

## The Downsizing Dilemma: How to Deal With a Lifetime's Worth of Stuff

A senior move manager can make downsizing, or upsizing, easier



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How hard could replacing a roof be? Years ago, I thought this was a job I could easily manage myself. I planned to do the roof in a couple of days, then play golf for the rest of the week. But by the third day, I was still removing shingles from the old roof. I didn't play any golf that week. I seriously underestimated the amount of work involved.

Likewise, it's easy to underestimate the work involved in a downsizing move. We think, "This'll be easy. We've moved before." But downsizing adds complexity to a move because it usually means, in addition to moving everything, getting rid of lots of stuff. It can be overwhelming, frustrating, and take longer than expected. Fortunately, some people actually specialize in this very process.

### What We'll Cover:

- What's a senior move manager?
- Why they make moving easier
- How to find and work with one



Figuring out what to do with a lifetime's worth of stuff can be **OVERWHELMING**

## First, What's a Senior Move Manager?

A senior move manager helps aging adults manage the moving process, whether that's downsizing, upsizing, or anything in-between. Think of them as the quarterback for your move. They typically don't do the actual moving, but they can coordinate all aspects of the move.

Their services include:

- Helping de-clutter and organize belongings for either moving, donating, or discarding
- Getting appraisals for items that are appropriate for selling, auctioning, or consigning
- Packing as much, or as little, of belongings as needed
- Arranging for items to be shipped or placed into storage
- Planning the logistics of the move from start to finish
- Hiring and overseeing professional moving services
- Unpacking belongings and setting up the new home or apartment
- Creating and executing floor-plan designs to ensure that furniture and belongings will fit in the new space

## Second, Why a Senior Move Manager Makes Moving Easier

Senior move managers can help move you to a local location or across the country. For longer moves, because of the distance, family members and friends may not be able to help with the move, so it can be comforting to have a senior move manager provide that help.

Downsizing usually means getting rid of a lot of stuff. Figuring out what to do with a lifetime's worth of belongings can be overwhelming. We can have an emotional attachment to our belongings and letting go of those items can be difficult. If family members help with downsizing, they may have trouble understanding your reluctance to part with these objects.

A senior move manager can offer a more objective, third-party, perspective. Plus, if you want to sell some of your belongings, a senior move manager can accurately assess the value of belongings better than you or your family members.

## Sometimes, Downsizing Has to Happen Quickly as a Result of a Health Crisis

If that happens, it can be difficult to gather friends and family to help you move instantly. Senior move managers have the experience and capabilities to make downsizing happen very quickly in the event of a health emergency.

## Third, How to Find and Work With a Senior Move Manager

To find a senior move manager, the following professionals can often give recommendations: real estate agents, estate lawyers, geriatric care managers, and senior communities. To do an online search, National Association of Senior and Speciality Movers (NASMM) has a "Find a Senior Move Manager" search link on their site where you can search by your ZIP code.

Once you've found a potential senior move manager, do some vetting. Ask them for references and then call them to ask about their experience.

After you find a potential senior move manager, ask them for a menu of services and pricing for your move. Most senior move managers offer à la carte services, so let them know if you, or your family members, plan on doing any part of the move, e.g. packing and unpacking, selling or donating certain belongings, etc.

The cost of a senior move manager typically ranges from \$40-80 per hour with the total cost ranging between \$1,500-\$5,000 depending on where you live and the details of the move.<sup>1</sup> If you're considering hiring a senior move manager, ask for a comprehensive estimate. Some senior communities offer the services of a senior move manager for free, so ask about this if you're moving to a senior community.





Consider choosing a senior move manager that's a member of the NASMM. They require members to have general-liability insurance, take classes in ethics and safety, and provide a signed contract to protect the manager, the family, and their senior loved one. They also have a code of ethics and standard of practice for all members.

### **When to Hire a Senior Move Manager**

If you're planning to use a senior move manager for an upcoming move, contact them early on to allow ample time for coordination. But, if that's not possible, because of a health incident or medical diagnosis, senior move managers can make a move happen quickly.

### **"Isn't It Expensive to Hire a Senior Move Manager?"**

Yes, hiring a senior move manager isn't cheap. You could certainly save money by just hiring a moving company. But that means you'll be responsible for

nearly everything else. And if you're downsizing, you may need to sell, donate, or throw away any belongings you're not planning to bring with you.

All of this takes you, and probably family and friends, lots of time and effort. Doable? Yes. Exhausting? Most likely. The extra cost of hiring a senior move manager may be well worth it when factoring in the stress- and time-reduction factor.

## Remember Three Things About Hiring a Senior Move Manager

First, senior move managers specialize in simplifying the complicated process of moving. They're experts at handling all aspects of moving and making a move easier for aging adults and their families. Second, seriously consider whether you want to handle everything on your own. It's a lot of work. And while family and friends may want to help, it requires a lot of time and coordination. Third, reputable senior move managers are easy to find by going to the NASMM website and searching by your ZIP code.

## Sometimes, Doing It Yourself Just Isn't Worth It

After my exhausting roof replacement job, I had a new respect for professional roofers. I'm sure they could do in one day what took me a whole week. If you have a lot of support and haven't accumulated lots of belongings, you could probably downsize by yourself without a lot of hassle. If not, consider hiring a professional. Reach out to a senior move manager before downsizing.

## Next Steps

1. If you, or a loved one, is planning a downsize, visit the NASMM website and search for a local senior move manager
2. Ask for a list of services and price ranges for each
3. Ask for, and follow-up with, references

Source:

<sup>1</sup> Senior Move Managers: Role, Cost and Why You Need Them, A Place for Mom, 5/2024

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