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## 6 Downsides of Downsizing for Retirement

Downsizing can save you money, but it's not as easy as you think.

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**MY WIFE AND I DOWNSIZED** twice in the past few years. First we sold our four-bedroom suburban home and moved into a one-bedroom condo. In order to accomplish this move we disposed of about one-third of our possessions, including old sports equipment, musical gear, stuffed animals and old books belonging to our kids. We then divided the rest of our stuff in two, half going into our condo and half into storage.

A year later we moved from our condo to a small three-bedroom house in another town. A lot of our old furniture and other paraphernalia did not fit into this new house. So we trashed, gave away or sold another round of our belongings, replacing some of them with new pieces.

Here are some of the drawbacks of downsizing in retirement:

### **You Will Not Necessarily Save Money**

You will likely [save a little on housing costs](#) by downsizing. Our tax bills and our heating bills are lower. When we disposed of our old stuff, which involved selling some silverware, kitchenware and a few pieces of furniture, we netted about \$500. But then we spent several thousand dollars buying a smaller sofa, a larger TV, a new mattress set and some wall hangings that would go with our new décor.

### **Accept That Your Furniture Will Not Fit**

After you pay to move your furniture and settle into your new place, you may have to replace a few of the items you just moved. Perhaps your old rug doesn't really fit or look right in the smaller space. No matter how much you

plan, some of your old furniture simply will not suit your new quarters, or it may look so out of place that you feel the need to buy something else.

### **A Smaller House Doesn't Necessarily Mean Less Work**

We went from a one-acre plot of land in a 1970s housing development to a much more modest outdoor space in town, but we still have to take care of the yard. Even though it's only an eighth of the size, the bushes and trees still need trimming. We found out that in our town it's the homeowners who are responsible for shoveling snow off the sidewalk in front of their house. If we want the cracks in the sidewalk fixed, we have to do it ourselves. So beware of surprises when you move. If you truly want [less housework](#), you should probably go to a townhouse or condominium where the association takes care of the lawns, walkways and perhaps the roof.

### **You May Need Additional Storage**

Many retirees who downsize look forward to [living with less stuff](#). But it's not easy to live without enough storage space. You will still have holiday decorations, outdoor equipment like rakes, shovels and flower pots, as well as indoor supplies including brooms, mops, extra light bulbs, soaps and cleaning fluids. Long after you move, you will likely have a few leftover unpacked boxes that need to be stashed somewhere. Those used to a large space may miss having a basement, attic or garage.

### **Clutter Expands to Fill the Vacuum**

You may feel like you've stripped your possessions to the bone, but it's easy for a small space to become cluttered. You still have photos of the kids, vacation souvenirs and family heirlooms. Perhaps you also held on to candles, flower vases, knickknacks and a few CDs or DVDs. And somehow, even though you got rid of half your books, the ones that are left still don't fit into your new bookshelves. You might buy some new shoes and clothes without throwing out the old ones, and before you know it your empty closet space is once again packed to the gills.

### **You May Not Agree With Your Spouse**

If you [live with a partner](#), he or she may have different ideas about what it means to downsize. Perhaps he likes a clean, spare house, and she likes to be

surrounded by her books, photos, collections and memorabilia. One spouse may be a hoarder, while the other organizes everything including the spice rack. You need to work out a compromise about which items will accompany you on your move, and what can be tossed or sold.

We are happy we [downsized](#) and are living a cleaner, more [easy-going lifestyle](#). But it's not that simple to simplify your life.