

Radiant Organizing

[organizing solutions for everything under the sun]

Ready... Set... Downsize!

By Sara Caputo, MA

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If only it were that easy, right? Downsizing your home for your next move can be overwhelming and frustrating to say the least. Where does one start? What goes? What stays? How much time will this take? "How on earth can I leave behind my home of 20, 40, 50 or more years?" Following are some guidelines that will answer these questions and help you stay focused and on task during the project.

First and foremost, have a plan! This includes a timeline as well as a floor plan of your new living space. Making a floor plan that shows each room and the placement of each piece of furniture is invaluable when moving into a smaller space. Try to take actual measurements of the rooms, and include locations of doors, windows, heaters, outlets, etc. This allows you to feel confident and in control of which of the largest of the furniture is moving with you.

Be honest with yourself when trying to decide what to take. For example, if you are moving from a four bedroom house to a 2 bedroom home, you will need to eliminate at least half of your current stuff! Think about your new space – how big are the closets? Does it have the same amount of storage space? We tend to forget what's in those nooks and cranny's all over our houses and how much stuff we really have... So where do you start? Consider these ideas:

- Concentrate on what you will need to make you feel comfortable, provide adequate storage, and preserve the cozy, warm feeling of your home.
- Assess your space to space needs. Where will items from built in spaces go? If you're not taking your china cupboard, where will the china go? Will a twin bed give you more living space than a king will?
- Work from largest to smallest. In other words, once you have the larger pieces figured out, now it's time to start on the smaller items.
- Focus on sorting, separating, and paring down. Be realistic, but at the same time, never leave behind something you'll regret later. You can't take every gift, book, blanket, and mug you own, and believe me, your friends and family will understand.
- Avoid turning your house into chaos. Have a trash bag handy at all times, if it's trash throw it out. Use as many labeled boxes or bins as you have categories for your things (such as "donate", "give to _____", and be sure to have one titled "not sure right now". This allows you to keep moving through the process and avoid getting stuck on one thing even when you are not sure what to do with something. If possible, do sorting and purging on shelves from shelf to shelf or side to side, sort drawers from drawer to drawer. Sort clothes side to side on closet rods. When you're done things are sorted but still in place.

- Set a timer, complete a small task every day according to your timeline and make small steps to continue to work towards the day of the move.
- Pick a magic number between 1 and 5 (**3** is good). When you can't decide how many of something to take, use your magic number as a guideline.

Now, what should you do with the things you're not taking? First, offer it to family and friends, but remember their houses are already full. If there's an over abundance of *stuff*, an estate sale may be the best way to get rid of it. Reputable estate sale business people will get the best price for your things and leave the house broom clean for a 25-30% commission. Most estate sale business people will come to your home and assess what you have for no charge. For an auction, there may be charges for transportation and insurance and you'll still have *stuff* left. Tag or garage sales can be a lot of work, but will bring immediate gratification of the exchange of money for your goods. Some small charities will come into your house, pick things up, and give you a receipt for tax purposes.

The good news is that you don't have to do this alone. There are many professionals that would delight in helping you with what may seem overwhelming. For instance, you could hire a professional organizer to help you make decisions and weed through the years of accumulation. Hire a moving company to ease the packing and moving process. Hire an estate sales person to help you set up your sale of items.

Last but not least... Don't wait until the last minute. Procrastination and pressure will only add more stress to the process. Even though change is difficult, admit to yourself that change is a given in life and try to embrace it by using your support system and looking towards the future with a smile from your new space in life!

About the Author

Sara Caputo, MA is a productivity and organizing consultant who has been streamlining environments and simplifying lives for years through consulting, coaching, and training. Sara is the owner of Radiant Organizing, a professional organizing & consulting company, based in Santa Barbara, California.

She is passionate and dedicated to helping people create more space in their lives for the things they love. Sara's commitment, intuition, and facilitative approach to organizing has helped numerous businesses and individuals pave their way towards living more productive and balanced lives. She believes that by creating more order in our lives and eliminating unnecessary chaos, we can participate more fully in all levels of life!