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## Expert Tips for Decluttering and Downsizing Your Living Space

Today, many retirement-aged adults are seeking to unclutter and simplify their living space or downsize to a smaller space. The following tips from experts can help you to get started:

- **Start the Decluttering Process with an Inventory of Your Items** – This helps you keep track of items that require upkeep or repair; and (as an added bonus) it can help you to make decisions on decluttering and maintaining an organized home.
- **Work in Reverse: What Would You Replace if You Lost Everything?** – Ask yourself: "If my home burned down and I lost everything, what would I replace as soon as my insurance check came in?" Your answers are the things most vital to you.
- **Declutter in Small, Focused Bursts: Make Each Session a Sprint, Not a Marathon** – Set yourself up for success by making a plan and targeting specific areas you're going to declutter, clean up and organize over a defined period of time. Then stick to it so you don't tire yourself out. Try working in 30-minute bursts at a time.
- **Think Of Your Things in Terms of Utility First and Sentimental Value Second** – Use the "four-box" method of *Keep*, *Sell/Donate*, *Store* and *Trash* to organize your items:
  - *Keep* items you need or use regularly and have the space for.
  - *Sell/Donate* goes to Goodwill® or your favorite charity; selling some items might make you a little money on eBay.
  - *Trash* is for junk you no longer want or need.
  - *Store* things you can't part with but don't play an immediate role in your daily life. This is your box for sentimental items.
- **Find New Ways to Keep the Things You Love**
  - Digitize photos and documents: Scan them, organize them and [upload them to safe places](#) so they're backed up.
  - Give items to family members or friends who'll value them. For example, if you have a sweater you love, or an old computer you used to use every day, clean it up and give it to someone who could use it.

In addition to decluttering your home, taking a minimalist approach to your current living space can also save you money on your heating, cooling and lighting bills by closing off areas of the house that are no longer used on a regular basis.



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Sometimes decluttering and minimizing the living area in your existing home is not the best solution. If you are in a larger home than needed and prefer moving to a smaller space, according to the article, “**15 Tips for Downsizing Your Living Space**,” <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/15-tips-for-down-sizing-your-living-space.html> there are several additional steps you can take to optimize the transition. For example:

- **Keep the Clutter from Ever Entering Your New Space** – Don’t begin the clutter accumulation process all over again. It will just continue to grow, and you no longer have the space to accommodate it. Keep your living space open and “breathable.”
- **Pick Your Storage Containers Wisely** – Square or rectangular pieces make better use of limited space than do round containers. Wicker baskets are also attractive storage containers that can be slipped under things and stacked on shelves.
- **You Might Not Have Room to Be a Costco Shopper** – If you don’t have room to easily store large quantities of products, limit how much you buy at one time.
- **Consider Furniture That Is Multi-Functional** – For example, you might want sofas and chairs that are convertible to sleeper beds for when family and friends come to visit.
- **Be “Merciless” with the Clothes You Keep** – When your space is limited, be very selective with your wardrobe. Use part of your closet space for stackable organizer bins to store big, bulky pieces of clothing so there is more space to hang other clothes and less clutter.

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