

# SELLER'S

GUIDE FOR DOWNSIZERS

COMPLETE GUIDE FOR THE HOME SELLING PROCESS



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# IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO DOWNSIZE YOUR HOME

**Y***our needs are my top priority! I understand that the process of selling your family home can be exciting yet emotional, and I have the tools to guide you through every step.*

This guide compiles information gathered throughout my years of experience helping downsizers in real estate that will help answer your questions and fill in any blanks for you regarding selling your property. The purpose of the guide is to make the process of selling your home easier for you.

I want to ensure your confidence in me and let you know I am here to help the process run effortlessly and smoothly. My goal is always putting you and your family first. This is something I am passionate about and enjoy doing; therefore, I am happy to help guide you every step of the way.

My goal is to provide those in our community with unparalleled service. Along with my years of personal real estate investment and licensed sales experience, I use cutting-edge digital marketing strategies and online platform methods to help you with a heart that cares more about serving you than selling to you. I ensure you have my full integrity in this process. If I haven't left you with an amazing experience, I haven't done my job.



Once you have reviewed this guide, if you have questions or need clarification, let me know. Helping people is my life's work. Let me provide you amazing service as I guide you through one of the biggest journeys one can embark upon.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hope". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'H' and a long, sweeping tail.

- Licensed Broker and Realtor
- Seniors Real Estate Specialist SRES
- Certified Negotiation Expert CNE
- Certified Full Service Professional CFSP
- Accredited Buyer's Representative ABR















# COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

*I am committed to providing clients with the highest level of service possible. Your needs are paramount to me. As a professional in this industry, the most important things to me are service and relationships. This is my ongoing commitment to you.*

*I will:*

-  Treat people honestly and ethically
-  Advise clients like I would a member of my family
-  Charge a fair price for services rendered
-  Return calls/emails in a timely manner within business hours
-  Provide the highest level of service in the industry
-  Provide great communication every step of the way
-  Keep appointments and arrive on time
-  Work with clients by their choice of communication method: call, email or text
-  Make it my mission to take the stress out of the transaction and make it as smooth as possible
-  Be a Fiduciary. The highest legal duty of one party to another, being a Fiduciary requires being bound ethically to act in another's best interest



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

***T**he reason you are moving and your future goals are important to me. When I know what you are looking for, I can better accommodate you and your needs. Tell me your big "why":*

## WHAT IS THE REASON YOU ARE SELLING?

- Easier lifestyle?
- Want new construction?
- Need first floor living?
- Are you moving to be closer to family?
- Looking to age-in-place in a community with assisted living options?

 *My goal in selling my home is...*

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**F**or me to better understand what you are looking for, please fill out the questions below. This will help me serve you better!


 *I want to sell my house because...*

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 *Selling my house would make me feel...*

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 *It is important that my agent...*

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# 5 EASY STEPS TO SELL *YOUR HOME*

## STEP 1 **PREPARE**

- Home Tour and Research
- Listing Appointment
- Hire a Real Estate Agent

## STEP 2 **PRE-LISTING**

- Establish a Price
- Stage Your Property
- Marketing Materials are Designed & Prepared

## STEP 3 **LISTING TIME**

- Your Property Is Officially Launched on the Market
- Buyer Prospecting Time
- Be Prepared for Showings

## STEP 4 **OFFER PROCESS**

- Sales Agreement
- Contingencies
- Under Contract

## STEP 5 **MOVING OUT**

- Closing Preparations
- Moving and Packing
- Closing Day



# PREPARE

## STEP 1



### HOME TOUR & RESEARCH

Before discussing the home selling process and your expectations, we will tour your property so that I may offer insight on what can help you sell your home. Next, we will sit down and discuss the approximate value of your property based on current market trends and recent closed sales in your neighborhood.

### LISTING APPOINTMENT

During our meeting, we will review the **Comparative Market Analysis (CMA)** that includes sold prices of comparable properties in your area. This CMA is based on my research and data collection prior to our meeting. Sometimes the data will need to be adjusted based on the condition of your home compared to similar, recent sales. Based upon the data we review and your needs, we will establish a competitive listing price for your property. We will also discuss the home selling process, timelines and expectations from the sale so that we are on the same page. Additionally, we will discuss my unique approaches to marketing your property so that you can rest assured that we'll do everything possible to get your home sold quickly and for top dollar.



### HIRE A REAL ESTATE AGENT

Selling a home is one the most significant decisions you will make in your life. Therefore, it is essential to have an experienced real estate agent advocating for your best interest during the home selling process. If you choose to hire me, I will walk you through all of the listing paperwork, and we will complete all of the necessary documents to move ahead with putting your home on the market!

To help you decide, here are some unique key services I offer all of my seller clients:

### Unique Key Services

Top priority and attention to your property

Regular and timely communication with you

Active follow-up of every buyer prospect

Work with you and for you to obtain top dollar

Fully customized marketing materials

Suggestions to increase your home's value

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRECTLY *PRICING* *YOUR HOME*



***P**ricing strategy plays a key role in selling your home and can mean the difference between selling right away or sitting on the market for months.*

Virginia's competitive housing market broke numerous records in 2021 according to the December 2021 Home Sales Report released by Virginia REALTORS®. In 2021, there were 154,340 home sales, an increase of 10.2% over 2020. Likewise, the annual median sales price was \$350,000, which is \$30,000 higher than 2020, a 9.4% increase. This price gain was due to historically low mortgage interest rates, low inventory and record sales activity.

***“Virginia's housing market is very strong. The biggest challenge in the market is a lack of inventory. Sales are slowing down a bit because buyers are having a hard time finding homes to consider.”***

*--Virginia REALTORS® 2022 President, Denise Ramey.*

When it comes to pricing your home, setting it at or slightly below market value will increase the visibility of your listing and drive more buyers your way. This strategy actually increases the number of buyers who will see your home in their search process.

Instead of trying to win the negotiation with one buyer, you should price your house so demand is maximized. This way, potential buyers are not deterred by a high price tag, and you don't find it sitting on the market longer than it should. By pricing strategically, you will not be negotiating with one buyer over the price. Rather, you will have multiple buyers competing for the property.





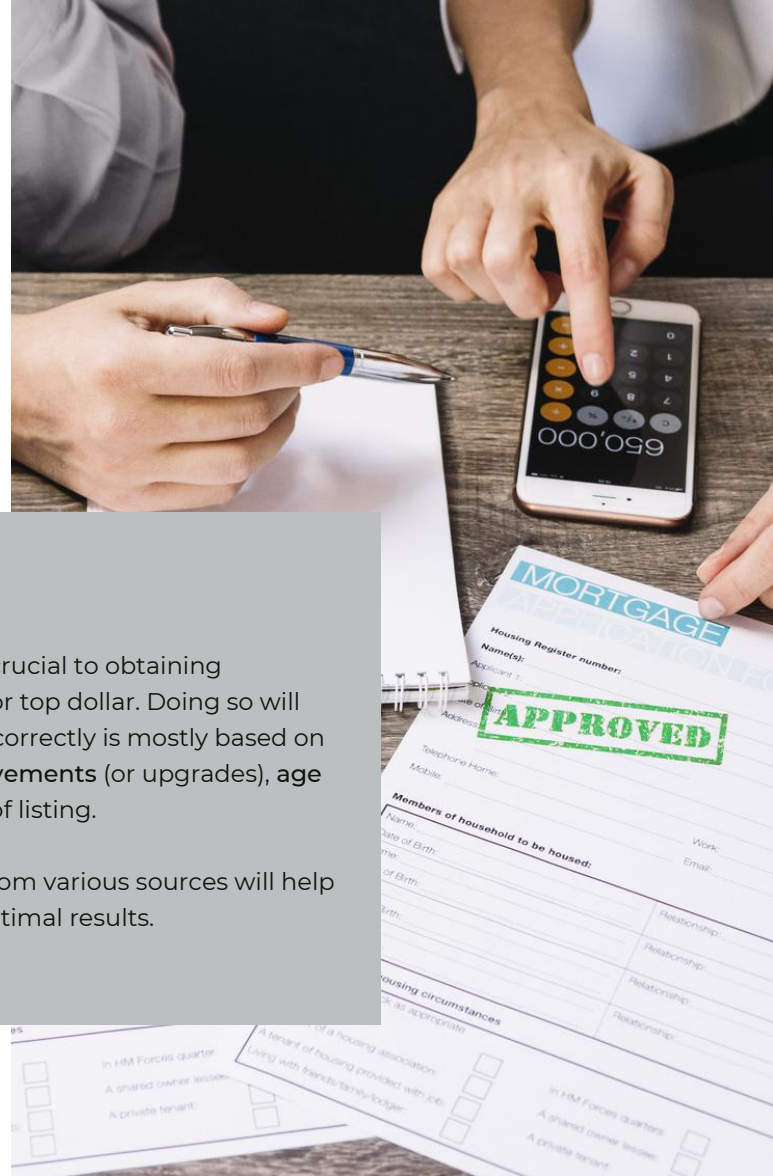
## STEP 2

### *PRE-LISTING*

#### ESTABLISH A PRICE

Pricing your home at the right price *the first time* is crucial to obtaining maximum exposure and selling your home quickly for top dollar. Doing so will also help you save money and time. Pricing a house correctly is mostly based on five factors: the property's location, condition, improvements (or upgrades), age and the market conditions experienced at the time of listing.

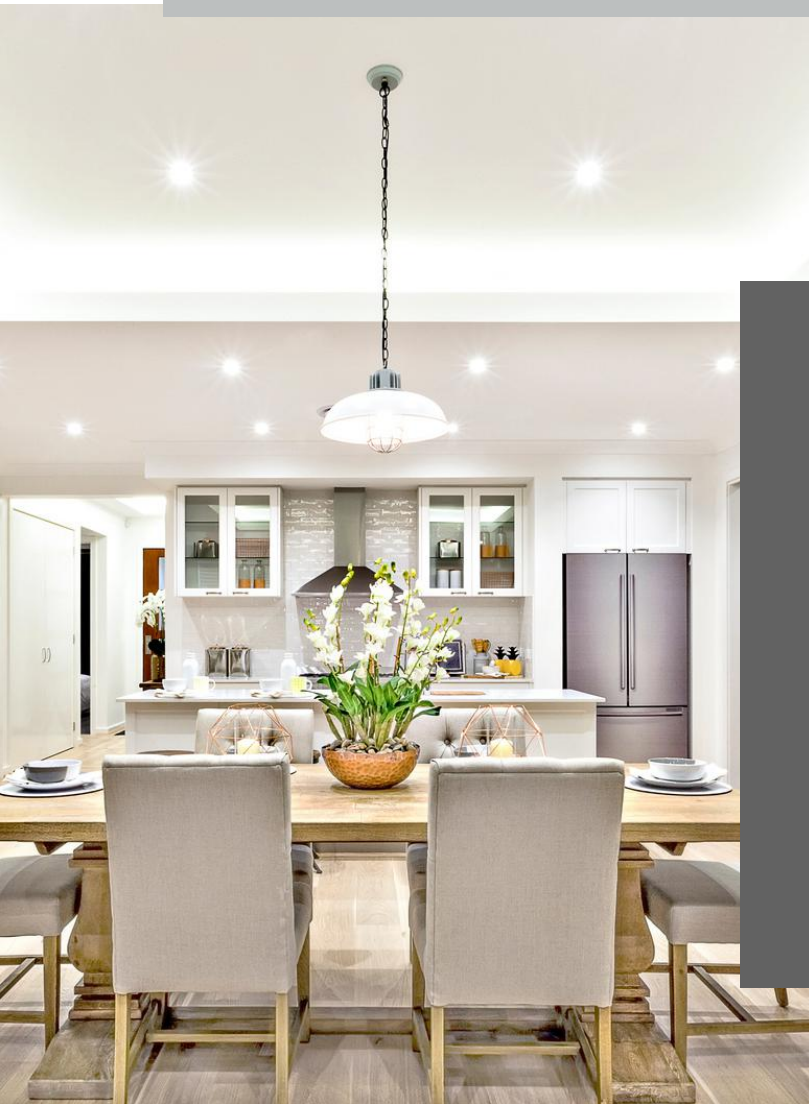
My experience and access to exclusive information from various sources will help us determine a competitive listing price to ensure optimal results.



#### STAGE YOUR PROPERTY

Staging a house is the process of strategically arranging furniture and décor to make a home look its best while on the market. This may involve refreshing your belongings or moving your items out and renting furniture and décor to better suit the room's staging arrangements. My goal is to create a clean, neutral, and coherent look to help buyers imagine what moving into your home could look like for them.

To help, I will give you personalized tips during our initial home tour, provide you with a FREE staging consult with a local staging company, and supply a home staging checklist for reference (see following page).





# HOME STAGING *CHECKLIST*

*To stage your home  
and get it ready for  
launch day, consider  
doing the following:*

## REMOVE PERSONAL ITEMS

A few personal things on display are acceptable, but we want to make sure we leave enough room for a prospective buyer to picture themselves living in the home. Personal items include pictures, awards, personal collections and personal paintings, etc.

## DECORATE YOUR HOME WITH NEUTRAL COLORS

If you plan to paint or replace/rent décor items, consider choosing neutral colors to brighten up the living spaces. Great color schemes to choose from are light grays and whites for main areas and soft blues and greens for bathrooms.

## CLEAR ALL ITEMS FROM COUNTERTOPS

Remember to remove all toiletries in the washrooms and all items from kitchen countertops. However, consider leaving a vase of flowers in the bathroom and a luscious bowl of fruit in the kitchen to add touches of color.



## DECLUTTER, DECLUTTER, DECLUTTER

Unless you have a minimalist lifestyle, you have likely accumulated many items during your stay in your home. As we aim to create an open and clean space inside your home, it is crucial to remove as many unnecessary items as possible. Furthermore, a decluttered home maximizes your home's space which can give the impression to the buyer that your home has more square footage than it has in reality. If you have no space for storage, consider renting a short-term storage unit.

### KEEP THE LAWN MANICURED AND WATERED REGULARLY

Don't forget to trim hedges, weed flower beds, and prune trees regularly. Also, keep the lawn free of clutter and add fresh mulch to garden beds.

### WASH OR PAINT THE HOME'S EXTERIOR

Don't skip pressure washing the exterior to make your home shine! A fresh coat of paint on the exterior trim work (and siding) will make your property's curb appeal stand out. This is not really a low-budget job, but if you can, I recommend doing it!

### DECORATE YOUR FRONT PORCH

Depending on the size of your front porch, consider adding outdoor pots with plants to finish off a warm look. Add a new welcome mat and hang a beautiful wreath on your door. To freshen up your front door, add a fresh coat of paint.

### DEEP CLEAN THE ENTIRE HOUSE

Everyone loves a clean home, so clean yours better than ever. Buyers will notice! Don't forget to clean all flooring and pet areas as well.

### MAKE ALL BEDS AND STYLE THEM

Add multiple coherent décor pillows to make a bed look more comfortable and inviting. Buyers love crisp, white linens and pillows.

### ORGANIZE CLOSETS

If you have hall/linen closets, try to make them look as organized as possible. If you have a walk-in closet, remove as many items as possible to make it look very spacious. Keep 1-2 weeks' worth of clothing and linens in your closets, if possible.

### HIDE ALL ELECTRONIC CORDS

Use twist ties or clips to secure cords. Also, consider hiding or removing any unnecessary devices (such as video game consoles).

### ADD CLEAN TOWELS IN THE BATHROOM

Place them neatly. Crisp, bright white is best! You can also add rolled-up towels to create a "spa" look. Hide your soap, toothpaste and shampoo.





## **MARKETING MATERIALS ARE DESIGNED AND PREPARED**

A professional photographer will take high-quality photos of your home after your property is staged. At the same time, all of the marketing materials will be designed and customized to match and include the stunning pictures of your home.

Once all of the marketing materials are designed, they will be downloaded and prepared for printing. Before listing day, some of the marketing materials (brochures, business cards, etc.) will be personally delivered to your home. That way, they can be displayed for showings and available to buyers as they are viewing your home.

Aside from printed marketing materials, I will also tackle the digital world by having professional social media posts, such as "Coming Soon" and "Just Listed" posted on my social media pages with targeted ads behind them to reach more prospective buyers.



# PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY PRE-SHOOT CHECKLIST

## EXTERIOR

- ☐ Clean up the landscaping: trim bushes and mow/edge lawn
- ☐ Close garage doors
- ☐ Pressure wash driveway/walkup
- ☐ Remove children's toys and hide trash cans
- ☐ Remove yard clutter
- ☐ Remove cars from driveway

## GENERAL

- ☐ Leave all lights on and turn off any ceiling fans
- ☐ Turn off any devices (including TVs)
- ☐ Open all blinds and curtains
- ☐ Declutter the entire home: remove any excess furniture and any other items
- ☐ Touch up paint
- ☐ Deep-clean the entire home

## BEDROOMS

- ☐ Make beds and tidy up the rooms
- ☐ Remove any personal photos and items
- ☐ Store away toys, clothes, devices and valuables

## BATHROOMS

- ☐ Clear countertops completely
- ☐ Keep toilet seats and lids down
- ☐ Remove plungers and cleaning items
- ☐ Clean all glass surfaces and mirrors
- ☐ Hang clean towels neatly and remove rugs
- ☐ Remove all personal items (i.e. soap, shampoo, etc.) from tubs and showers

## KITCHEN

- ☐ Clear countertops completely
- ☐ Empty sinks and store dishes away
- ☐ Empty and hide garbage bins
- ☐ Remove all magnets from refrigerator
- ☐ Remove or hide any pet food, accessories or kennels



## STEP 3

# LISTING TIME



## YOUR PROPERTY IS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED ON THE MARKET

The day you have been preparing for is finally here! On launch day, your property will be officially posted online and appear as an active and new listing on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). From this day until an offer has been accepted, many real estate agents will be making showing requests. So, get ready to leave your home on short notice and prepare to be gone for a few hours at a time.

Now, a common question from sellers is: "When is the best day of the week to launch our listing?" One thing to remember is that whenever I list a property, I strive to obtain multiple offers on your home to ensure you get the best price for your home. To do this, it is vital to get as many showings in the shortest amount of time as possible.

Weekends are the peak days of the week when people are most available to view homes. Therefore, if we list early in the week and receive an offer immediately from a few buyers who viewed your home, you will not be giving a chance to those who are mostly available on weekends to view the property. You will have to respond or decide on the offer you have already received early in the week.

Therefore, I recommended launching your property closer to the weekend - more specifically, on a Thursday - to ensure maximum buyer exposure and get as many showings as possible within a few peak days.





## BUYER PROSPECTING TIME

Starting on launch day, my massive marketing plan exposing your property to prospective buyers will begin. Consistent exposure of your home will be spread across all of my social media platforms. Targeted Facebook and Instagram ads will begin and the audience will be customized according to the types of buyers I aim to attract for you.

Additionally, the marketing of your property will continue until an offer is negotiated and accepted.

## BE PREPARED FOR SHOWINGS

Once your property is launched, real estate agents will start contacting me to make showing appointments. Depending on your property and market trends, you may experience many showings in a short span or occasional ones. In any case, it is crucial to be prepared for showings. Here are some tips to help you during this time:

Be flexible to prospective buyers' schedules to avoid missing out on a strong offer.

Get everyone in your household on the same page regarding when showings are scheduled so they can keep their spaces clean and tidy.

Have your entire household ready to leave your home so that buyers will feel more comfortable and can visualize themselves living in your home.

Create a particular mood by setting a tone that accentuates your property's features. Examples include: generate a luxurious atmosphere by placing two clean champagne glasses on a table with a bottle of champagne or sparkling cider; turn on some soft music at a low volume, drape sensuous materials such as chunky knit blankets over your chairs and sofas. Avoid heavy air fresheners which may alarm some buyers.





# SHOWING TIME

## GET YOUR HOME READY:

- Make the beds
- Move pet dishes, toys and kennels out of sight
- Put up your "show" towels
- Create extra light in the house by opening curtains and blinds
- Empty all trash
- Vacuum all carpets
- Clean all glass and mirrored surfaces
- Sweep the front porch and shake out the door mat to remove debris
- Put laundry away: hide in basket with towel folded on top if necessary
- Turn on ALL lights
- Clear kitchen and bathroom countertops (except for decorative items)
- Close all the toilet seats
- Wipe down all countertops
- Secure your pets or take them with you
- Sweep and mop all hard-surfaced floors
- Put away the dishes: place sponges and cleaning items under the sink
- Turn on soft music to greet buyers
- Mow and trim lawn
- Leave 15 minutes prior to the showing time



## STEP 4

# OFFER PROCESS



## SALES AGREEMENT

Once a buyer tours your property and decides they would like to purchase it, the buyer's agent will prepare an offer and send it to us.

After an offer is submitted, we will review it together. Although it may be tempting to go with an offer that has presented the highest sale price, we will also consider other factors: contingencies, financing conditions, closing timeline, deposit and repair requests.

Once we have discussed an offer, you will decide how you want to move forward. You can: **accept** the offer, **decline** the offer, or **counter-offer** (which occurs when you want to negotiate certain terms). If you choose to counter-offer, the buyer would have to decide whether they wish to accept, decline, or counter that counter-offer. After negotiations, if all parties (buyer and seller) agree with all terms of the offer, we will finalize all signatures. Next, the buyer will deposit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) with the Escrow Agent. Afterward, any inspections, appraisals, financing approvals or other contingencies will take place.

## CONTINGENCIES

Contingencies (or conditions) are found in most sales agreement contracts. The most common ones included in a contract are home inspections and appraisals.

A buyer can hire a professional **home inspector** to review your property's condition closely. The home inspection typically takes 2-4 hours. If the inspector finds items that need to be repaired, the buyer will send a repair addendum and home inspection report with their repair requests in writing. In this case, a negotiation period will begin where you can accept, decline or counter offer their repair requests.

An **appraisal** is often requested by the buyer's mortgage lender to ensure that the buyers are not overpaying for your property. No matter the result, I will assist you in making the right moves if and when necessary.

All conditions have deadlines which the buyer must meet, or the buyer can waive the contingencies to keep the transaction proceeding toward closing.



## UNDER CONTRACT

The "under contract" period begins after the buyer and seller finalize and sign the sales agreement. This is called "ratifying" the contract. During this period, a binding agreement exists between the seller and buyer involving a property. When a property is "under contract," the seller may not enter into another contract with a different buyer, as the buyer is now obligated to purchase your home. A property is still considered "under contract" when there are contingencies as long as all parties are working toward a successful closing.

## MORE ABOUT HOME INSPECTIONS



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. WHEN DOES A HOME INSPECTION USUALLY TAKE PLACE?**

**A.** Although home inspections can take place later, usually the appointment takes place within 1-14 days after signing the contract.

**Q. HOW MUCH DOES THE HOME INSPECTION COST FOR SELLERS?**

**A.** Good news! Buyers choose and purchase a home inspector's services at approximately \$300-500, so they incur the whole cost. Therefore, there is NO COST to you, the seller.

**Q. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INSPECTION IN TERMS OF NEGOTIATIONS?**

**A.** Negotiations usually happen within a few days of the home inspection appointment. If there are any issues with the property that the home inspector finds, the buyer can:

- **Accept** the house as-is
- **Back out** of the transaction
- **Negotiate.** They can ask you to make the repairs before closing day or you can give a credit towards the repairs and the buyer will repair the items after closing.

### TYPES OF INSPECTIONS THAT CAN BE PERFORMED:

- Basement
- Foundation
- Crawlspace
- Roof + Components
- Doors (including garage doors)
- Electrical
- Attic + Insulation
- Appliances (select)
- Windows + Lighting
- Well
- Grading + Drainage
- Structure
- Exterior + Siding
- Plumbing
- Radon
- Heating + Cooling
- Septic Tank
- Pool



## STEP 5

### MOVING OUT

**C**losing day refers to the day that finalizes your sale. At closing, funds and documents are exchanged to transfer ownership to the buyer. After closing and deed recordation at the courthouse, you will receive any remaining funds from the sale of your property.

#### CLOSING PREPARATIONS

At this point, the buyer's loan approvals have been met and closing documents have been ordered. The closing appointment has been scheduled: now it is just a matter of preparing for the big day.

As you prepare for closing day, make sure you have completed the following duties:

- Gather your seller documents
- Deep-clean your house, keep lawn tidy
- Turn off all valves & switches after moving out
- Set your insurance policies to cancel the day AFTER closing
- Change your address on subscriptions, bills, banks, etc. Forward all your USPS mail.
- Set utilities to transfer to buyer on closing day
- Collect all house keys, remotes, shed keys and mailbox keys for the buyer and put them in kitchen.

#### MOVING AND PACKING

While you wait for closing day to arrive, don't forget to plan and prepare for your move into your next home!



#### CLOSING DAY

Closing day is here! The buyer will have a final walk-through of your property 24-48 hours before closing. This is to ensure that you have left your home in the same condition as they purchased it and to check that the agreed upon repairs have been completed.

As a seller, you will sign your closing paperwork a few days prior to the closing date. Typically, you will sign final paperwork at your lawyer's or title company's office. You will need to bring some documents with you, including:

- Valid government-issued ID
- Any outstanding documents requested from your lawyer or closing company

Both the buyer and the seller will incur closing fees. For the seller, these fees typically include:

- Closing Attorney or Title Company fees
- Real Estate Commissions
- Any unpaid septic, well or termite inspection fees
- Remaining balance on mortgage
- Any outstanding taxes, fines, assessments, or claims against your property
- Property taxes (prorated with buyer)
- Recording fees



# Downsizing Tips

## Step 1: Decluttering for a Fresh Start

Downsizing often means parting with years of accumulated belongings. While it may feel overwhelming, breaking the process into smaller steps can make it manageable. Here's how to start:

### ***The Three-Box Method***

Label three boxes as Keep, Donate, and Toss. Begin in one room—preferably a smaller or less sentimental space like a bathroom or hallway closet. Pick up each item and ask yourself:

- Do I use this regularly?
- Does this item bring me joy or have a strong purpose in my life?
- Will this item fit into my new, smaller space?

*If the answer is "no" to all three, it's time to let it go.*

## Step 2: Deciding What to Keep

Making decisions about what stays can be tough, especially when sentimental value is involved.

### ***Here's how to decide***

- Start with the Essentials: Keep what you use daily—kitchen tools, clothing, toiletries.
- Prioritize Sentimental Favorites: For keepsakes, choose a select few meaningful items to take with you. For example, keep one quilt instead of all the ones Grandma made.
- Digitize the Memories: For photo albums, children's artwork, or bulky mementos, consider scanning them into a digital format. This preserves the memory while saving space.

## Step 3: Preserving Memories Without the Clutter

You don't have to keep everything to honor a memory. Here are creative ways to hold onto what matters:

- Create a Memory Box: Set aside a small box for the most cherished items—letters, a few photos, or a special heirloom.
- Pass It On: Gift sentimental items to family members who will treasure them.
- Take a Photo: If parting with an item feels impossible, take a photo of it and write a short story about its significance.

## Step 4: Letting Go with Purpose

Donating items can bring comfort, knowing they'll benefit others. In Central Virginia, consider these local charities and services:

- Mercy Mall and Habitat for Humanity ReStores: Perfect for furniture, clothing, and home goods.
- Local Consignment Shops: Sell higher-value items to generate extra cash.
- Online Groups: Use platforms like Facebook Marketplace or Nextdoor to pass items directly to neighbors.
- Redemption Thrift will often pick up furniture items that meet their needs





**TAKING OUR MEMORIES WITH US...**  
**Embracing a new season and**  
**honoring our past.**

***Selling your home is an important and emotional moment  
in your life. Let me help you.***

***For more information about buying or selling your home, contact me  
today!***

*www.HopeGeorgeRealEstate.com*

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