

Quick TIPS FOR STAGING® YOUR HOME

BY CALIE WATERHOUSE

When you get ready to place a home on the market for sale it becomes a product, and just like any product on the shelves at your local store it has features and benefits, pluses and minuses, and there are other products to compete with. Sometimes it's difficult to think of a home as a mere product, but it helps to think that way so that you can get top dollar for your property and sell it in a reasonable amount of time. Here are some tips for starting the staging® process.

1. **Spick & Span** – Clean! This is perhaps the most important quality a home can have. If you don't have the time, or don't want to clean yourself, hire a service. Pay special attention to the home's focal points, such as entryways and fireplaces, as well as kitchens and baths. Keep your home as spotless as possible while it is on the market.
2. **Goodbye Clutter** - Pack up the little things. Little things create clutter and they need to be packed up anyway, so pack them up now. Take a hard look at those beloved houseplants, there may be too many or barely clinging to life. Mantels and hearths need to be cleared off except for a very few necessary items. Reduce the number of books on bookshelves, family photos, and bath and kitchen countertop items. Pack up all collections. They become a distraction for buyers from the desired focal point...your home. It will feel more spacious when you are done!
3. **Odor Control** - The scent of your home can leave a permanent impression on potential buyers. In fair-weather months, open windows and doors to let in some fresh air. During winter months, the smell of baking (bread, cookies, pie) leaves a pleasing aroma. Avoid cooking smelly foods before showing your home. Candles and potpourri can give a quick fix, but don't overdo it – stick with safe scents like vanilla. In the case of trapped-in odors, such as "old house" smell, a commercial deodorizer can be rented for a day and the effects last three weeks.
4. **Light Brightens** - Light makes a room seem vivid and uplifting. Unless you are disguising an unsightly view, leave all drapes and blinds open to let in natural light. Clean windows and screens, inside and out. The difference can be remarkable. Some places, such as laundry rooms or hallways can be very dark, so leave them lit for showings. In large rooms, if overhead lighting seems too blunt, use lamps to set the stage.
5. **Room Revision** - In every room...stand at doorway and look at the room through the eyes of a buyer. What do you see? What can you live without while your home is on the market? Over time, rooms get chock-full of stuff. Pack up all valuable items to protect them. If there are items that you were planning on selling or giving away, do it now. To create more space you may want to remove some furniture. This will let the room "breathe", feel more spacious, and more attractive to buyers. (Remember the model home!)

6. **Furniture Layout** - Placement of furniture can also open up a room. Don't be afraid to move furniture from room to room. That extra chair from the living room or dining room may just look great in the master bedroom. Avoid lining furniture along all four walls. In the living areas, be sure to enhance any potential selling points such as a nice fireplace and include an area for cozy conversation.
7. **Textile Revival** – Remember, you are “putting on a show”. Toss your used bath towels and dishcloths in the dryer before heading out of the house. Soiled or shabby towels are a faux pas for home showings. Consider investing in some new towels (or use ones in good condition) that you can keep out while your home is on the market. Carpets and rugs should also be in good condition. And if they are not completely necessary, such as in an entryway, or hiding a beautiful wood floor, they should be removed altogether. Never lay a rug over carpeting. Threadbare or shabby bedspreads should be replaced and beds should always be made.
8. **Plant Life** – Fresh flowers can add big impact to your indoors, especially in the entryway. Seasonal market bouquets are fairly inexpensive and look great in any room in the house. Go across the street and look at your landscaping from a prospective buyers point of view. Any trees or shrubs that hide a good view of the house should be pruned, trimmed or removed. If you need additional or updated landscaping, consider using mature plantings for a more established look.

IN GENERAL . . . Try to look at your house “through a buyer’s eyes” as though you’ve never seen it before. This exercise will help you see what needs to be done. Any time and money invested on these items will usually bring you the return of more money and a quicker sale.

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