

EXPERT ADVICE
AT YOUR
FINGERTIPS!

5

PRO TIPS TO DOWNSIZING YOUR HOME



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REASONS FOR DOWNSIZING

So, you've decided to move to a smaller place.

You may be doing it for any number of reasons

- You're tired of all the work you're doing to maintain your current home
- You're looking to simplify your life
- You think a move to a new place will help you focus on what's really important and create a better lifestyle
- You want to move to a new town where the pace of life suits you better
- You've lost your spouse and your current home feels empty without them
- Health issues have made it difficult to continue living where you are now
- You want to move to an adult lifestyle or retirement community where you can meet new friends and stay active
- You want to move closer to your family
- You plan to use the proceeds from the sale of your home to help fund your retirement goals





REALIZING WHAT'S AHEAD OF YOU

Whatever your reasons for downsizing, this is a big step for you. It's natural to feel a little anxious.

You'll be leaving behind what's comfortable and familiar and taking a risk on someplace new. Not only that, you're beginning to realize just how big an undertaking this is going to be.

You'll need to

– TO DO –

- ☐ Get your current home ready for sale
- ☐ Get your home sold
- ☐ Search for a new home, if you haven't already found one
- ☐ Go through all your belongings and sell, donate, or give away things you can't take with you
- ☐ Plan out everything that needs to happen before you can move

This feels very different from moves you made when you were younger. That's because *it is different!*





HOW THIS MOVE IS DIFFERENT

Real estate may be different

Depending on when it was you last bought or sold a home, real estate practices may have changed a lot, including how homes are listed, how they're shown, and what prospective buyers expect to see. Bidding practices may also have changed, especially in competitive property markets.

You're different

Your circumstances definitely aren't the same as when you were younger. Back then, you may have been looking for a home to accommodate your growing family or a place within commuting distance of a new job. Now your kids live elsewhere and may have families of their own. And work doesn't determine where you live anymore, even if you're only semi-retired.

Plus, you're in a completely different head space. The things that give your life meaning and purpose may well have changed. Your hopes and concerns for your future may be very different as well.

And regardless of how physically fit you may be, you may react very differently this time to the physical demands of getting your home ready for sale, going through all your belongings, carting off what you can't take with you, and setting up your new home.

That's why you need to approach the coming move differently than you did in the past.

**FOR
SALE**

TIP 1: GETTING YOUR CURRENT HOME READY FOR SALE

Even if you're in a seller's market, you'll probably want to spruce up your home to make it appealing. That's because a more appealing home can very often translate into a better selling price. And if you're relying on the proceeds from the sale to help fund your future living expenses, getting top dollar is very important.

A real estate agent might do an initial walk-through and recommend ways to prepare your home for showing. It's up to you how many of their recommendations you follow.

Some things to keep in mind

- If you're concerned about spending money on changes to a home you won't be living in much longer, focus on changes that will likely add the most value and get you a good return on your investment such as painting, removing old carpets, or upgrading fixtures. Your agent will likely advise you on this and other possible improvements.
- Remember that buyers want to picture how their own belongings will look in your home. Your personal touches – the things you've done to make your place feel like home to you – can be a distraction. You may think people should be able to see past that, but alas, they generally don't.
- Staging your home helps buyers see your home as a blank canvas. If you're concerned about the hassle or expense of doing a full-blown staging, doing a partial staging – that might involve focusing on key rooms or repairs – may still help attract more buyers while allowing you to recoup the associated cost.
- Keep in mind that the more changes buyers think they'll need to make to your home, the lower their offer will be. If your home needs a lot of work, it's more likely to attract an investor who wants to flip it. They typically will pay less for it than someone who wants to buy it for themselves.

TIP 2: USING THE SALE OF YOUR HOME TO SUPPORT YOUR FUTURE LIVING EXPENSES

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Assuming you're not buying a more expensive property, selling your home will free up some money. You may decide to use some of it to

- Make upgrades to your new home
- Pay for travel or other big-ticket items
- Give some to family

The list goes on.

But before parting with any of that money, you should figure out how much of it needs to be set aside for future living expenses. Here's where you may want to consult a financial advisor. They can help you come up with a financial plan that anticipates what those future expenses might be, factors in your current assets and retirement income, and identifies possible tax considerations.

Anticipating how much you'll get from the sale of your home

How much money are we really talking about here? One way to find out is to ask your real estate agent to show you what portion of the proceeds from the sale of your house will need to go to things like commissions and legal fees. What remains is the amount you should include in your financial plan.

Caution: If you see an ad or quote listing a flat fee or 1% commission, that doesn't necessarily mean that's all you'll be paying. It may only be the portion going to the listing brokerage and will generally result in limited services which often leads to a lower sale price. Insist that all fees, commissions, and services be shown. (If you're buying a new home, you'll need to consider other related fees.)

TIP 3: **FINDING A NEW HOME THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU**

How do I know if my new home is going to suit me?

It's a question you're bound to ask yourself. It may even keep you up at night.

Here are a few things to consider so that you're making an informed choice. (Even if you've already committed to a new place, some of these questions may still be worth asking.)

If you're purchasing a new home, like a bungalow or a condo

- Will it allow you to spend less time doing housework and more time doing the things you enjoy? For instance, are property maintenance services provided?
- Will it allow you to "age in place"? Is everything located on one level? Could the bathroom be made wheelchair-accessible? Are there any restrictions on the types of renovations you can make, if needed? Are medical facilities nearby?
- Do ongoing monthly fees – if there are any – fit within your budget?
- How easy is to get to shops, restaurants, and other places of interest?

If you're renting a new home, like an apartment or a suite in a retirement community

- What sorts of opportunities are there to participate in interesting activities and meet new people?
- Do you want to keep preparing your own meals or would you like to have them prepared for you? What dining options are available?
- If you have health issues now or in the future, what sort of support is available and how much does it cost?
- Can you sign up for a trial stay to see if you like the place (and the people) before committing?

TIP 4: THINNING OUT YOUR BELONGINGS

Moving to a smaller place means getting rid of some of your current belongings. That involves sorting things into the following categories:

- Take with you
- Give to someone you know
- Donate
- Sell
- Throw away

This can take a lot of your physical and emotional energy, especially if you've accumulated a lot of possessions over the years. That's why it's wise to start sorting as soon as possible, even if you're still just thinking about downsizing.

Of course, sorting is only part of the job. You'll also have to figure out who will take your stuff. Then you'll need to get it to them. A real estate agent who specializes in downsizing can often tell you who accepts items for sale, donation, or disposal in your area. It can save you a lot of time.

Caution: Finding “good homes” for items that hold particular significance to you can be difficult. You may discover that your kids are reluctant to take your dinnerware or family heirlooms. Antiques don't fetch the price you think they're worth. Agencies won't accept donations of things you think are perfectly usable. If this sounds overwhelming, consider hiring a senior move manager who can help you with the practicalities and the emotions of letting go of your belongings.

TIP 5: PLANNING EVERYTHING THAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN BEFORE YOU CAN MOVE

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There's a lot that needs to happen before you move. Creating a to-do list with deadlines is one way to make sure things get done on time and you're not left scrambling at the last moment.

Start with the date your agent will be coming in to take pictures of your current home for the real estate listing. You'll want things to look appealing. Here are some tasks you'll probably want done before that date:

- Make sure your home looks good on the outside (e.g. trim bushes, complete repairs)
- Sell, donate, or give away as many belongings as possible. Consider temporarily putting any remaining items that might distract potential buyers in storage.
- Make décor neutral so that it's as easy as possible for buyers to imagine their belongings in your home

Laying out all the tasks on a schedule ahead of time will also give you a clearer picture of just how much time you'll need to put into getting your home ready for sale. If it seems overwhelming, you'll probably want to consider getting friends and family or professionals to help you out.

If you're planning to hire a professional (e.g. a contractor or cleaner or personal organizer), give yourself enough lead time to find the person. And remember that they may not be able to fit you into their schedule immediately.

Another key milestone to include in your schedule is your moving date or the date you take possession of your new home. Be sure to book movers well in advance, allowing yourself enough time to get estimates from different companies. Even if you're relying entirely on family and friends, give them plenty of advance notice, too.



HOW A REAL ESTATE AGENT WHO SPECIALIZES IN SERVING SENIORS CAN HELP

You'll want to sign on with a real estate agent who specializes in serving seniors and understands how downsizing is different from moves earlier in life. And not all real estate agents do. In fact, the majority don't, not really.

How do you know if a real estate agent specializes in serving seniors?

Look for an agent with an **SRES®** (Seniors Real Estate Specialist) or **CSHP™** (Certified Senior Housing Professional) designation in the US. In Canada, look for an agent with an **SRES®**, **ASA™** (Accredited Senior Agent), or **Lifestyle55+™** designation.

Advantages of signing on with an agent who specializes in serving seniors

- They'll identify important issues you'll need to consider related to wills, estates, finances, and taxes.
- If necessary, they can refer you to a variety of professionals from their network such as financial advisors, lawyers, senior move managers, staging consultants, contractors, and cleaners.
- They can provide a local listing of where to take things that you want to sell, donate, or throw away.
- They're generally willing to spend more time working through downsizing-related issues with you than agents who are more focused on simply "making the sale".
- They'll often help you establish a downsizing schedule and stay on track (before and after you list your current home).
- If you're looking for a new, smaller home, they'll know what's out there that's likely to fit your desired lifestyle.
- Many have personal experience with downsizing. Some have helped parents downsize. Some are seniors who've gone through the process themselves. That experience helps them understand what you're going through on an emotional level.

LOOKING FOR A REAL ESTATE AGENT WHO SPECIALIZES IN SERVING SENIORS IN YOUR AREA?



Laurie Turner, SRES®

Seniors Real Estate Specialist
Coldwell Banker Realty
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The first question my senior clients looking to downsize ask me is “Where do I begin?” It’s a process, like peeling back the layers of an onion, and it all starts long before we start talking about selling your home. Yes, that means that I am there at your side through the whole journey.

For the last 14 years I have been working to help local seniors ready their homes for sale. I understand the ins and outs of this emotional process and have a team at the ready to help make your move as easy as possible. My senior clients speak volumes about how easy it was, looking back. We’re partners!

Want a free, no-obligation assessment that gives you actionable advice on how to get your current home ready to sell? Email or call me to schedule one now. Not ready to commit, but interested in learning more about what to keep in mind when downsizing? I’m happy to chat in person or by phone/Zoom.

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Helping you transition to the next chapter of your life

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