



An armoire that once stored china in a dining room is repurposed to accommodate a TV in a living room.

## Designing for downsizing

The tricks of making the move

By Sheila Selby

**W**hen you downsize, especially from a home you've been living in for decades, the move may be emotionally trying. All the memories of raising a family in that home and the happy times spent there make downsizing difficult. To help ease the emotions, keep in mind that you bring all those memories with you when you move.

But what do you do about the material items you've accumulated? It's likely they won't all fit in your new home, as downsizing means you're moving into a smaller place. Deciding what items to take with you can seem overwhelming.

To make the physical transition easier, here is some interior design advice to help you determine how to use the space in your new home and what furniture and home décor items you should bring along.

**Allocate your space:** Once you find your new home, think about how you'll use the space. Your rooms will probably need to be multi-functional. For example, you may not be able to have a separate office or a den for watching TV or a dedicated guest room. Do you want to make the second bedroom in your new home a combined office/den/guest room? Or maybe you decide to put your television in the living room and create an office in the second bedroom. To accommodate your occasional overnight guests, you can use a self-inflating air mattress that stores easily when not in use.

### Family First

If you have children, grandchildren, or other family members you'd like to share your treasures with, walk through your existing home with them and have them tag items they would like. Your family will be grateful to have these pieces that are special to them. And you'll get pleasure when you visit and see these things in their homes.

**Decide what to keep:** After the family has tagged what they want, walk through the house with stickies in three different colors and tag the furniture, artwork, and larger accessories. Use one color for items you want to take with you, another color for things you plan to donate or sell, and the last color for trash.

Break this task down by room if it seems overwhelming. If your house has four bedrooms, and you're downsizing to a two-bedroom place, start with the extra bedrooms. The things in these rooms will be easy to tag, since you're not going to take four bedroom sets with you. Once you've taken the first step, the task will become easier.

If you're waffling about keeping certain pieces, ask yourself: Do I really love the piece or am I just attached to it because I've had it for so long? Will it be functional in my new home?

Still having trouble deciding? Bring in a friend or a professional designer, someone who can be objective and help you with these decisions.

**Create a plan:** Take measurements of all the rooms in your soon-to-be new home and



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draw a scaled floor plan. It's possible a floor plan already exists; ask the management company or current owner. Measure the pieces you've tagged to take. Use the floor plan to create a furniture plan by seeing if/how these pieces will fit in the space.

Think outside the box when you're doing this. Perhaps you can repurpose a piece in your current living room that won't fit in your new living room. It may fit and be useful in your new bedroom. In one client's home, a new bedroom was smaller than the original bedroom. By placing the bed under a window, the existing furniture fit nicely into the new space. If you decide to purchase some new furniture, have it delivered to the new home. It doesn't make sense to pay for moving it twice.

**Don't sweat small stuff:** Before you move, don't obsess about things such as new window treatments and where to hang the artwork. These are better addressed once you move in.

**Have a plan:** On moving day, have your furniture plan in hand. It will save you time and money as it will make it quicker and easier to tell the movers where to place everything.

**Enjoy your new home:** Once you've made the move, you'll realize it was well worth it. No more shoveling snow, cleaning three bathrooms, or climbing up and down the stairs many times a day. Enjoy your new lifestyle.

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