases) receive as much money as you think you should. Most dealers will buy from you for wholesale. Consignment shops and eBay sellers usually take 40 - 50 % commission. You may need to contact specialists for certain things such as silver, coins, jewelry.

And, of course, you could have a yard sale for some things. Remember that yard sales take a lot of time and the return may not be worth it in the long run.

You may also donate items to non-profits. You must realize that many non-profit organizations are selective (picky) and need to be scheduled well in advance for pick-up. Holiday times are especially difficult. If you are moving in early January, start several weeks ahead to plan for pick ups. Some non-profits have yard sales and auctions to earn money and are happy to accept quality donations. Thrift stores, benefiting non-profits, accept almost anything; however, you must deliver it to them. Many organizations know of specific families and individuals in need, if you just ask. And if you want to take a tax write off, make your own list and take photos for back up. Keeping all this information together in a file will make things easier at tax time.

Sorting through the objects of your lifetime will be tiring and emotional. Before you donate, sell, or even discard things, you must make many decisions. This can be exhausting; you will need to pace yourself. When you are in doubt about an item, look at again later. Any downsizing done too quickly or with little thought will be unsatisfactory in the long run.

Expect that you will make the move taking too much stuff with you, and may need to donate or sell it after settling into the new location. You might also need some creative storage ideas. Space Bags work well for seldom used linens and out of season clothes. Use any available vertical space: high shelves in closets or garages can store holiday items and other things you don't often need. If you must rent a public storage unit, ask about specials and rent the smallest space you can. (Even a relatively thrifty \$60.00 - \$70.00 per month will add up to \$720.00 - \$840.00 in just a year.)

GOOD LUCK!