

# 6 Tips for Downsizing

Make the most of your small space with careful planning and smart design strategies.



Design by Jenna Pizzigati

By:

Downsizing a home can lead to lots of stress and anxiety for anyone who loves their belongings but hates living in clutter. Seniors, empty nesters or people moving from a suburban home to a city apartment all face the challenge of creating a new living space with limited room for furniture, accessories, clothes and collectibles. But if you come up with a plan before you downsize, you can create a comfortable and stylish environment made for daily living.

Here are six tips for organizing and/or downsizing your life to live comfortably in a cozier space.

## TIP 1: Plan ahead

Don't wait to make decisions. Start planning your downsizing early and set goals. For couples and families, make sure everyone is on the same page to eliminate conflicts and hurt feelings down the road.

## **TIP 2: Determine your lifestyle needs**

It helps to ask yourself some questions. Think about what lifestyle you want to embrace as you move forward, suggests professional organizer Mary Dykstra, CPO, president elect for NAPO (National Association of Professional Organizers) and owner of Within Reach Organizing Services.

- Do you have room for oversized furniture in your new space?
- If you are moving, how much smaller is your new home?
- Do you feel you should keep something just because you spent a lot of money for it?

## **TIP 3: Find purpose**

"The biggest issue is people don't edit," says designer Jane Hamilton of JAC Interiors. "They want to bring too much stuff with them and don't realize every little corner should have a purpose or function. With some planning, a shelf can become your whole home office or a corner becomes an art studio."

"Be conscious of what you let into your mind, life and environment, and how you choose to spend your time and resources moving forward," says Dykstra. "This is the secret to feeling whole and living well."

Regarding sentimental items, take photographs of your old home and belongings to preserve memories. This can be especially helpful for children who don't want to let go of an old stuffed animal or dolls.

## **TIP 4: Keep clutter out**

Edit your technology. Use a printer that connects to Wi-Fi to eliminate extra cables and choose a TV that mounts to the wall, so you don't need a media center that takes up valuable floor space.

Use smart storage solutions in your smaller space. For example, a table cloth can re-purpose an older table and give you a way to "hide" things from plain sight. Or use a piece of your china collection that seems too large to store as a pencil holder in your home office or for makeup storage in your bathroom.

## **TIP 5: Think quality and multipurpose**

Hamilton says you need to go for quality over quantity. Choose a great piece of furniture that makes a statement, instead of trying to squeeze too many pieces into a single room.

If you're investing in new furniture when you downsize, choose multipurpose furniture pieces. Go for nightstands with open and closed storage and ottomans with tops that lift to offer space inside for blankets or extra pillows.

Look for durable fabrics, since a smaller home often requires flexible spaces that have to do double duty as an office, extra bedroom or playspace.

## **TIP 6: When in doubt, get an objective opinion**

Accept help in sorting and packing your belongings. Consider hiring a professional organizer who can offer an objective opinion when you're trying to decide what you really need to eliminate or donate to charity.