Your Home in Retirement

A planning guide for thinking through staying or moving, before anyone has to decide.

Most people treat this as one question. It is really three: whether a move makes sense at all, when to do it, and where to go. Trying to answer all three at once is what keeps the same conversation going for years.

This guide separates them. Part One is the three questions, with no math. Part Two is your numbers.

This guide is educational. It is not financial planning advice, tax advice, a recommendation, or a suitability review, and it does not account for your individual circumstances. Any figures shown are general limits, not targets for your situation.

> **How to use this guide**
>
> Fill it out on your own first. Then compare.
>
> That one step is what makes it useful. Couples often discover they agree on the answer and disagree on the timing, or the reverse.
>
> Part One takes about ten minutes. Part Two needs a recent statement or two.
>
> There is no score. A blank line is a question worth asking, not a failure.
>
> Individual results will vary.

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Clear guidance. Coordinated planning. Calm decisions.

Part One: Should You Move at All?

No math on this page. Just what you each actually want.

What is pulling you toward a move

- [ ] **The house is more than we need now**

  Rooms that go unused, or a yard that has become a chore.

- [ ] **The upkeep is getting harder**

  Stairs, maintenance, or repairs you no longer want to manage.

- [ ] **We want to be closer to family**

  Or closer to medical care, or to a community we already know.

- [ ] **We would rather have the money working elsewhere**

  A large share of net worth is sitting in one asset.

What is holding you here

- [ ] **This is home, and that matters**

  Neighbors, memories, and a place that already fits.

- [ ] **Moving is expensive and exhausting**

  Commissions, repairs, the move itself, and furnishing a new place.

> **The one to write down**
>
> If we never moved, what would we regret? And if we moved next year, what would we miss? Answer both before you look at a single number.

Part One: When, and Where

Two separate questions that often get tangled together.

When

If a move happens, what year?

A guess is fine. Write the first year that comes to mind.

- ☐ **Before we stop working**

  Income is still coming in, which can make a mortgage or a bridge easier.

- ☐ **After we stop working**

  More flexibility on timing, and a different tax picture in some years.

- ☐ **Not tied to a date at all**

  Tied to an event instead: a health change, a grandchild, a market.

Where

Same area, or somewhere new?

What kind of place?

Smaller house, condo, community with care available.

> **Where couples usually differ**
>
> It is rarely the if. It is usually the when, or how far. Naming which of the three you disagree on is most of the work.

Part Two: Your Numbers

Rough is fine. This is for a conversation, not a tax return.

What the house has done

What you paid for it

The original purchase price.

Improvements over the years

Additions, a new roof, a finished basement.

What it might sell for today

A recent estimate is enough.

Rough gain

Sale price, minus what you paid, minus improvements.

How much may be tax-free

Under current rules, a single filer may exclude up to $250,000 of gain and a married couple filing jointly may exclude up to $500,000, if they meet the ownership and use tests. Gain above that may be taxable.

Your exclusion limit

$250,000 or $500,000, depending on filing status.

Gain above the limit, if any

This is the part that may be taxable.

Part Two: The Cost of Staying

A move has costs. So does staying. Both belong on the page.

Property taxes, per year ______________________

Insurance, per year ______________________

Up roughly 46 percent nationally since 2021.

Upkeep and repairs, per year ______________________

An honest average, not a good year.

Total, per year ______________________

This is the cost of staying put.

One more line worth adding: if you would move, check whether your doctors are in network under the coverage you would have at the new address.

> **The tests, in plain terms**
>
> You generally need to have owned the home and used it as your main home for at least two of the five years before the sale.
>
> For a married couple, either spouse can meet the ownership test, but both must meet the use test.
>
> The exclusion can generally be used once every two years.
>
> A surviving spouse may be able to use the full $500,000 if the sale happens within two years of the death and they have not remarried.
>
> The share of a home that passed at a spouse's death is generally revalued as of that date, which can reduce or eliminate the taxable gain.

These are general rules with exceptions. A conversation with a qualified tax professional is the right place to confirm how they apply to you.

Part Two: The Cost of Moving

The side people underestimate. Rough figures are fine.

One-time costs

Commission and closing costs

On both the sale and the purchase.

Repairs to get the house ready

The move itself

Decades of belongings is rarely a weekend job.

Remodeling the new place

Single floor living, wider doorways, a step-in shower.

Furniture that fits

Pieces sized for the old house often do not work.

Costs that change with the address

New property taxes, per year

New insurance, per year

Association or community fees

These often replace some upkeep rather than add to it.

Travel to see family, per year

If the move puts distance between you.

Bring It to a Conversation

The filled-in version is the useful version.

Bring your pages to a conversation and we will run the real numbers with you. That means the sale side and the staying side together, how a move would fit your income plan, and which of the three questions is actually the one to settle first.

What to bring

So the conversation starts with facts.

- [ ] These pages, filled in as far as you got
- [ ] Your spouse's copy, if you are planning together
- [ ] A recent estimate of what the house might sell for
- [ ] Your most recent property tax and insurance bills
- [ ] Any questions you were unsure how to answer

Have a question about your own house?

It is a good time to look before anyone has to decide.

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Individual results will vary.

Important Disclosures

Sources

Internal Revenue Service, Publication 523 (2025), Selling Your Home. irs.gov

Internal Revenue Service, Topic No. 701, Sale of Your Home. irs.gov

Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, Public Law 105-34, amendments to Internal Revenue Code Section 121

Insurify, 2026 Insuring the American Homeowner Report, home insurance premium trends. insurify.com

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