



Dare to Downsize

Janet LaBerge is the owner of Dirty Deeds, Done Dirt Cheap, a full service clean out company in Pembroke. She recently opened “Good Deeds”, a thrift store in Pembroke, selling all the items that come in from Dirty Deeds.

I have been in business for nine years now and in that time, I have seen my share of overwhelmed home owners at the start of their downsizing process. Moving from a 5 bedroom home that is full of memories, old furniture, paperwork, and all the other things that can take up 3000 square feet of space is a daunting task. I'd like to share with you the things that I have learned to make the process a little easier.

1. **Break it down:** I usually tell an overwhelmed homeowner, “How do you eat an elephant?” The answer is, “One bite at a time”. That is the same way that we will approach a clean out. Don't look at the whole picture, but break it down into manageable segments. Start in the area that you use the least, whether it's the attic, basement or a spare bedroom. If you haven't seen or used items from this area in over a year, chances are they are things that you can let go of fairly easily. Completing one area will not only give a sense of accomplishment, but will create space for sorting items from other rooms.
2. **Categorize:** When I am doing a clean out, my goal is to touch each item only once and put it in the correct category. Things are either recyclable (metal, paper, glass, plastic); keeping (stuff you want family members to take or is going to the new home); donations (anything serviceable that no one in your family wants); or trash.
3. **Reality Check:** Many homeowners falsely believe that their kids will want the good china set, Grandma's drop leaf table or the two piece china hutch to display the aforementioned china. In reality, the china may be beautiful, but your kids don't entertain like you did and don't want something that they can't throw in the dishwasher. If Grandma's drop leaf table had a Pottery Barn or Crate and Barrel label on it, then your kids might be interested. The china hutch? No one displays the paper plates they actually use on a daily basis and most kids don't have a truck to transport such a heavy piece of furniture. Better to shop at IKEA or Wal-Mart so they can go shopping again when it falls apart in a couple of years. While I appreciate the quality of old furniture, the reality is that most young people do not and you must be prepared to have your kids say, “No thanks”.
4. **Plan to use local resources:** No new homeowner wants your old paint (it's expensive and difficult to dispose of), tile or molding. Call your town hall to find out when hazardous waste day is so you can take any non-latex paint, stains, anti-freeze, etc. when this is offered. Find out what your local transfer station/dump/curbside hauler will take for free or for an additional fee. Each town is different. Some will allow one large piece of upholstered furniture every week (Pembroke) or only twice a year (Norwell). Disposal of trash that is not normal household trash is expensive, which is why budget conscious towns vary in what they will take. This is also why there has been such an increase in private junk removal companies.
5. **Hire professionals:** Know when you need to call in the experts. If you don't have the knowledge, strength, resources or desire to do the clean out yourself, call for help. The best way to find a good junk removal company is via a referral from someone you trust. Make sure the company you hire is fully licensed and insured.

I hope you will find this advice helpful as you start this process of downsizing your belongings. At Dirty Deeds, we offer free estimates and are happy to share our knowledge with you. You can contact us at 781-308-4447 or learn more about our businesses at: www.dirtydeedscheap.com and

www.gooddeedsstore.com

