

MAKE A FIRST GREAT IMPRESSION WITH HOME STAGING

PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SALE

Kitchen Area

Clear off counters, put dishes away & remove magnets from refrigerator

Pantry Area

An unorganized pantry area looks like there is not enough storage space

Dining Room

Remove extra leaves from table & remove extra items from china cabinet

Living Room

Arrange furniture to a conversation friendly design

Master Bedroom

3 rows of pillows, an updated comforter & a bed skirt

Front Yard

Mow lawn, trim edges & maintain a green lawn

Bedrooms

Keep it plain & simple
A bed, nightstand, dresser & lamp

Backyard

Remove any extra items, put away pet & kids toys.

Bath Rooms

Fresh & clean linens a must!

Decks & Patios

Set patio table so they won't want to leave

Office Area

Clear off that desk, sort thru stacks of paperwork & file

Pool, Spas & Pool House

Get pool equipment in working order



Laundry Room

Put soap & cleaners in cupboard or neatly on shelf

Garage & Carports

Clear off work bench & organize

Hallways & Closets

Repair marks & nicks on wall. Tidy up & organize closets

Game Rooms

Show off your game room by uncovering equipment

Basement & Attics

Box up unused items & store in 1 corner of basement or attic

Entertainment Rooms

Leave out the cork collection

Family/ Exercise Rooms

Remove clothing, shoes & old sports bottles from the exercise room.

Entryway & Foyers

A hall table w/greenery & mirror works well

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MAKE A FIRST GREAT IMPRESSION WITH HOME STAGING

WHAT IS HOME STAGING?

Home Staging is the preparation of a home to sell by combining three key elements: (1) the design, (2) the flow and (3) creating curb appeal. By staging a home it offers: organization, a more roomy/spacious feeling, and adds brightness and an airy sense of feeling to the potential buyers.

The four (4) things that affect the sale of your house are: (1) location (2) market conditions (3) condition of your home and (4) the presentation of your home. Staging your home gives you the competitive edge in the real estate market world. In a “hot” market, a staged home will usually sell for more money. In a slow market, a staged home will sell while others continue to stay on the market.

Following is a list of suggestions from some of the homes I've staged, some will apply to your situation and some will not. So, please feel free to engage in some of these ideas, use them all or use some – it's totally up to you. But please keep in mind that selling your home is not the same as living in a home and that first impression counts! The memories you have of your home now should not show up in the house you sell. The goal in presenting your home for sale is to have nothing interfere with the potential buyers' image of living there. The following is a list of suggestions to guide you in your home staging process.

THE GOALS OF HOME STAGING

1. To make a great first impression.
2. To maximize your space & eliminate any clutter.
3. To utilize natural & artificial lighting thereby creating an open spacious feeling.
4. To de-emphasize the negatives in your home and call attention to all the positives.
5. To make your house appealing to buyers with a variety of tastes.
6. To create a sense warmth within your home.
7. To bring your home up to date as much as possible.

LET'S START MAKING THAT FIRST GREAT IMPRESSION

What is the first impression that gives the potential buyer the desire or need to see the inside of the house? Think about it for a second. Yes it's the curb appeal! Take a walk across the street and look at the front of your house, now be honest and be objective. How's the mailbox? Is it properly maintained? Could it use a freshening up with paint or polish or just a good cleaning? What about the post area? Is there vegetation grown around the post? Could you plant flowers and spread mulch as appropriate weather conditions allows? What about your house number? Is it clearly visible and can be read at night?

Check out the garage door(s), do they look clean and well painted? Are all of the outside light fixtures clean? Now what about the windows do they shine? Are the matching flowerpots at the entry ways placed so as not to crowd the doorway? What's the condition of the door mat is it time to replace? (**Tip:** Buy a door mat larger than the size of the door. It gives the doorway a larger feel & look). Check the roof and gutter area. Remove any branches, moss, leaves or any other debris that shouldn't be there. Are the eaves free from mildew, cobwebs, birds & bees? Now what about the front door & threshold. The front door & threshold should be in pristine condition. Dust, paint or power-wash the front door (if your home's paint is cracked or peeling and your intention is to not repaint the door, then do not power wash it, it will only cause further damages to the door and surrounding moldings). (**Tip:** Suggested color for painting front door, black, red, or dark green – be sure it goes well with siding). Inspect your walkways, do they require a weeding? Could some of the cracks be repaired?

THE FRONT YARD AREA

Now let's move onto the front yard. Are the grass areas green and free from bare spots? Try to keep your lawn as green as possible. Mow, maintain and keep edges trimmed. What about the bushes & shrubbery? Could they use a pruning or removal of all dead wood and underbrush? Let's remove all holiday lights from the roof line & shrubbery now. Flower beds should be raked and weeded. Remove any dead plants and spread new mulch. (**Tip:** Add new wood chips or mulch to spruce up a garden & make it appear professionally landscaped). And lastly, make sure all the windows are clear of any outside vegetation; we want to allow the most amount of natural light into the home as feasible. (More on the backyard later).

THE ENTRYWAY & FOYERS

So now let's move onto the entryway & foyer areas - the grand entrance. Wow them now! This is the first impression the buyer gets of the inside of your house. This first impression sets the positive or negative tone for the rest of the house. So step back and take a good look at the entryway & foyer area. What can you remove? The coat rack could be removed completely or at least left empty. Hide the key rack, remove any boxes or storage units, and remove the stacks of mail, shoes and baseball cap collection. Remove excess wall clutter, such as dried flower wreaths and family photographs. Keep the entryway as neutral in color as possible. (**Tip:** A hall table with some greenery & mirror works well in this area). Place a small votive candle that can be safely used to warm & scent the entry on the hall table. Lastly clean the floors.

THE DINING ROOM

The dining room should be a dining room and not anything else. Consisting of a dining table, four (4) chairs, six (6) at the most, and a hutch/china cabinet. Remember the buyers should be able to walk around the table comfortably. (**Tip:** By removing any unnecessary pieces of furniture it creates the impression of more square footage). Clean all light fixtures including the ceiling fan. Take the extra items out of your china cabinet. Featuring 1 place setting per cabinet window opening & don't forget to clean the glass. Any mirrors? Make them sparkle. Set your dining room table – no tablecloths please. (See setting your dining room table).

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen is the heart of the home. Most homes have many small appliances sitting on the countertops. The counter tops surfaces should be completely clear. No microwaves, toasters, blenders, mixers, popcorn makers, coffee pot, napkin holder, can opener, salt/pepper, or dish racks. We want to create the impression of more counter space and a sparkling clean kitchen.

CABINETS

1. No plants or items of any kind should rest atop the cabinets.
2. Move half of everything in your cabinet cupboards to the garage for storage.
3. Modernize the cabinets by replacing brass knobs with chrome, brushed nickel and iron handles. (**Tip:** Murphy's Oil Soap mixed with hot water works wonders cleaning wooden cabinets. Follow up by polishing with Howard's Wax).

STOVE

1. Replace old electric burners & inserts or if you have a glass top range I use Mr. Clean Magic Eraser Pads to get up any burnt residue and followed by a glass cleaner to make it shine. Do you have a self cleaning oven? Let's tackle that job too!

REFRIGERATOR

1. Clear refrigerator of magnets, calendars, photos, appointments or whatever.
2. Clean the refrigerator inside and outside. Buyers will open up the refrigerator. Remove any extra food and place a box of Arm & Hammer baking soda to absorb any leftover odors and to keep the refrigerator smelling clean.

OTHER ITEMS

1. The garbage can should also be cleaned and rid of any odors. Change the garbage bag daily from this point on. Please only one garbage can per kitchen and if possible stored in a cabinet or out of sight.
2. Remove any excess storage cabinets and bins.
3. Pet dishes should be removed.
4. Sponges, soap dispensers, scrubbing pads, etc. need to be stowed away – out of sight. Removal dish towels, paper towels and paper towel holders.
5. Move the water dispensers to the garage.
6. If you have a kitchen table let's set the kitchen table.
7. (**Tip:** Fresh fruit or vegetables make wonderful kitchen decorations).

THE PANTRY

An unorganized, crowded pantry area looks like there is not enough storage space. Start by removing everything and then wash down the shelves. Restack your products neatly back on the shelves with no open boxes please – make sure all covers are closed. Your pantry shelves should look like grocery store shelves. All products should be lined up facing forward with the product labels facing out. And by the way...let's remove everything off the floor.

THE LIVING ROOM

Ah the living room – buyers need to see the living room too! Let's start by clearing out the items that do not pertain to the living room such as exercise equipment, office or game room items; we need to present the living room as a real living room. Now let's arrange the furniture into a conversation friendly design and remove any unnecessary pieces of furniture or clutter to the garage. (**Tip:** Face the sofa towards the fireplace or focal point of the room; place a chair on either side of the sofa with the coffee table in the middle). Throw rugs should be removed, unless your floors are tile or hardwood. Open the window coverings allowing the flow of natural light and to make the room appear larger. New pillows and throws may be used to minimize robust colors or hide imperfections. Clean the carpet, and if you have pets, use a cleaning product to neutralize odors. Fireplaces must be cleaned, dispose of any ashes and place logs or candles resting on the grate depending on the season. Have a rusted fireplace screen? (**Tip:** Spray paint it black with a heat-resistant spray paint). And lastly don't forget to hide any electrical cords.

THE FAMILY ROOM

Okay now let's tackle the family room! By now you know the drill. Remove any additional items & furniture. Does the family room have fireplace? Arrange the furniture to enjoy the fire, not the TV. Entertainment equipment & speakers should be minimized – clean up that rat's nest of wires. Clean off bookshelves, mantels and coffee tables. No books or magazines under the coffee table or under the couch, please. Again take away the throw rug under the coffee table unless the flooring is hardwood or tile. Live plants should be removed unless they are well pruned and in perfect shape. Create a sense of warmth with the use of pillows, candles, fresh cut flowers. Remove any family photos – for security reasons. Hide those electrical cords.

THE MASTER BEDROOM

Bedding is especially significant in the master bedroom. Therefore, utilize the bed as the central focal point of vision for your master bedroom. A bed should include 3 rows of pillows, an updated comforter and bed skirt. Comforters should be turned back about twenty inches. Next pull back the flat sheet to meet the top of the comforter. Then starting at the headboard place the pillows you sleep on. Then place the Euro shams next, followed by 2 king size shams. Finish with three small decorative pillows. (**Tip:** Use three Euro shams for a king size bed and two for a queen or full). Decorate the bed with a breakfast tray, tea set or champagne flutes, napkins and a bud vase (this will give any bed the look of a showroom floor bed). Now place a vase of fresh flowers and a scented candle on the dresser. Remove all items except the lamps off the night stands. Clean out the closets and make those mirrored closets sparkle. (**Tip:** Single women should put men's clothing in the master bedroom closet - better safe than sorry). Hide any extra clothes, personal photographs, accessories, books, clocks and the phone – yes, go ahead stuff it under the bed. Coordinate master bathroom towels with your bedding. Again hide any electrical cords. (**Tip:** Target, Kmart, Wal-Mart & Kohl's sell great bedding sets for less. Bed in A Bag varieties is usually a good deal at stores like Macy's).

THE ADDITIONAL BEDROOMS

Keep these bedrooms fairly simple & eliminate personal tastes. The additional bedrooms should be gender neutral as possible. A bed, nightstand, dresser and lamp, along with some neat bedding. To start remove all posters, put away the toys, pictures, trophies, and crafts. Remember to store all personal photos – again for security reasons. Try to coordinate the drapes with the comforter making this room very stylish. Keep it light in color. Make the bed and roll the bedding back the same as in the master bedroom. Take everything off the night stand but the light and hide the alarm clock, phones, Kleenex boxes and glasses under the bed. Robes, ribbon holders, and hampers hanging from the back of the door need to be packed away. Put closet doors back on hinges if off. Remove additional rugs if you have carpeted rooms. And check to see if the ceiling fan is squeaky or wobbly. **(Tip:** Open a book on the bed and add a pair of old glasses if you have them).

BATHROOMS

Perhaps a little elbow grease in here please. Scrub the bath counter tops, sinks, toilets, showers, tubs, and mirrors until they are fully clean. Check the bathroom grout. It must be in good condition, otherwise consider re-caulking the tub and sink area. Replace or eliminate decorative toilet seat covers and remove contoured toilet rugs. Install a new shower curtain and liner. Remove or hide the toilet bowl cleaners, plungers and wastebaskets. All bath room reading material can be donated to a local library, disposed of or packed away for future reading. Be sure to remove all toilet items from the bathroom and place them in a basket or zip bag under the sink. Replace the dirty hand soap with a bottle of liquid hand soap. The bathroom fan is an item often forgotten. Flip the switch and check for loud noises, remove dust bunnies and repair or replace as necessary.

Now regarding the linens. Having clean, fresh, and new linens is essential. Coordinate all towels using only 1 or 2 colors. Fold the towels into thirds and hang neatly over rack. **(Tip:** Tie the towels with a ribbon to discourage buyers from using them. Place a silk flower or some greenery in the ribbon). Set out a large fragrant candle on a candle dish making sure that the fragrance of the candle does not conflict with any other fragrances used in the house.

THE LAUNDRY ROOM

The laundry room for the most part is very plain. A quick cleaning and neatening is probably all it requires. Give the washer & dryer a good cleaning on the outside and remove that excess spilled detergent. No detergent, no clothes or clotheslines left in this room please. Perhaps a cute picture could be hung. If your laundry facility is in the garage, put a rug in front of the washer & dryer. **(Tip:** Set out a nice laundry basket filled with rolled towels). Dispose of those excess hangers. Turn on the lights in the laundry room when showing.

HALLWAYS

Hallways seem to get a lot of traffic. Look at the hallway walls – are they clean? Any marks & nicks on walls that need to be filled? Perhaps a repainting of the hallway is in order. Remove any plastic runners as they can be slippery. Keep the floor clean & clear of anything. If carpeted, clean the carpet.

THE OFFICE

It's okay to leave those hunting, fishing, and golfing pictures in the office! Remove all diplomas, schooling certificates, awards from the walls and again all personal photos. The desk should be cleared off. Go through those papers and stacks on your desk and organize or file them. Don't leave anything personal out for anyone to see. Computers, printers and fax machines are okay. Hide those electrical cords. If possible, move metal filing cabinets to the garage. Keep bookshelves half empty – remove all paperback and leave the hard covered books. **(Tip:** Push books to the back of the bookshelf to give the room a larger feel). Organize shelving accessories in bundles of three and separated by theme and color. Remove any plastic runners from under the desk chair. Leave a large book open on the desk.

THE EXERCISE ROOM

Consider turning the exercise room back into a bedroom. Remove all clothing, shoes, and old sports bottles from the exercise room. Plastic mats under exercise equipment should be removed if cracked or torn. Store signed baseballs, jerseys and other sports memorabilia in the garage if small enough to be stolen. Put a clean new towel over the handrails of the exercise equipment. Put vanilla plug-in deodorizer in the room to make it smell pleasant.

GAME ROOMS

Game rooms are always an exciting & fun room in the house. Let's show off your game room by uncovering the equipment. If you have a pool table, uncover it and set with 2 cue sticks and racked balls. Place a tray with 2 beer mugs and 2 cloth napkins next to the balls. Ping pong tables set up with the 2 paddles and ping pong ball and again set 2 beer mugs and 2 cloth napkins. A bridge table – set it up with the cards, some glasses and cloth napkins. Keep the wall hangings simple and minimize any clutter in the room. Bistro tables with matching stools look great in game rooms. Turn on all the lights in the game room. This includes any lights over pool tables, ping pong tables, bridge tables, etc. Eliminate smoke and cigar odors by cleaning carpets and using vanilla plug-ins.

HOME THEATER AND ENTERTAINMENT ROOMS

The walls in the home theater & entertainment room should be freshly painted with a dark color. Keep the room well lit while on the market. Popcorn & soda machines can stay. Why not set out a tray with soda bottles, cloth napkins and a big bowl of popcorn!

THE BAR

Pack away the booze, at least out of sight. Leave decanters, ice bucket and crystal glassware. Don't forget to remove the bowl of matches, stack of coaster & jar of swizzle sticks. I have seen some fun cork collections on bars – keep it out. Stage a bar counter with beer steins or wine glasses and cloth napkins. Leave a nice bottle of wine in an ice bucket with a candle and cloth napkins. Decanters look great on any bar but make sure they sparkle and enjoy the brilliance.

DECK AND PATIO AREAS

Decks and patio areas today are a large part of family life. They should be safe & attractive. Power wash the patio & deck areas & stain if needed. Put down the umbrellas. Cover the BBQ if it's in sketchy shape. Dispose of any old flower pots and excess furniture. Reduce any clutter. If it is a nice day, set your patio tables. Use a tablecloth, cloth napkins and non-disposable dishware. Make it an inviting area so they want to stay!

THE BACKYARD

Pack away kids & pet toys. Bring in lawn mowers, rakes, shovel and other tools left outside. Keep your lawn as green as it can be. Check your fencing – repair any broken parts of the fence and paint/stain if necessary.

POOL & SPA AREAS

Nothing like showing off a fresh crystal clear pool. Power wash the concrete perimeter of the pool. Get pool equipment in working order. Face all chairs & lounge chairs towards the house. Deflate & remove floating chairs and other water toys. (**Tip:** Have a pool fountain? – let's get that up and running). Leave spas uncovered or folded back – throw in some large bright beach balls to catch the eye of the buyer. Turn on the bubbles – this makes the spa look more inviting and soothing.

POOL HOUSE AND CABANA

Make sure the pool house and cabanas are clean and organized. The use of vanilla – plug-ins gets rid of the wet towel odors & makes the pool house smelling fresh. Set out fresh towels in bright colors. Consider painting the walls and cleaning the carpets. If you are using your pool house as extra storage space, move the excess stuff to the garage.

THE BASEMENT & ATTICS

BASEMENT

If the laundry facilities are in the basement, leave the washer & dryer in the basement. Check the vent connection for the dryer, making sure it is secure and properly vented outside. Move all storage boxes to one side of the basement corner and away from the furnace area. Clean the basement stairway. Vacuum the basement floor, cob webs and any bugs. Don't forget the basement windows need a good cleaning too – some more natural light. Clean off your furnace from the built up dust and perhaps have the furnace serviced now. Smells of musty odors and dampness need your attention to rid these odors. Use of room deodorants, disinfectants & sprays can help. (**Tip:** Put a dehumidifier in your basement to any remove dampness).

ATTICS

Do you have a pull down ladder? Let's start by checking it over and making sure it is secure and in good condition. You don't want any buyers possibly getting hurt. If you have a stairwell to the attic, remove everything off the stairs. Provide plenty of light in either case. If there is flooring in your attic space, vacuum the floors, cob-webs & bug residue. Consider airing out the attic if you have windows or by opening the vents. If you are using your attic for storage spaces consider moving all storage items to one (1) corner of the attic. Attics as the rest of the house need to be clean and well organized.

THE GARAGE

Most buyers don't care too much about a garage. If there is a work bench, make sure it is cleaned off and tools are organized. Vacuum the floor to as clean as possible, get rid of cob webs & bugs. Make sure that the window in the garage is cleaned as well. If you have electric garage door openers, make sure they are in working order and above all make sure the safe guard that prevents the door from closing works! You definitely don't want anything to happen to the buyers' child. If you have too much stuff stored in the garage consider renting a portable storage unit. Remember to keep garage doors down while home is on market.

REVIEW OF ODOR CONTROL

Beware of cat, dog, unusual cooking spices and smoking odors. Smoke odors can sometimes be difficult to get rid of. Clean your carpets, drapes, linens, air filters and clothing. Remove all ashtrays and clean up any butts. Smoke outside temporarily. Pungent spices can be stored in an airtight container. Clean the cabinets, floors, and stove top to remove any spice residue. Sometimes a fresh coat of paint is your best defense against strange odors. Febreze and other fabric sprays can do wonders – but be sure to check the label for fabric limitations. Candle manufacturers make great cookie and pie fragrances candles that smell like real. Another suggestion would be to keep a bucket of frozen cookie dough and bake them when having an open house. All pet dishes, beds, toys and blankets should be tucked away. Remember this is also an emotional time for your pet as well. Make sure all pet stains are cleaned up, including the yard. Diaper pails must be cleaned. Clean walls around the toilet if excessive amount of urine are present. Use a solution of water and bleach but make sure it is safe for your walls. Take out the trash daily when your home is on the market. Use vanilla plug ins where needed. The best thing is to get some fresh air – open up the windows and enjoy the fresh air.

NOISE CONTROL

Play easy listening music or close the windows.

LIGHTING

Turn on every single light, lamp and chandelier in your home – the brighter the better & even in the daytime. Energy saving bulbs makes your house appear dull and drab – please change them temporarily to the traditional light bulb. Old, yellowed, or dust ridden lamp shades should be replaced. Wal-Mart, Kmart & Target have a great selection of lamp shades. Be sure to remove the plastic protector from the lamp shades. Pull up the blinds and open the shades. Let the sun shine in. Clear away any plants or brush that blocks natural light from entering the home. Remove window screens – place them in the garage and give the windows a good cleaning.

HOBBIES AND COLLECTIONS AND VALUABLES

Keep all collections to a minimum – less always looks better – pack them safely away. Collectables like Beanie Baby, Precious Moments, GI Joe, Star Wars and other stuff animal collection should be packed up and stored for its new home. Sports collectables like a signed baseball, bats, and jerseys should be removed if they can easily be stolen. CD's and videos should be stored out of sight. Orchids can stay in the home, if you are an orchid lover. Just remove the dormant plants.

My personal definition of what makes something valuable is (1) if it is dear to me (given to me by friends or loved ones) (2) expensive or costly or perhaps priceless and (3) if the item is useful to me. Each of us has our own definition of valuable. So my suggestion to you is...that if something is valuable to you in whatever sense of the word, put it under lock and key, store it, rent a lock box, put it someplace safe or with someone safe, please don't risk the loss...it could be irreplaceable.

SETTING TABLES

In the dining room, I prefer six place settings with only four chairs if the space allows. The first layer in setting the table is to place a charger at each setting. Chargers come in a variety of colors (gold chargers are my favorites). A dinner plate is placed on top of the charger. In the center of the dinner plate I place a handful of: kidney beans, lentils, peas, dried cranberry, black beans, coffee, or navy beans. In the center of the beans I like to use a good set of artificial fruits and vegetables such as pears, apples, artichokes, lemons, and any other fruit that will compliment a table. For the centerpiece instead of fresh flowers which can be costly week after week, I have several good artificial quality centerpieces. Also silver, porcelain, iron or crystal candle holders or candelabras are attractive as well. Please be sure to use safe candles. I like the small votive variety which can be lit on the day of your open house. In addition, dining room place settings should include: water, wine and champagne glasses. It doesn't have to be expensive; we are establishing a fun and festive dinner party in progress. Always, always use cloth napkins. No paper or plastic on the table! Set the napkin inside of the wine glass or water glass.

If it is a nice day, set your patio tables too. Use a tablecloth, cloth napkins and non-disposable dishware.

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