

# DOWN SIZING

## Six Months and Counting

By Margit Novak

For thousands of people, moving to smaller quarters is “out there,” – some time in the future. “I’m not ready yet” is what most of us say. For many of us, what we really mean is “I can’t stand the thought of getting ready to move.”

On the other hand, for most people, their home is their largest single asset, so maximizing what it will sell for is important. There are many things we can’t control. We can’t control what the mortgage interest rates will be when we sell our home. We can’t control what the real estate market will be like when we sell our home. But we can control how ready our home is to go on the market, and the best investment is starting now, even if your move is months or years away.

The key is “working smart” — doing work once and benefiting from it twice. Working smart means downsizing before listing your home for sale, so it sells quickly and at the highest price, reduce your stress, and save on packing and moving costs.

For many of us, belongings that once brought us pleasure now seem like a burden, extra weight we would rather not have, except sorting through a lifetime of accumulations and deciding to part with many of them is hard.

Think of downsizing from your home of decades as losing 100 lbs. You didn’t gain the weight overnight and you can’t lose it overnight as well. Your belongings are like those pounds. It took years to accumulate them, and sorting through them will take time. Just as each pound, taken individually, doesn’t appear to make a difference, there may not seem to be a lot of improvement from each sorting session. But losing 100 pounds is accomplished by losing one pound one hundred times, and with planning, patience and perseverance, you can get ready to move and maximize your home’s marketability, one bag at a time.

Here are some proven tips and techniques that you can begin implementing today, even if your move is years away. The key to losing 100 pounds is not losing the 100th pound; it’s losing the first pound. The key to downsizing is not finishing the process; it’s starting it.

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# HOW TO LOSE 100 LBS OF STUFF

- Stop warehousing your kids' stuff. Do they visit their things but not take them home? If so, put them in a box and place it by the door so your kids can take the carton with them the next time they visit. (If they don't want their textbooks and tennis trophies, you don't need to keep them either).
- Decide on what "go" means. It may sound silly, but "This goes" can mean you are getting rid of it or taking it with you. To avoid confusion, decide what "go" means and use it consistently. Better yet, use color coded dots to separate what you are keeping and what you are getting rid of.
- If you plan to store things temporarily in trash bags, use clear bags for items being stored and opaque bags for regular trash. We once stored all our winter gloves and hats in a white kitchen trash bag, only to discover we had accidentally thrown them out.
- Throw a downsizing party. Cover your dining room table with items you no longer need and invite friends over for coffee with the caveat that they must take one thing away with them. It's fun, and since each person selects what she wants, everyone leaves thinking that they found a "treasure."
- Develop a kitchen tracker --- a form that helps you track how often you use those "I use it sometimes" items. Lists the items that aren't frequently used - (ice bucket, cuisinart, electric mixer, blender, bundt pan, 30 cup coffee urn, heating tray, turkey roaster, dutch oven...). Keep the list on your refrigerator and whenever you use an item on the list, make a checkmark next to it. At the end of six months, look at the items without checkmarks. You may find that you don't use those items after all. See sample below.
- Keep sorting sessions short - two hours at most, and start with the simplest room first. Starting with the most complicated area means you may get dis-couraged, throw up your hands and quit. Starting with a simple room helps build confidence so you say "I can do this."
- Once you start working, don't leave the room; it's human nature to get distracted (especially from something we don't want to do in the first place).
- DON'T PACK! Remember, you are months or even years away from moving. If you can pack something away and not need it until you move, you probably don't need it.

## SIX MONTHS KITCHEN TRACKER

Make a check mark each time you use an item on the list.

KITCHEN ITEMS	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6
Turkey Roasting Pan						
Fish Paocher						
Blender						
Electric Mixer						
Knife Sharpener						
Carving Knives						
Soup Stock/Spaghetti Pot						
Asparagus Pot						
Electric Frying Pan						
Double Boiler						
Dutch Oven						
Bread Machine						
Angel Food Pan						
Rolling Pin						
Lettuce Spinner						
Water Pitcher						
Popcorn Popper						
Coffee Grinder						
Griddle						
Waffle Maker						
Crock Pot						
George Forman Grill						