



Tips for downsizing your home

Sifting and sorting through years of family history and possessions can feel overwhelming. It's important at this time to seek support from friends and family members and remember that you are not alone.

Don't wait for a crisis: plan ahead. Learning about your options and being organized may help you to make this transition more easily. The following steps may help you and your family regain a sense of control over what might feel like an unmanageable situation.

Step 1: Plan Ahead

- Even if you are still deciding whether or not to place your family member in a facility, begin the process of downsizing.
- If possible, have a family meeting to discuss options and begin planning:
 - Consider what level of care your family member needs, and what future care needs your family member may need
 - Consider cost of facilities: public or private
 - Visit the facilities to “get a feel” for the place. Try to visit at different times of day, and observe interactions between the residents and the staff.
 - Find out what personal belongings people can take with them into each facility
- Start by decluttering and getting rid of things you no longer need: old clothes, household items that take up space, and expired medications
- Collect and keep together important papers, such as wills, birth certificates, passports, etc.
- Try to get other family members to claim their keepsakes, such as old trophies and school projects.
- Begin planning for pets, if necessary

Step 2: Sorting

- Go through each room in your home one at a time. Divide the contents into four categories:
 1. Definitely save (most useful, beloved, or meaningful items)
 2. Possibly save (revisit these items later)
 3. Donate, sell, or give to a friend



4. Discard

Consider using coloured stickers on items (or bins), such as a green sticker for those items you want to save; an orange sticker for those you will possibly save; a blue sticker for those items you will donate, sell, or give to a friend; and a red sticker for those items you plan to discard.

- Make a list to designate which items will go to specific people
- Don't try to sort paperwork or photographs at this point. This kind of decision-making is time consuming and may be emotionally draining. Simply pack up photos and paperwork to be sorted later.
- Be patient and allow time at this stage to reminisce and to acknowledge emotions. This can be an opportunity to remember stories and events that are unique to your family.

Step 3: Packing

- Packing can be a difficult job. If possible, enlist support of friends and family, or hire a professional moving company to pack.
- If possible, move your family member into a facility with only the things he or she will need immediately, and leave the rest to be dealt with after the move.

Step 4: Moving and Settling In

- Adjusting to the new surroundings may take time, both for your family member and for you. Allow yourself and your family member time to adjust to this major life change. Often persons with dementia find change particularly hard; however, over time they often adjust and even thrive in their new surroundings. Get support from friends, family members, or a support group, and remember to be kind to yourself.