

THE DOWNSIZERS

*Making the most
of smaller spaces*

By Marnie Bennett

A spacious two-storey on an ample lot: it's what many of us aspire to own. But a sprawling estate home isn't for everyone. Many of my returning clients have found that, once the children have grown up and moved away, the family home is far too large for their needs. A few have found themselves obliged to move due to a change in financial circumstances. And a small but growing group are interested in decreasing their ecological footprint: they want to live within walking distance of work and amenities, in a smaller home that requires less energy to run.

Now, smaller doesn't necessarily translate to more modest. I've seen jewel box condominiums that are incredibly luxurious and inviting, in part because of an intelligent use of space. In my years in the business, I've seen thousands of home interiors, exquisite and otherwise. I've seen what works and what doesn't. And when I'm working with clients who are clearly nervous about moving to a smaller home, I like to pass along what I've learned.

The most frequent mistake I've seen stems from downsizers' reluctance to part with their large-scale furniture. Even the most expensive and beautiful chesterfield will look awkward if it dwarfs the rest of the room. As a rule, smaller rooms are complemented by furniture with slender lines, whether traditional or modern in design. Some furniture lines are designed specifically with smaller spaces in mind – seek these out.

For many downsizers, storage presents the biggest challenge. Investing in closet organizers, beds with built-in drawers and pieces such as storage ottomans can make a big difference. One tremendous benefit of purchasing a new home is that you're usually presented with various storage options. If you feel daunted by limited kitchen and bathroom space, select extra-tall kitchen cabinets and vanities rather than pedestal sinks.



Finally, I can't stress enough how important it is to unload your excess possessions before you move. Difficult as it is, you must be merciless: if you haven't used something in the last year, it should be donated to your local thrift store or sold. For those who have difficulty parting with things, I strongly recommend hiring a personal organizer. These professionals are whizzes at simplifying your life.

And then, surrounded only by things you truly love, you can happily welcome the next chapter in your life.



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