

Checklists for organising a move into a smaller property

Use our checklists to get support with the stress of moving home, the value of advance planning and de-cluttering.

Get the help and support you need

Even at the best of times, moving home can be a stressful experience. As we get older, it can be especially difficult, so check through all the lists below for help with the planning stage - dividing the tasks into groups can make things more manageable.

- Don't underestimate the difference it can make to have the help and support of others when you move house.
- If you don't have friends or family nearby to help out, consider enlisting the services of a company that specialises in helping older people downsize or move home. Senior relocation services can ease the load by taking care of many aspects of the process and will understand your specific needs.
- Contact a number of local removal firms and talk to them about their business. Do they have experience of helping older people to move? Price is probably not the priority here - having drivers and removal men who are careful and sensitive is more important. Look for a company that is a member of the British Association of Removers (www.bar.co.uk) or the National Guild of Removers & Storers (www.ngrs.co.uk), which is covered by the Removals Ombudsman.
- Make sure your chosen removal firm has adequate insurance to cover damage or loss to any possessions and get a detailed breakdown of costs, including overtime rates if things run late. Brief the firm on any items needing special packing or treatment, such as valuables or fragile antiques, large items that may need to be dismantled and reassembled, or which could be difficult to manoeuvre, and on any items that you'll be moving personally.

Which? Money's advice on how to choose the best removals company has more information about getting quotes and briefing removals companies.

Do plenty of advance planning

- Draw up a floor plan of the new home, as accurately as possible. This will help you plan where things will go. Start with big items, such as furniture, and work your way down the list. This will also help later with the packing and de-cluttering.
- It's a good idea to visit your new property before moving to double-check measurements and see whether there's room for your curtains, furniture, appliances, etc.
- Make a priority packing list of the things that you'll want or need to unpack first in the new home (make the kettle top of the list).
- Estimate how many boxes you think you'll need and which sizes. Think also about packaging for items that may not fit neatly or safely into boxes - what sort of packaging will be best? Bubble wrap is surprisingly versatile for smaller, odd-shaped items.
- It may help to plan the move over two or more days, rather than trying to get everything done in one day. This will allow you time to adjust as you go. For example, if you underestimated the number of boxes required, you'll have time to buy some more before everything needs to be moved.

Sort and de-clutter

Sorting through possessions and de-cluttering may be the most difficult part of the whole moving process. Many possessions will be of sentimental value, and even the idea of moving them may trigger strong emotions.

- Try to arrange to do this task with someone you're close to who can be there to support you if you're finding it difficult.

Be realistic about what's needed in the new home and go for quality over quantity. It may be tempting to put things into storage, but if things are really needed, take them to the new home. Otherwise, sell them or give them away.

Arrange sale of any items of value, such as antique or vintage furniture, rugs, paintings or other collectables, which can't be taken to the new home. It may be worth obtaining a professional valuation.

Recycle as much as possible. It's much easier to let go of things if we feel they are going to benefit someone else, such as through charity shops or by donating items to someone who will use or appreciate them.

Use up any frozen food remaining in the freezer in advance of the move and defrost the freezer. If you're moving to accommodation with catering and will no longer be cooking for yourself, consider donating any surplus tins and in-date packaged food to a local food bank if it can't be distributed among friends, family or neighbours. Which? Money's guide to packing and preparing to move house has lots more useful advice about de-cluttering and packing your possessions.

Transfer services and inform them of a change of address

You'll need to inform all utility services of the move 10 days beforehand, and arrange any meter readings so final bills can be issued.

Inform the post office, and arrange for mail to be redirected to the new address.

Contact all the household's utility suppliers - for gas, electricity, water, telephone and any internet or pay-TV providers.

Inform the local council and get a statement for council tax. The Department for Work and Pensions, and HMRC will also need to be informed of the change of address.

Inform your bank(s), as well as any credit card, investment or savings providers, and insurers - for your home and contents, car or any other policies you hold.

Vehicle owners will need to tell the DVLA.

Your GP and any other healthcare provider will also need to be informed.

On the day itself, allow more time than you think you'll need

Moving can be both physically and emotionally tiring, so also allow time for regular breaks - keep that kettle close at hand. You can also make life easier for yourself in the days leading up to the move.

Pack one room at a time and keep these boxes together, so that they're loaded and unloaded from the removal van at the same time.

Mark boxes clearly to indicate their contents, which will make unpacking easier and lessen stress over finding certain items.

Put different-coloured stickers on furniture and let the movers know which colour goes into which room.

Take down any curtains, light fittings or other fixtures that are going to the new home.

Extra notes/comments