

What Not to Pack for Senior Living

Moving into senior living is a fresh start. It's a chance to experience life differently, without the worries of cooking, home maintenance, and daily chores. Instead, you get to focus on wellness, social connection, and comfort.

As you pack for your new life, here's one important thing to keep in mind. No matter what type of community you're moving to, your new home will likely be smaller than your current one. This is your opportunity to let go of what you don't need and bring only what makes daily life wonderful. Think like Marie Kondo: keep only what sparks joy.

This process of downsizing can be liberating, allowing you to focus on the things that truly matter to you. To help you get the most out of your new space, here's a guide on what *not* to bring. These tips will make your new home secure, functional, and still very much your own.

Why Downsizing Matters

Senior living apartments are thoughtfully designed, but they're often more compact than a traditional house. You may be moving into a space that is less than 1,000 square feet. Large furniture, duplicate items, and decades of belongings won't all fit. More importantly, you won't need them. Most senior living communities, especially assisted living and skilled nursing, provide daily meals, maintenance, security features, personal services, and healthcare. There's no need to bring your entire household with you. Instead, think about your new home as a simplified space, set up to support the things that matter most: your happiness, , comfort, and daily routines.

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Disclaimer: Information provided above may vary by community. We encourage you to speak directly with each Senior Living community to confirm specific details and ensure the community is the right fit for your individual needs and preferences.

15 Items to Leave Behind

1. Bulky or Oversized Furniture

Large sectionals, formal dining sets, and heavy dressers will quickly overwhelm a small space and limit your ability to move. Instead, bring smaller, multi-purpose pieces like a compact loveseat with storage, a kitchen table set, and a nightstand with storage.

Pro Tip

Ask the community manager for the square feet and floor plan of your unit, and make sure all furniture fits into it.

2. Furniture with Glass, on Wheels, or Needs Repair

Glass tables are prone to tipping, cracking, or shattering. Opt for something more stable and senior-friendly. Furniture on wheels can also slide unexpectedly and cause falls. Likewise, if a piece is wobbly or needs fixing, leave it behind.

Pro Tip

Bring only items that are sturdy and in good condition. You don't want to have to replace anything right after you move into your new home.

3. Too Many Decorative or Collectible Items

It's tempting to bring all your favorite décor, but too many knick-knacks create clutter and limit space for what you really need. This includes framed photos, artwork, decorative bowls and dishes, vases, figurines, books, and other collectibles.

Pro Tip

You most likely won't have room for your collection of ceramic frogs or your antique train set. Choose a few special pieces for your new home and leave the rest with family to enjoy.

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4. Floor Décor and Throw Rugs

Avoid bringing items that sit on the floor, like standing vases, plant stands, planters, or large sculptures. They can become tripping hazards. Also, throw rugs and loose carpets are one of the most significant tripping hazards for seniors. If you must have a rug, choose a low-pile, non-slip option that you can anchor under furniture.

Pro Tip

Clear walkways help prevent falls, especially if you're using a walker or cane.

5. Kitchen Appliances, Tools, and Dinnerware

Senior living communities typically offer daily meals in a shared dining space. There's no need (or space) for a full kitchen setup in your apartment. You won't need china sets, silverware, wine glasses, kitchen utensils, pots, pans, mixing bowls, etc. Also, many communities ban toasters and hot plates as fire hazards.

Pro Tip

If you have a kitchenette in your new home, pack only a few basic items, like your favorite coffee mug, a water glass, a set of silverware, and a couple of small plates or bowls.

6. Duplicate Items

You won't need multiple sets of any household items like dishes, bedding, blankets, and towels. In addition, you most likely won't have room to store extra toiletries, household paper and cleaning supplies, and other supplies like batteries or stationery.

Pro Tip

Bring only the items you use regularly: your favorite blanket, softest sheets, and most comfortable robe and slippers.

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7. Excess Clothing and Footwear

Closets in senior living apartments are usually smaller. Focus on comfort and functionality. Pack a week's worth of everyday clothing, a few dressier options for outings, sleepwear, and one or two pairs of sturdy shoes with non-slip soles. In colder climates, bring only one coat and accessories.

Pro Tip

Leave behind high heels, rarely worn outfits, formal wear, extra outerwear, and excess accessories.

8. Old and/or Valuable Paperwork

You won't have room in your new home to store boxes of old tax returns, receipts, or outdated files. In addition, leave valuable papers like your birth certificate or living will with someone you trust.

Pro Tip

If you don't have a family member to keep your most important documents, digitize them to be stored in the cloud or on a thumb drive.

9. Candles, Electric Blankets, Space Heaters, and Heating Pads

These items are typically prohibited in senior living due to fire risk. Many communities don't allow anything with an open flame or high heat.

Pro Tip

If you enjoy scents, consider a plug-in fragrance diffuser or battery-operated candle instead.

10. Stored Items

Don't plan to bring the contents of your attic or basement with you. Most senior living communities have limited storage. Bring only items you actively use.

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Pro Tip

Ask a family member to store your cherished photo albums, holiday decorations, family memorabilia, artwork, furniture, and other stored items.

11. Extension Cords

Extension cords can be a tripping hazard. Also, the community's fire safety rules might not allow their use.

Pro Tip

Instead of extension cords, pack grounded power strips that turn on and off for additional outlets.

12. Expensive Items and Excess Cash

It's wise to leave high-value items in a safe deposit box or with a family member. That includes heirloom jewelry, rare collectibles, and large amounts of cash.

Pro Tip

If you must bring valuable items with you, invest in a small safe to store them in. Make sure a trusted family member knows how to access the safe if you're not able to.

13. Large Amounts of Hobby Supplies

If your hobbies require a lot of supplies to store, such as sewing, knitting, or painting, consider downsizing your supplies into a single, compact storage unit.

Pro Tip

Bring just enough supplies to enjoy your hobby in your new space and rotate finished projects in and out with the help of family or friends.

14. Power Tools and Repair Supplies

You won't need your toolbox, ladder, or power tools. Senior living communities have maintenance teams who can help with hanging pictures or fix a squeaky hinge. Save the space and leave the tools behind.

Pro Tip

Let the experts take care of any repairs or updates you need in your new space. That's what you're paying for!

15. Weapons or Hazardous Supplies

Even if your collection means a lot to you, the community likely won't let you keep items like knives, guns, or chemical supplies in your unit.

Pro Tip

Talk with your community about their security guidelines and consider passing your collection to family or donating it.

Final Tips for a Smooth Transition

Moving into senior living means stepping into a lifestyle that's simpler, secure, and more supported. You'll have less responsibility and more time to enjoy what matters most.

To make the most of this new chapter:

- **Take measurements.** Know exactly how much space you have before packing.
- **Start early.** Downsizing is emotional. Give yourself time to make thoughtful choices.
- **Ask for help.** Family, friends, or professional downsizers can make the process easier.

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- **Pack your “first night essentials” separately.** Include a set of pajamas, medications, and a few comforting items like a pillow and a book to help your new apartment feel like home.
- **Download this handy packing checklist.**

Downsizing Doesn't Mean Leaving Everything Behind

Downsizing can be a joyful experience. Letting go of belongings doesn't mean letting go of memories. It's about creating space for what's next. By bringing only the things that bring you comfort, joy, and practicality, you'll set yourself up to thrive in your new community. And you won't be alone, your neighbors are doing the same.

Your Lifestyle, Your Way at Kisco

At Kisco Senior Living, you'll live the way you want, with security, engagement, and purpose. We're here to support you every step of the way. Let us help you start your next chapter with confidence. Contact us today to learn more.

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