

Staging Guidelines

“The Way You Live In Your Home and the Way We Sell Your House are Two Different Things!”

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 competing with it. To gain an edge in your marketplace, you must be priced right and look better than the competition. Sometimes it's difficult to think of a home as a mere product; but it helps to think that way in order to get top dollar for the house and sell it in a reasonable amount of time.

When you sell your house you are going to have to move. When you move you're going to have to pack. Most of the principles of Staging just mean that you're going to pack up some of your things early. It's a little bit of work, but you're going to have to do it anyway, so let's do it now so you can get top dollar for your home in your marketplace.

General Comments:

In every ROOM stand in the doorway and look at the room through the eyes of a buyer. What do you see? Ask, “What can you live without while your house is on the market?”

Most CARPETS need to be cleaned. Have them professionally cleaned before coming on the market.

“Buyers only know what they SEE, not the way it's going TO BE!” Unless the home is a “fixer,” badly worn or very out-of-date carpets should be replaced before coming on the market. Offering a buyer a credit to pick their own new carpet or discounting the price is far less effective and will always end up costing the seller more money and slow the selling process. Pick a light colored short plush or Berber carpet. A FLECK DUAL or TRI COLOR or NEUTRAL SOLID is the safest color.

Check all LIGHTS. Are they working properly? Replace all burned out light bulbs. Look for dark hallways and corners and increase the wattage of bulbs in those areas.

Make sure there are LAMPS in dark corners that are turned on for all showings.

Repair and repaint CRACKS and HOLES on all walls and ceilings.

Repair or replace broken light switches and switch plates. Clean any dirty areas around them.

Keep all CURTAINS and BLINDS open during the day to let in light and views. The extra cost of additional heating or air conditioning is a necessary cost of selling. Ask about minimizing unattractive views.

Reduce the number of PILLOWS on couches to zero or two. Remove all BLANKETS. Use tasteful throws as an accent.

Pack up all VALUABLE ITEMS to protect them. If necessary, take them to a safe deposit box.

Staging Guidelines

Take a hard look at those beloved HOUSE PLANTS. In most cases they need to be pruned and/or the number reduced to create more space. If they don't look healthy or are just barely clinging to life then give them away.

FIREPLACES need to be cleaned out. Glass doors should be cleaned. Mantels and hearths need to be cleared off except for a very few necessary items.

To create more space you may want to REMOVE a chair, loveseat or other pieces of furniture. (Remember the model house!)

Pack up all COLLECTIONS. (You're going to need to pack them up sooner or later anyway). They become a distraction for buyers from the desired focal point... your home.

Reduce the number of BOOKS on bookshelves. Pack up extra books early!

Remove any FAMILY PICTURES on shelves, pianos, and tables. Your family is not for sale and photos are distracting to buyers, not to mention unsafe to leave out photos of your house go on the internet and anyone can see them.

Reduce the number of WALL HUNG photos and paintings in every room to one large piece on a wall or a small group of three. Make sure they are hung at eye level.

Keep soft MUSIC playing during showings. Easy listening, light rock or light jazz are great.... not hard rock or funeral music.

Be sensitive to AROMAS, because buyers are! Excessive cooking or smoking odors, dog or cat odors, baby, laundry and mildew odors will turn off buyers. If there is a challenge in your home, use room deodorants or disinfectant sprays and keep windows cracked open even in very hot or cold weather for ventilation. There are great products in pet stores for pet odors, and many professional carpet cleaners have special ozone machines that can really help with difficult odors. You can't sell it when you can SMELL IT!

Wash all WINDOWS inside out and make sure they OPERATE freely. If the SEAL is broken on a double pane window replace it now.

REPAIR items that are broken. This will show that your home is well taken care of. In many cases buyers will ask for them to be repaired anyway, so do it now.

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.

In general, PACK UP THE LITTLE THINGS. Little things create clutter and they will need to be packed up anyway, so pack them up now.

Staging Guidelines

LIVING ROOM

If you go into model homes that are newly constructed you will see that they are usually SPARSELY DECORATED. In a resale home you need to create space for buyers to mentally move in to the room by reducing clutter and the overall number of items.

Family Room, Den, Bonus Room or Rec Room (Same as Living Room)

DINING ROOM

CLEAR OFF the Dining Room TABLE except for a tasteful centerpiece.

Remove TABLECLOTH from table.

Remove EXTRA LEAVES from the table to make the room LOOK BIGGER.

REMOVE EXTRA DINING ROOM CHAIRS if they crowd the table or fill up the corners of the room. Four or six chairs are plenty. It will make the room look bigger and you can put the extra chairs in the garage or a storage unit.

See the Living Room section above concerning removing or reducing the number of items, valuable items, and collections. It all applies here too, especially in a buffet.

KITCHEN

The main question in the kitchen is WHAT CAN YOU LIVE WITHOUT?

Clear off counters leaving only a very few items that you have to use on a daily basis.

Remove KITCHEN KNIVES from the counter. These are weapons.

EVERYTHING else should be kept OFF the COUNTERS to create space. Most homes have far too many appliances and other items out that should be stored out of sight. Leave a few large items on the counters like a bowl of fruit or a basket with bread in it.

REPAIR any tile or Formica countertops and edges that have been damaged or have come unglued.

CLEAN TILE GROUT with bleach if it is stained.

REMOVE all magnets, photos, children's drawings, etc. from the REFRIGERATOR FRONT AND SIDES.

If there are a couple of truly necessary items, put them on the side of the refrigerator.

Staging Guidelines

KITCHEN

CLEAN the STOVETOP AND OVEN. Replace old burner pans if they are badly stained.

Clean all exhaust fans, filters, and hoods.

CLEAN the KITCHEN FLOOR and keep it clean for showings.

Make sure kitchen faucet is working smoothly without drips and is clean.

Remember to PACK up the COLLECTIONS in the kitchen, too. Pack up their whatever will distract buyers and take up space.

Keep all soaps, towels, scouring pads and cleaning supplies out of sight UNDERNEATH the sink.

Some kitchens have too many SCATTER RUGS on the floor. Too many rugs make a room look smaller. If space allows, one large rug in middle of kitchen looks great.

EMPTY GARBAGE regularly to prevent kitchen odors. Stash garbage can for photos and showings.

MOVE PET DISHES so they don't interfere with buyers walking around the room. Hide evidence of pets for photos and showings.

MASTER BEDROOM

Make the bed every day.

INVEST in NEW BEDDING if necessary.

CLEAR OFF BEDSIDE TABLES and CHEST OF DRAWERS except for a very few necessary items.

STORE EXTRA BOOKS and MAGAZINES in the bedside tables.

Keep closet doors CLOSED. If you have a walk-in closet keep the floor clean and free of laundry and clutter.

If you have a clock radio keep it playing soft music during showings.

Remove family photos on tables and chest of drawers.

HALLWAYS

Remove plastic runners on carpet or hardwood floors.

Staging Guidelines

Inside of Home (continued)

ADDITIONAL BEDROOMS

See Master Bedroom guidelines.

In children's rooms TAKE DOWN all the POSTERS except for one favorite over the bed; repair nail holes and paint walls.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Put all SOAPS AND CLEANERS in a cupboard or reduce the number and organize neatly on one shelf.

Just like the kitchen, keep counters and sinks CLEAN AND EMPTY.

GET RID OF EXCESS HANGERS and hanging laundry. If you have a drying area replace all those miscellaneous hangers with one style of white plastic hangers.

Make sure LIGHT BULBS ARE WORKING and have adequate wattage. Many laundry rooms are too dark and need to be brighter.

BATHROOMS

CLEAR OFF COUNTERS. REDUCE toiletries down to a decorative few (3-6) and consolidate them on a tray or decorative basket. Put everything else in drawers or cabinets.

REPLACE that ugly dirty HAND SOAP with a NEAT bottle of LIQUID SOAP.

Coordinate all towels with ONE OR TWO COLORS. Fold in thirds and hang neatly every day.

New towels can be purchased very inexpensively if the ones you have don't match.

CLEAR EVERYTHING OUT of shower and tub during showings.

CLEAN OR REPLACE the SHOWER CURTAIN. Keep shower curtains drawn halfway at all times.

One common problem in a lot of bathrooms is cracking or peeling just above the top of the shower tile or tub enclosure where it meets the dry wall or ceiling. REPAIR using caulking and paint or install wood trim coated in POLYURETHANE.

GET RID of MOLD and stains throughout bathroom, especially in the shower and bathtub area.

Most TUBS AND SHOWERS need a fresh NEW bead of SILICONE CAULKING around the edges to make them look neat and clean.

Take all cloth toilet lid covers and water closet covers off. Keep TOILET LIDS DOWN every day.

SCATTER RUGS in front of sink and toilet and shower make the room look small.

USE ONE larger rug in the middle of the room or NONE AT ALL.

HIDE all CLEANING SUPPLIES and GARBAGE under sink or out of the line of sight.

CLOSETS

Make sure you can open the door freely and closet is orderly.

Staging Guidelines

Inside of Home (continued)

ADDITIONAL BEDROOMS

See Master Bedroom guidelines.

In children's rooms TAKE DOWN all the POSTERS except for one favorite over the bed; repair nail holes and paint walls.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Put all SOAPS AND CLEANERS in a cupboard or reduce the number and organize neatly on one shelf.

Just like the kitchen, keep counters and sinks CLEAN AND EMPTY.

GET RID OF EXCESS HANGERS and hanging laundry. If you have a drying area replace all those miscellaneous hangers with one style of white plastic hangers.

Make sure LIGHT BULBS ARE WORKING and have adequate wattage. Many laundry rooms are too dark and need to be brighter.

BATHROOMS

CLEAR OFF COUNTERS. REDUCE toiletries down to a decorative few (3-6) and consolidate them on a tray or decorative basket. Put everything else in drawers or cabinets.

REPLACE that ugly dirty HAND SOAP with a NEAT bottle of LIQUID SOAP.

Coordinate all towels with ONE OR TWO COLORS. Fold in thirds and hang neatly every day.

New towels can be purchased very inexpensively if the ones you have don't match.

CLEAR EVERYTHING OUT of shower and tub during showings.

CLEAN OR REPLACE the SHOWER CURTAIN. Keep shower curtains drawn halfway at all times.

One common problem in a lot of bathrooms is cracking or peeling just above the top of the shower tile or tub enclosure where it meets the dry wall or ceiling. REPAIR using caulking and paint or install wood trim coated in POLYURETHANE.

GET RID of MOLD and stains throughout bathroom, especially in the shower and bathtub area.

Most TUBS AND SHOWERS need a fresh NEW bead of SILICONE CAULKING around the edges to make them look neat and clean.

Take all cloth toilet lid covers and water closet covers off. Keep TOILET LIDS DOWN every day.

SCATTER RUGS in front of sink and toilet and shower make the room look small.

USE ONE larger rug in the middle of the room or NONE AT ALL.

HIDE all CLEANING SUPPLIES and GARBAGE under sink or out of the line of sight.

CLOSETS

Make sure you can open the door freely and closet is orderly.

Staging Guidelines

Inside of Home (continued)

BASEMENTS

BE AWARE OF SMELLS (AROMAS) musty odors, and dampness. Do your best to alleviate problems by repairing and cleaning problem areas. Use room deodorants and disinfectant sprays to help with any odors.

If you use the basement for storage, condense the piles to **ONE CORNER** of one area of the basement.

REPAIR cracks in ceilings and walls.

Clear **DRAINS**.

GARAGE CARPORT

Carports have to be completely **CLEANED OUT**. Everything!

Garages should be **SWEPT OUT** and organized. If you have to use part or the entire garage for storage that's fine, just keep it neat.

Always keep **GARAGE DOORS DOWN** while your home is on the market.

If you're not using the garage for storage keep **ALL CARS** in the garage and **NOT IN THE DRIVEWAY**.

MOVE BOATS AND RV's to a storage facility or a neighbor's home several homes away until your home sells.

Where do they store all the stuff they took out?

1. Rent a storage unit
2. Have a garage sale
3. Give it to charity
4. Put it in the attic
5. Store it in the crawl space
6. Use a portion or corner of the basement
7. Use part or all of the garage
8. As a last resort, sacrifice a 3rd or 4th bedroom

EXTERIOR OF HOUSE

The first impression when a buyer drives up to a home is critical. Take your sellers **ACROSS THE STREET** from the property. Ask them to **THINK** like a **BUYER**. What do they see?

TRIM AND HOUSE PAINT

Take a hard look at the **FRONT DOOR AND TRIM**. Give special attention to this because this is where buyers will get their first opportunity to make a close inspection of your home. Does it need repainting or staining? Repainting doors and trim to help make the house look crisp and in good condition is one of the least expensive things you can do to dress up a home.

Staging Guidelines

Exterior of House (continued)

DECKS, PORCHES, PATIOS

SWEEP all decks, walks, porches and patios and keep them swept.

REMOVE any MOSS or MOLD from all decks, walks and patios.

Decks should be **PRESSURE WASHED & STAINED OR PAINTED** if they are in need of it.

REDUCE CLUTTER on decks, porches and patios so that they look bigger. Get rid of old flowerpots, barbeques, charcoal, planters, toys, construction materials and excess furniture.

If you have **OUTDOOR FURNITURE** create one simple “room setting” of clean furniture that will remind buyers of the usefulness of the space.

ROOF

Clean all **DEBRIS AND MOSS** from roof and gutters.

FENCES

Repair broken fences and paint if necessary.

RVs, BOATS, TRAILERS, NEIGHORS

PLANTS ARE LIKE CHILDREN— they grow up so fast! First they are **LITTLE** and cute, then they seem just right, and all of a sudden they’re so **BIG** we hardly know how to take care of them!

You can’t trim the kids, but you can trim your plants. If they need it, do it now.

RAKE AND WEED FLOWER BEDS. If possible spread new mulch such as beauty bark, pine needles, gravel, or lava rock to put a finishing touch on the landscaping.

REMOVE and, if needed, **REPLACE** all **DEAD PLANTS**.

Mow lawn and keep it mowed on a weekly basis during the growing season.

TRIM BRANCHES around **ROOFLINE** to prevent animals, insects & foliage from getting on roof.

FRONT YARD

CURB APPEAL is important. Has your landscaping overgrown the house?

Remember “You can’t sell it if you can’t see it!” Cut back all shrubs to window height that block light or view from windows. (If your sellers are afraid they won’t bloom next year remind them that they won’t be here, so don’t worry!)

Move all **CHILDREN'S TOYS** to the **BACK YARD** and keep orderly.

Clean and sweep paved driveways. Rake, weed or re-gravel gravel driveways.

BACK YARD

REMOVE any extra items from the yard, such as **TOOLS, PILES OF LUMBER, OR AUTO PARTS**.

All **CHILDREN'S TOYS** should go in one area of the back yard.

Staging Guidelines

Additional Notes:

Special Needs and People:

Get the Seller's commitment on completing the "To Do" list!

Set a DEADLINE COMMITMENT and follow through by CHECKING IN WITH the Seller to see if the list is done!

Agents: Start your marketing only when your Sellers COMPLETELY FINISH THEIR LIST OF THINGS TO DO AND THE HOME IS COMPLETELY STAGED!