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The Calm Florida Downsizing Guide

Start with one closet. Move at your own pace. Keep what matters.

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Maybe you shouldn't read this whole guide today. Not because it isn't useful, but because nobody downsizes a long-time Florida home in a single weekend. Most homeowners I sit with across North Port, Venice, and Charlotte County feel stuck for one simple reason: they look at the entire house at once.

Here's what actually works. You don't start with the whole house, and you don't start with the things that carry forty years of family memories. You start with one drawer, one shelf, or one guest closet—and you give yourself permission to stop after thirty minutes.

1. Where to Start (and Why Small Wins Matter)

Momentum comes from easy decisions, not hard ones. Begin in the **lowest-emotion spaces** in your home so you build confidence before touching keepsakes.

1. **Pick one small zone, not a whole room.** Start with a guest bedroom closet, a linen closet, or a single bathroom vanity drawer. Towels, extra sheets, and expired toiletries rarely carry deep sentimental weight.
2. **Work in 20- to 30-minute sessions.** Set a kitchen timer. When it rings, stop—even if you feel like you could keep going. Ending with energy left over is what makes tomorrow easy.
3. **Touch each item once.** Resist the urge to make a "maybe" pile. Making a clean call in the moment saves you from sorting the exact same box twice next month.

2. How Decisions Are Made: The Four-Box Method

Before you open a single closet, set four labeled boxes or laundry baskets in the hallway. Every item you pick up goes straight into one of these four categories (Sunrise Senior Living):

1. Keep (Moving With You)

Items you use every week, genuinely enjoy looking at, and have a clear spot for in your next home.

2. Sell (High-Value or Niche)

Solid-wood furniture, fine jewelry, power tools, golf clubs, or collectibles worth consigning or listing.

3. Donate (Ready to Help)

Clean furniture, kitchenware, small appliances, and tools in good working order for local charities like Habitat ReStore.

4. Something Else

Family: Ask kids to claim keepsakes now. **Digitize:** Photo bulky albums (BrightStar Care). **Dispose:** Shred old papers or drop off hazardous waste.

Tip for Furniture & Larger Items: Use Colored Sticky Notes

For sofas, dressers, and appliances you can't put in a box, stick a bright colored Post-it on the front so movers, family, and donation crews know where each piece goes at a glance:

DONATE	SELL	KIDS
Habitat ReStore / Charity	Consignment / Estate Sale	Claimed by Family

Before You Keep It, Ask This One Question

"Is this item worth someone packing, moving, and unpacking—only for it to sit on a shelf at a new address?"

The fear that *"I might need this one day"* is what quietly stalls most moves. If you haven't used it in the past year—or you already own another one that does the same job—let it go so you can keep moving forward.

3. Visual Room-by-Room Progress Checklist

Print these pages and keep them on the kitchen counter. Check off each small task as you go, and shade in the milestone boxes below as you finish each zone.

YOUR 5-ZONE PROGRESS TRACKER (CHECK OR SHADE AS YOU COMPLETE EACH AREA)

☐ Zone 1	☐ Zone 2	☐ Zone 3	☐ Zone 4	☐ Zone 5
Guest Rooms	Master Suite	Kitchen	Garage & Lanai	Living & Paper

Zone 1: Guest Bedrooms & Linen Closets — Start Here

- ☐ Keep 2 sheet sets per bed you will have in the next home; donate clean extras.

- [ ] Clear guest closets of spare luggage, off-season coats, and forgotten storage bins.
- [ ] Pare bath towels down to 2–3 sets per person (animal shelters welcome worn towels).
- [ ] Sort unused guest-room lamps, framed prints, and decor into Sell or Donate.

Zone 2: Master Bedroom & Closets

One Drawer at a Time

- [ ] Empty one dresser drawer or one 3-foot closet rod section per session.
- [ ] Donate clothing that no longer fits, pinches, or hasn't been worn in a year.
- [ ] Set aside heavy northern winter coats and formalwear you no longer need in Florida.
- [ ] Gather jewelry, watches, and heirlooms onto one tray—keep favorites, gift or appraise the rest.

Zone 3: Kitchen & Pantry

Easy Everyday Wins

- [ ] Check pantry and spice rack expiration dates first for a quick, zero-emotion start.
- [ ] Trim duplicate utensils (three spatulas, five wooden spoons) down to your best one.
- [ ] Donate single-use appliances you haven't touched in a year (extra coffee pots, bread makers).
- [ ] Keep everyday dishes for 4–6 people; ask family now if anyone wants formal china or crystal.

Zone 4: Garage, Lanai & Outdoor Storage

Florida Heat Check

- [ ] Group hand and yard tools by type; donate working duplicates to Habitat ReStore.
- [ ] Discard Florida heat-damaged items (warped plastic bins, dried-out glues, rusted patio chairs).
- [ ] Separate paint cans, pool chemicals, and pesticides for county hazardous waste drop-off.
- [ ] Decide on bikes, golf clubs, fishing gear, and storm supplies you won't need in your next home.

Zone 5: Living Areas, Paperwork & Photos

Finish Strong

- [ ] Keep favorite books; donate the rest to a local library sale or neighborhood Little Free Library.
- [ ] Gather deeds, titles, wills, insurance policies, and medical records into one labeled folder.
- [ ] Shred expired utility bills and old statements (confirm tax-record timelines with your CPA).
- [ ] Choose your favorite 2–3 photo albums to keep; consider digitizing loose prints and home movies.

“YOUR KIDS DON’T WANT YOUR STUFF”

It sounds blunt, but it’s one of the kindest truths in downsizing: never assume your children or grandchildren want your furniture, china, or collectibles. Let them know you’re starting this project and invite them to share ahead of time if there’s anything specific they’d love to have—so you aren’t paying to store or move things no one plans to claim.

4. Local Florida Donation & Disposal Resources

When your Donate box fills up, local Habitat for Humanity ReStores make giving back simple—and most offer free pickup for large furniture.

Resource	Location & Contact	What to Know
Habitat South Sarasota ReStore	1400 Ogden Rd, Venice, FL 34285 (941) 493-0529	Tue–Sat 9 AM–5 PM (drop-off 10 AM–2 PM). Free pickup for large items (ground-floor only).
Charlotte County Habitat ReSale	Port Charlotte, Punta Gorda & Englewood Pickup Hotline: (941) 639-0586	Accepts gently used furniture, appliances, home goods, and tools to fund local Habitat homes.
Habitat Sarasota ReStore	2095 17th St, Sarasota, FL (941) 363-0777	Tue–Sat 10 AM–5 PM. Free pickup Mon–Fri for bulky items (book 2–3 days ahead).
Venice Chemical Collection Center (South) & **North Port**	250 S. Jackson Rd, Venice, FL 34292 (941) 861-5000 · Mon–Sat 8 AM–4 PM	Paint, pool chemicals, pesticides, electronics, & bulbs (plus North Port events & Bee Ridge Rd).
Central County Landfill & Convenience Center	4000 Knights Trail Rd, Nokomis, FL 34275 (941) 861-5000	Mon–Fri 8 AM–4:30 PM, Sat 8 AM–1:30 PM. Bulk trash & hazardous waste (physical photo ID required).

Quick Habitat ReStore Check Before You Load the Car

Per Habitat South Sarasota County, ReStores cannot accept paint, chemicals, gas/oil cans, mattresses or box springs, rugs, unframed glass, medical equipment, obsolete printers/computers, or TVs over 4 years old (or without a remote).



Want a Second Set of Eyes?

Downsizing doesn't mean you have to put a sign in the yard next week. If you'd like a calm, no-pressure walkthrough to talk through what buyers in your neighborhood actually care about—and what you can skip fixing or clearing—I'm happy to stop by over coffee.

Call or text Bill Bambrick at 941-218-9961 · bambricksellsflorida.com

Because your next chapter matters.