



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

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Associated Country Women of the World
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

“Downsizing Your Home”

Objective:

Learn how to move to a smaller living space and to create a functional and lovely home.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

The decision to downsize from your current home to a smaller space can be caused by many factors. It's an opportunity to simplify your life and let go of things that no longer serve you. But the process can be emotional and overwhelming. This lesson outlines steps to make the transition easier.

LESSON:

Part 1: Defining your new home

Why would you move to a smaller home?

You might choose to move to a smaller home in any phase of your life for many reasons...empty nest, financial difficulties, desire to live in a more expensive area, marriage or divorce, moving to a vacation home after retirement, the desire to travel, or the need for assisted living. Downsizing can present a challenge if we've spent much of our lives moving to larger homes and accumulating possessions. We're often attached to the memories represented by our things and find it difficult to give them up.

If you think you might move to a smaller home in the future, start decluttering NOW. You will have less to clean and maintain in the meantime, and more time to process emotions and make good decisions.

Who is moving? Where do you want to live? What type of home would you like? How many people are moving and what are their relationships? Single person, couple, roommates, children? This will determine how many bedrooms and bathrooms you need. Don't forget space for your pets.

Where do you want to live in the next phase of your life? Real estate agents say the three most important factors in a home are location, location, and location. As you have thought about your reasons for moving, you may also have an idea of where you want to live... rural, city, resort. Do you want to be near your children? Do you have other things on your wish list such as mountains, beach, pool, access to health care, or weather?

What type of housing do you need? Do you want a cottage with yard, a patio home, a rental apartment, a condo, a houseboat, a mother-in-law suite in a relative's home, or an assisted living apartment? What trade-offs are you willing to make?

Are there things you don't want or are willing to give up? Yard work, stairs, hurricane evacuations, pool maintenance, cooking, large dining room, garage, traffic. As you plan your move, make

arrangements for help from family and friends. If the project seems overwhelming, consider hiring a senior move manager to help with some or all phases of your move. Fees will depend on the services they provide. Contact National Association of Senior Move Managers (4) for more information.

Part 2: Trading spaces

Declutter your current home of things you don't need. Even though decluttering is an ongoing task, a move requires a focused effort. See previous lesson "Declutter Clutter" (1) for guidance. Make arrangements with a real estate agent and sell your home or plan to give notice if you rent.

Discuss your requirements and trade-offs with your real estate agent or family members who are helping you with research. Make a decision about a place to rent or buy and set a moving date.

As soon as you can, visit your new home. Start a notebook or computer file with information for your new home. Get a floor plan if there is one, or measure and draw your own. Measure everything, make notes, and take photos. Measure windows, doors, ceiling height, and closets. Measure and make notes about any built-in storage in the kitchen and bathrooms. Don't forget outdoor spaces like a balcony or patio. Arrange for any repairs, renovations, or reconfiguration of storage before you move in. Do the paperwork for transfer of utilities and change of address.

Part 3: Downsizing the stuff

You have been decluttering all along, hopefully, but this is a big project! Be brave. You will need to decide what to do with big items like refrigerator, washer and dryer, freezer, antique car in the garage, large safe, grand piano, lawn furniture, lawn mower.

"Shop your collection." This the fun part. You are the decorator. Think of your home as a home décor warehouse. Start with a color scheme and a few favorite pieces.

- ★ Choose furniture that is appropriate scale for the new space. Look for things with enclosed storage, and items that can serve more than one function. Are there pieces that can be repurposed or reupholstered? Choose your favorite artwork and decorative items. Clean and freshen any curtains, rugs, upholstered furniture and bed linens that are going with you.
- ★ Pack kitchen items and clothes.
- ★ Pack and label items to go in closet and cabinet storage.
- ★ Pack an "OPEN FIRST" box with things you need for the first night. Take your floor plan for placing furniture and other necessary documents.
- ★ Pack cleaning supplies, sheets for the bed, toiletries, medication, pajamas, flashlight, and reading glasses.
- ★ Once you have chosen the items you want to take, it is time to do a massive decluttering on the rest of it. Sort into categories to sell, give, donate, or trash. Offer the give-away items to your children and friends. Respect their wishes if they say "No, thanks". Decide and organize anything to be sold and organize an auction or yard sale. If you have a yard sale, make arrangement for leftovers at the end of the day. See previous lesson "Turning Clutter into Cash" (2).
- ★ Schedule a charity pickup, a trip to the dump, or as last resort, call 1800-GOT-JUNK to haul it way for a fee.

Part 4: Moving

- As soon as you schedule the moving day, enlist help from family and friends.
- Reserve a truck and schedule a moving service if you are using one.
- Plan the schedule for moving day.
- Plan where you will get your dinner the first evening.
- Be sure the “OPEN FIRST” box goes with you.

Part 5: Enjoying your new home

- Place furniture according to your floor plan.
- Unpack boxes into designated storage area.
- Relax and enjoy your new home.
- Follow the guidelines in “Declutter Clutter” (1) for keeping your new home spacious and clutter free.
- Enjoy your new fresh simpler lifestyle.

Suggested activities:

1. Provide floor plans of several small homes and small pieces of paper representing furniture.
2. Provide color schemes.
3. Arrange the home like you would like it.
4. Ask each other questions like:
 - Are there enough beds for everyone?
 - Do you have (or need) space for a guest to sleep?
 - Where will the cat’s litter box go?
 - What pieces of furniture can do double duty?
 - Is this a place you would like to live?

Lesson Summary:

The process of downsizing can be challenging, but good planning can make the transition easier and result in a comfortable new lifestyle.

Sources/References:

- *SCFCL Leader Training Guide “Declutter Clutter” by Pat Breznay (2018)
- *SCFCL Leader Training Guide “Turning Clutter into Cash” by Christine J. Patrick (2016)
- Downsizing Your Home with Style; Living Well in a Smaller Space by Lauri Ward (2010)
- National Association of Senior Move Managers <https://www.nasmm.org>
- * (Education lessons can be found at scfcl.com)

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