

Your Evanston Experts

Jackie
Mack
&
More

The Jackie Mack & More Guide to Downsizing



Thank You
for downloading this guide.
I hope that you find it helpful.

Jackie

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Declutter. Downsize. Delight.

Getting ready to downsize can be an emotional time. It means getting rid of items that you've collected over your lifetime.

But it is also a positive time.

It's freeing up space for your future. Research shows that decluttering is good for your mental health. In fact, it shows that in the end, you'll be happier.

The following are some tips I've learned over the course of my career as a realtor helping my clients aiming to downsize.

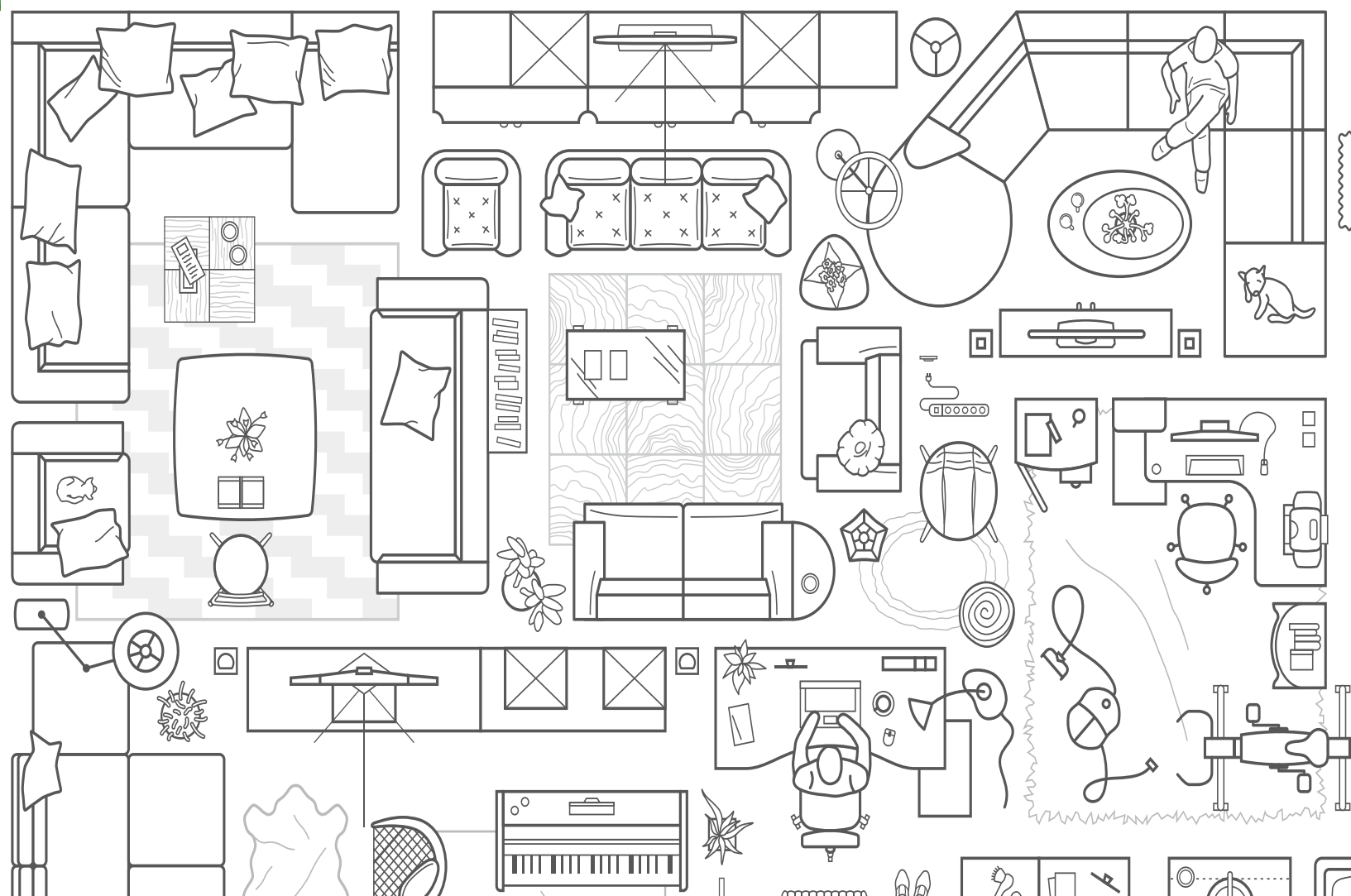
I hope they help you as well!

Set a goal

It's been said that most people can easily eliminate at least 1/3 of their possessions. How much can you eliminate?

To help you set your decluttering goal, imagine your new, organized, and perhaps simpler life. How many rooms will you have in your new home, how do you want to decorate these spaces, and where will you store the items that you will keep?

The answers will help you visualize the end results and determine how much you must eliminate to have the environment you eventually want.





Decide on a system.

Once you have your goal, you need to decide on how you're going to go through your things.

Some experts like Marie Kondo suggest going through like items – clothing, books, pictures, and so on. Others suggest going room by room. Either option can work.

Going through like items shows you the entirety of a collection and, thus, shows you how much you can eliminate – while going room by room can help you feel that you're accomplishing your goal earlier in the process.

Which is best?

It's up to you. Pick one method. If it works, keep going. If not, switch to the other.

Keep. Donate. Giveaway. Recycle. Discard.

Once you have a system, you need to figure out how to divide up your possessions. Your items will fall into one of five categories.

The first is the obvious one – the items you'll retain. For these cherished items, you can either have them remain in their place or, if you are moving soon, you can pack them.

Then among the rest, you will need to decide where they will end up.

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The same goes for identifying the family, friends, and even neighbors who'll receive the family heirlooms you no longer need or enjoy but know that they'll cherish.

For those who are more environmentally conscious, you will want to determine which of the remaining items can be recycled. Every day more items are becoming recyclable – including worn out fabrics such as clothing, linens, towels, and more.

There are many recycling events for computers, cell phones and electronics, financial and other secure documents, and other miscellaneous items that can impact the environment. Follow my Facebook for alerts to these events in or near Evanston.

Finally, the rest will need to be tossed. If you have a large amount, you can call Red's Hauling Service, 773-616-0979, to have your garbage hauled away.

Start with the easy stuff

Nothing breeds success like success, which is why you should tackle downsizing the types of items that are easy to eliminate.

These include:

Books – Unless you're a rare book collector, keep the signed ones and those you have referred to time and again, but the ones you intend to read or think that you might read again – someday – can be given away or even sold online.

Clothing – It's amazing the number of clothing items people collect that they have never really liked (or worn), so there's no need to keep them. Simply admit you made a mistake and donate or resell the items to people who'll enjoy it. Likewise, if it doesn't really fit now (even if you are planning a diet), donate it; then once you complete your diet, you can reward yourself with something new and still have room in the closet.

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start with the easy stuff continued:

Entertainment Media – Eight track and VHS cassettes are not coming back. It's probably the same for CDs. If you're not viewing or listening to them, you can discard them. And, for VHS recording of your family milestones and events can be easily digitized (just like your old home movies).

Holiday Decorations – Keep the most cherished ones and those that you'll use and get rid of the rest. If you're a parent, your children might like some of them. The rest that are in good shape, you can donate to help those who can't afford store bought decorations. If they're not in good shape, either recycle or discard, depending on the materials.



Home Electronics – If you are not using it and especially if it doesn't work, get rid of it. You can drop off electronics for recycling at the Levy Senior Center and at the Evanston Ecology Center. Also visit swancc.org (Solid Waste Agency for Northern Cook County) for details on other drop off locations and times.

Linens – Yes, keep a few matched sets of linens and towels (both kitchen and bath) that are in good condition (and fit the mattresses for bed sheets and kitchen and bath designs in your new home), but you can get rid of the rest. For the items in good shape, you can donate to a resale shop and for the unusable items, you can donate to fabric recyclers.



Magazines – Do you really want your home to look like a doctor's office? Anything older than six months can be easily recycled. If there's an article you really want to read, but haven't yet, you can always tear it out of the publication. Remember, if there is a story you discarded that you want to reference, you can probably find it online.

Newspapers – Unless you're using them to line a birdcage or have a sentimental article about a family member or friend, these should be easy to recycle. Just follow the steps I outlined for magazines.

Recipes – Digitize the ones you love and eliminate the ones you've never tried – even if they sound good preparing "some-day." After all, most recipes can be found online.

Takeout Containers – When you get some new ones, get rid of the old ones. If you use them for storage, you only need a few. Many take-out containers can be recycled and some of them can even be composted.

Takeout Menus – Only keep the few you use often, the rest, of course, can be accessed online.

Tools – You might need one or even two hammers, but not three or four. The same goes for other screwdrivers and other tools. Eliminate the duplicates and the tools you haven't used in a long time – or probably won't use in your new home.



Eliminate the duplicates

Want more easy items to donate, discard, or recycle?

How about extra or duplicate art supplies, coffee mugs, dish sets (how many dish sets will you really use), kitchen utensils (one manual can opener should be enough), office supplies (you only really need one stapler), plastic silverware, water bottles (particularly promotional ones), and more.



Recycle your unused medications

Don't forget to get rid of expired and unwanted medications, another easy win for you.

Just be sure not to flush them down your toilet. Rather, you should recycle them.

Just take them to the City of Evanston Police Headquarters in their original containers. (*Note: you can blacken out your name and prescription numbers.*)

In addition, the Evanston Fire Department collects used sharps, which must be delivered to them in sealed in containers.



Measure up your furniture

If you are downsizing, you won't need as much furniture. And you might want to get something new for a room or two.

The first step here is to figure out how much room you'll have and then prioritize the furniture you'll keep based on the space in the room that they'll go as well as the functionality that you'll need.

Anything low on the priority list – or just doesn't fit in terms of the space or design – can be downsized.

Easy.



Slightly harder:

Figuring out what you'll do with the no longer needed furniture. Again, the decision boils down to donating, giving them away, discarding them, or perhaps, even selling them.

Tackle your art collection

Once you're done with your furniture, you should take the same approach with your art collection. After all, less wall space means less space to hang pictures and display sculptures.



Get Help

It's best to stay positive throughout the decluttering and downsizing process, especially when you get to sentimental items like your jewelry collection.

If you're having trouble deciding what to keep, ask a family member or a friend.

You can also ask yourself the Marie Kondo question:

Does the item bring you joy?

If not – and it's not really a necessity or utility item like nail clippers – then you shouldn't keep it.

Don't think about possible uses for an item that you might need years down the line, because virtually every utility item can be replaced. And if it's a decorative item – i.e., everything from earrings to paintings – that is not creating joy now, it probably won't be bringing you joy down the line.



Keep Going: 9 More Tips for Home Sellers

If you're planning to move once you're done decluttering, here are nine additional steps to help you prepare your home:

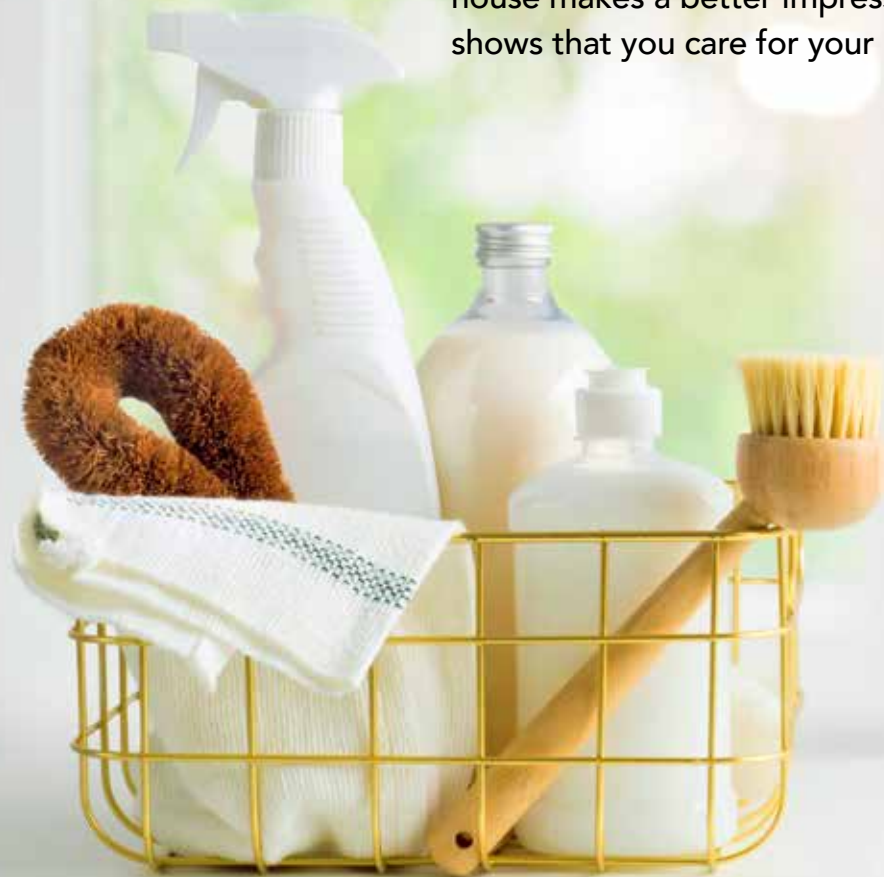
1. Wash your windows & screens. This lets in more light.

2. Keep everything extra clean. Wash fingerprints from light switch plates. Mop and wax floors. Clean the stove and refrigerator. A clean house makes a better impression and shows that you care for your home.

3. Get rid of smells. Clean carpeting and drapes to eliminate cooking odors, smoke, and pet smells. Open the windows.

4. Put higher wattbulbs in light sockets. You want to make rooms seem brighter, especially basement and other dark areas. Replace any burnt-out bulbs.

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5. Repair minor flaws that can create a bad impression. Small problems, such as sticky doors, torn screens, cracked caiking, dripping faucets, may seem trivial, but they give the buyer the impression that the house wasn't well maintained.

6. Tidy your yard, Cut the grass, rake the leaves, trim the bushes, and edge the walks, Put a pot or two of bright flowers near the entryway.

7. Get estimates from reliable repair persons on items that need to be replaced soon. such as a roof. This way, buyers will have a better sense of how much these needed repairs will affect their costs.

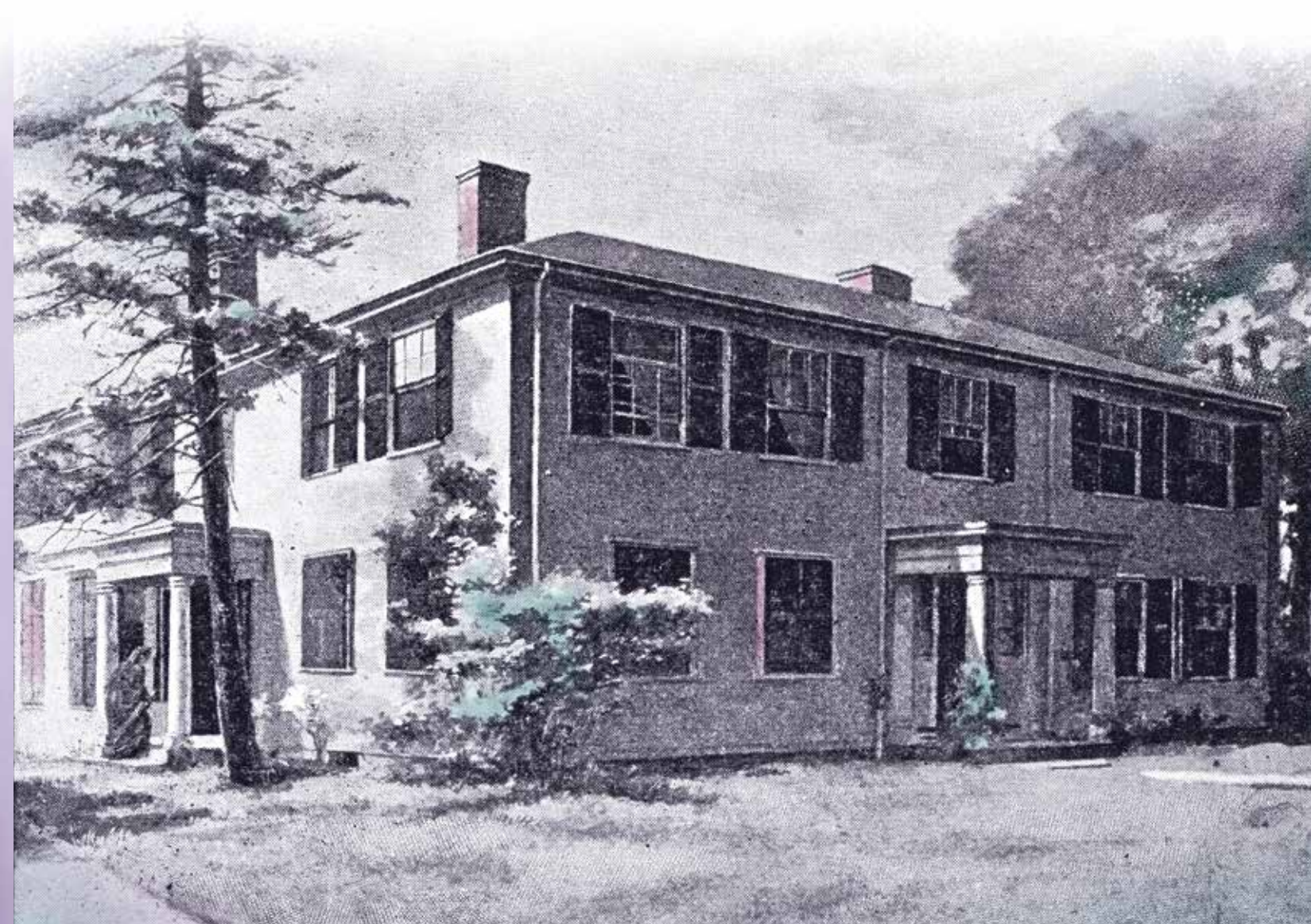
8. Gather the warranties and guarantees on items that will remain with the house. These include the furnace and all appliances.

9. Fill out a disclosure form provided by your Realtor. Be sure not to forget problems, however minor, that might create a liability for you after the sale.

Let's get started.

Even if you don't plan to sell your home and move in the immediate future, now is the time to start. Why hang on to unused, unneeded, or extra items?

The Jackie Mack & More team are here to guide you every step of the way. Just let me know how I and my team can help.



2934 Central Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201

847-274-6676 or info@jackiemack.com



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