

# HOME STAGING TIPS

In order to get the most money in the least amount of time for your home, you need potential buyers (and their agents) to feel it's a "hot property"! Here are some low cost tips to help get you started . . .

**Consider the curb appeal.** Landscaping is nice, but not in everyone's budget. At minimum, lawns should be freshly mowed, leaves raked, or snow shoveled. Consider a hanging or potted plant for the entrance. Sweep the porch, deck and all walk ways and ensure garbage and recycling are tucked neatly away from the front of the house. Naturally, there shouldn't be toys or junk lying around outside. Scrub your front door, porch, outside railings and steps. This is cheaper than repainting (or renting a power washer) and makes a world of difference. Once the outside entrance is clean, decide if the paint really needs a touch up.

**Get rid of clutter!** Pick one closet or area at a time so the task isn't as daunting. Look at every item with a *very* critical eye and ask yourself why you're keeping it. Forget about hanging onto stuff for that big garage sale. Pick your favorite charity and donate it all. You paid for these things long ago, why not just give them away to people who REALLY need them? You'll probably have to edit the same closets a number of times to really whittle them down to the "essentials". If rooms and closets still look cramped, rent a storage locker.



Clutter was removed from the desk top and credenza. It's also important to get those piles of "stuff" off the floor and into storage or recycling. Here a large painting provides a stunning focal point for the end wall and emphasizes the generous size of the room.



Extra furniture and clutter removed and missing tiles at the bottom of the cabinets replaced with a close match. Always put away dish drying racks, especially if the kitchen has a dishwasher!

Eliminating clutter includes putting away personal items. Is your fridge covered in photos and school notes? Does the edge of your bathtub look like a drugstore shampoo aisle? This makes it harder for potential buyers to imagine themselves living in your space.

**Turn excess inventory into cash.** If you have a collection of items for projects you never got around to, return them. This also applies to the two-year supply of light bulbs, canned goods or paper products sitting in your basement. Without a receipt you won't get cash, but you will have a store credit that you can use once you move. Less clutter and less stuff to pack, move and unpack again!

**Watch where the eye goes.** There are speedy and low cost solutions to many of the little problems that together make a home seem shabbier than it needs to. Walk along each corridor and into every room and check where your eye is drawn (better yet, ask a critical friend or family member). If the eye is drawn to the chipped white paint on the door frame, take some "white out" and fill it in. If it's those old nail holes in the wall, see if you can hang a picture to cover them.

Glue any peeling wallpaper. If it's really horrible and you can't afford the time or money to fix it properly, hang pictures and strategically place baskets. You won't cover the problem entirely (which would be wrong anyway), but you will draw your audience away from the problem by giving their eyes something more visually pleasing to focus on.

When arranging items remember that symmetry brings a sense of order and calm to the space.



**Find a fix-it person.** Ensure cupboards open and shut and that no taps are dripping. Look in all rooms for things you never got around to fixing and decide which ones might be distracting to potential buyers. No, it's not OK for door handles to fall off, even if *you* have learned to ignore it!

**Clean, clean and clean again.** Most mortals can't live in a spotless environment all the time. This can be one of the more stressful aspects of having your home on the market— but it's worth the effort to sell your home for top dollar. You can hire a professional service to come in and deep clean everything; then take 20-30 minutes each day to maintain it.

Appliances should sparkle even if you're not including them with the house. After all, you might throw them in later as a negotiating tool. Counter tops, taps, sinks and bathtubs should be shiny and free of water spots.

If you have a pedestal sink, don't forget the dust that collects on top of the plumbing where it attaches to the wall. If the *whole* sink is spotless and the taps aren't dripping, it will look new!

Dust shelves and vacuum or "Swiffer" the floors. Naturally, all beds should be made. At a recent open house for a home listed over \$500,000 (and over 60 days on the market), they hadn't even bothered with these two simple steps! It made you wonder what bigger things had been neglected.

Remember clean windows let in more light and look newer. Hire a service if you have to— it's worth the investment.

If all this attention to detail seems over the top, remember that a very clean home leaves the impression that *the house* is well cared for. This helps put buyers at ease— especially a first time buyer who may be worried about the responsibilities of owning a house.

**Let in some air.** Open some windows for at least 10 minutes. There is nothing worse than walking into a stuffy house or one that smells of smoke and pet odors.

**Let in some light.** It might be mood lighting to you, but if you're trying to sell your home, keep it bright! Dimly lit rooms tend to look small and dingy— especially during the day. If you have a particularly dark room, consider investing in a floor lamp that will bounce light off the ceiling.

If your walls are so dark that they're sucking up all the light, consider repainting. You can even buy a small can of a lighter shade of your wall color, mix it with glaze and rub it onto the wall. It will reflect light and give the room a more open feeling. This approach saves much of the preparation and clean up involved in repainting.



It's important to open all window coverings and lights prior to house showings. Don't assume the agent showing your home will do this. This also creates the impression of lots of activity.

**Don't forget fresh flowers.** You don't need to spend a fortune to have fresh flowers throughout your home. Even a daisy in a bud vase brightens a bathroom counter. Ask your florist which blooms last a week. You can also use potted flowering plants that are in season for a low-cost solution. Don't use plastic or obviously fake flowers, especially in an expensive home!

**Carefully consider music.** Soft background music can help create a soothing environment and camouflage neighbor and traffic noise. But make sure the volume is very low. Blaring TVs are definitely a no-no, but you'd be surprised how many people leave them on for showings!



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