

The Simple Life: Tips on 'Rightsizing'

Children off on their own? Too much empty space? Yard upkeep getting to be a chore?

Perhaps it's time to consider "rightsizing" to simplify your life. But what's just right for home owner may be completely wrong for another. Is a luxury condominium your best choice? Would a gated community home best suit your needs? Or are you simply in need of a home with a few less bedrooms or a no-maintenance yard?

With so many options, it's often difficult to know where to begin, but I can help you sort out the issues involved and then find a home that better fits your needs.

Making a painless transition

Finding the right sized living space is just the beginning. As soon as you've decided to begin the search for a new home, it would be wise to begin paring down so that your transition can be a smooth one.

Starting the decision-making process is sometimes a daunting task. But it doesn't need to be if approached systematically. Start working in a specific room in your house or even an area of a room (a closet or drawer.) It's never too early to start weeding out the extras, and you can begin by taking an "audit" of your accumulated possessions.

Sorting trash from treasures

Starting early will also allow you to take your time. Plan to spend an hour or two at a time as you begin the sorting process. Expect to have emotions and memories stirred up – sorting belongings is almost like going through an old photo album. Take time for recalling memories, perhaps shedding a tear or two and sharing stories with friends and family. And – speaking of family and friends – ask others to help you with your sorting; it's a great way to cement relationships.

Begin in the areas of the house that you are currently not using since it will be least disruptive to everyday life. These areas also often contain items that are not used much and won't be missed when passed on to family members, given to charity or sold at auction.

Start with larger things in each room and work your way down to the small items. With large items, either prepare a list of your decisions or – often handier -- use stickers to mark the items as you decide what to do with each piece. If you can't make a decision about something, then set it aside and think about it for awhile until you do come to a decision.

Moving experts suggest you sort the items in each room as follows:

- Items you're sure you want to keep for your new home
- Items you're not sure about, but you're not ready to part with
- Items that will be passed on to family or friends
- Items to be sold at a garage sale, estate sale or auction
- Items to be given to charity
- Items that need to be thrown away

Separate the items into piles as you mark them with stickers or make your list.

Letting go

The goal is to get rid of as much "stuff" as possible as you work through it. Once a room has been sorted, the next step is to begin the process of moving unwanted items out of your current home.

- Put items to be thrown away into garbage bags and take out for collection weekly – so you won't change your mind!

- Call your favorite local charity and arrange a pickup as soon as you have enough items to justify their making a trip
- Ask family and friends to make arrangements to get their things

If you've started early and planed ahead, you'll be able to work at a pace that is comfortable for you and your situation and soon you'll be able to enjoy the 'simple life' in your new home!