

Home Staging Tips - How to Stage a House for Sale

This tutorial on home staging was created to give sellers a competitive advantage in their respective real estate markets. By using the home staging tips and advice offered below, you will have a much greater chance of selling your home quickly and for maximum price.

If you're here because you want to stage your own home prior to listing it, then we have plenty of helpful tips for you as well. The staging tips that follow will help you evaluate your home one room at a time, while making note of "hot spots" that are in need of home staging. Enjoy!

Part 1 - What is home staging?

Before we dive into home staging tips for a quick sale, we first need to define what exactly staging is — just so we are on the same page.

Definition: Home staging is the act of preparing a home (and the contents of the home) for sale, with a special emphasis on presentation and appearance.

It's important to realize that preparing a home for sale and staging a home is not always the same thing. For example, as part of your pre-sale preparations, you might go through the home to make small repairs where needed. This is an essential step in preparing your home for the market, but it's not the same as home staging.

Staging a home for sale normally involves things of an aesthetic nature, such as design, organization and overall appearance (as opposed to mechanical or functional improvements).

The goal of home staging then is to improve the home's appearance in the eyes of potential buyers, with the ultimate goal of selling the home more quickly and for the highest possible price.

If you are selling a home, then you've obviously been on the other side of the process as a home buyer. Think back to your home buying experience. Try to recall the difference between the homes you thought were "just okay" and the homes that made you say "wow!" Professional home staging can help you turn your "okay" house into a "wow" house.

So to sum up our introduction: You can think of home staging as presenting your house in a way that appeals to the largest possible audience, in order to ensure a quick sale for the best possible price. It bears repeating. The key to this whole thing is appealing to the *largest audience* — that's what it's all about.

Part 2 - Benefits of staging your home



Why should I bother staging my home? What do I get back for all the time and effort I put in? This is one of the most common home staging questions among sellers, especially those who are selling in a seller's market.

Here's the bottom line: Staging your home can benefit you regardless of what type of real estate market you are in.

In a buyer's market, you will need every advantage you can get in order to sell your home for a decent sale price, so it's extra important to stage your home effectively. But even in a seller's market staging can help you achieve a quick sale for the maximum sale price.

So no matter what kind of real estate market you are in, it's always wise to stage your home for the market.

Here are some of the primary benefits you will get out of it:

Home Staging Benefits

- *Staging forces you to think like a buyer.* When you set out to stage your home for the market, you will be looking at the home as if you were a buyer. Adopting this perspective early on will help you in many ways when preparing your home for the market.
- *Staging forces you to organize and de-clutter.* Clearing away shelves, closets and cabinets is a big part of the home staging process. It also helps with moving, because you'll have to pack things away at some point anyway. So when you stage your home, you will also get a head start on packing to move.
- *Staging increases likelihood of a sale.* When selling your home, you must do everything within your power to increase your chances of selling — and I mean everything. These techniques can give you an extra edge in selling the home quickly.
- *Staging reduces the home's time on market.* When you put in the extra effort to stage your home effectively, you will move closer to a quick sale. Anyone who has sold a home before can attest to the fact that the least time the home is on the market, the better. This is especially important if you will be paying two mortgages until the home sells (as is the case when you buy a new home before selling the old one).
- *Staging helps justify the asking price.* If you are in a seller's market and you price your home correctly, you probably won't have to haggle over the asking price. But in a market that leans toward the buyer, you need everything in your favor to justify the asking price. Proper home staging can help you justify the asking price by positioning the home more favorably in the buyer's mind.
- *Staging can be fun!* It may sound like all work and no play at first. Granted, you will certainly be putting some elbow grease into the process. But staging a home can be a creative process as well, and many people find they enjoy it once they've begun.

Part 3 - Staging the exterior for maximum curb appeal



When most people hear the phrase *staging a home* they immediately think of preparing the home's interior — painting, arranging furniture and the like. While the interior is certainly important, the home's exterior is an equally important (but often overlooked) home staging hot-spot.

Curb appeal is exactly what it sounds like. When potential buyers pull up to the curb in front of your home, you want the home to appeal to them as much as possible. This gives a good first impression, so it should be part of your home staging checklist.

Here are some tips to help you stage your home's exterior for maximum curb appeal.

Staging the Exterior

- Start by creating a list of items needing attention. Go out to the curb in front of your house with a notepad and pen. Jot down anything that "leaps" out at you.
- Have a friend perform the same type of inspection. It will only take them 10 or 15 minutes to spot areas that need attention. Add their list to your list.
- If the home's paint is chipped or faded, give it a fresh coat. Pay particular attention to shutters, doors and trim.
- If the door and shutters are different colors, you may want to make them the same color. Choose the color that's the more neutral of the two and standardize the color scheme.
- Keep the lawn mowed and neatly edged. A nicely mowed lawn does wonders for curb appeal, so you might have to mow every few days while the home is on the market (depending on where you live, season, etc.).
- If your lawn is in really bad shape from years of neglect, you might have to lay down fresh sod. Do this at least a month before listing the home, so the new grass has some time to grow in and look nice.
- Mulch is your best friend when trying to boost your curb appeal. Adding fresh mulch to your existing flower / plant beds can make a big difference in appearance. Best of all, it's cheap and readily available at your local garden store, Home Depot, etc.
- Weather and season permitting, plant or pot some fresh flowers outside the front door. For simplicity, you might want to stick to potted plants. This will allow you to place them wherever you need them, and with less effort. Bright plants or flowers do a lot to enhance the entry.
- Think "yellow" when adding accent plants to your home's entry. Yellow is a great color for this purpose. It draws the eye and makes people feel at ease, which is exactly how you want them to feel when entering your home.
- Check your flower beds and lawn for weeds every day while your house is on the market. Remove any weeds you find. It's important to check daily, because weeds can literally sprout up overnight.
- In the fall, be sure to rake leaves from your lawn and also from flower beds. Do this every couple of days, or as needed to keep the lawn free of leaves.
- Trim bushes and trees as needed to give a tidy appearance. In particular, make sure they are not blocking windows or doors.
- Speaking of windows, make sure they are spotless. This includes the frames around the windows, as well as the shutters. This adds a lot of sparkle to your overall curb appeal.

- If you have vinyl railings outside your home's entrance, give them a good washing. All you need is a bucket, a hose, and some concentrated car wash liquid.
- You might want to rent a power washer if you have a lot of dirt and grime. It's an easy way to clean everything at once -- the siding, sidewalks, doors and shutters, etc.
- If you have wood railings, consider giving them a fresh coat of paint.
- Do you have a large porch that's ideal for sitting? Add a nice bench, or a pair of chairs, to help people see themselves relaxing on the porch.
- You'll find more tips and ideas for creating curb appeal in [this related article](#).

Remember, people will see the outside of your house before they see the inside. Unless, of course, you escort them in with a blindfold. :-) If the home's exterior makes a bad first impression on potential buyers, they will carry that negativity inside the house with them. So when you stage your home prior to listing, work on the outside as well.

Part 4 - Stage the entryway for maximum effect



Your home's entrance is part of its overall curb appeal, because people will see it when they pull up to the house. But the entrance is doubly important because it marks a threshold — literally and figuratively — between the outside world and what could possibly be the buyer's new home.

So you can consider the entryway another home staging hot-spot that deserve special attention. Here are some tips to help you stage the entry area of your home.

Staging the Entry

- The "entry" includes those areas people see when they first open the front door. This picks up where curb appeal leaves off. It's a critical area, because it represents the potential buyer's first impression upon walking into the house.
- Keep the entryway open and free of clutter. This will make the house seem larger, right from the get-go.
- Clear away all of those spider webs and any other "natural touches" to the entry area. It's a dirty job, but it must be done.
- Make sure the entry has plenty of light. This is for safety reasons as well as general appearances. A bright entryway gives the initial impression of a warm, inviting home.
- Get rid of that worn welcome mat and buy a new, high-quality welcome mat. It's a home staging essential ... and well worth the \$20 you'll spend.

Remember, professional home staging focuses on the house as a whole, but also on key "hot spots" that have a bigger impact. Your home's entryway is a natural magnet for people's eyes, so give the entry some extra attention when you stage your home for sale.

Part 5 - Staging living rooms and family rooms



People spend a lot of time in their living room and family room areas, especially when they have children. The family room / living room is also an entertainment area of the home.

So when buyers walk through the living room or family room area of your home, they will want to envision these two activities — spending time as a family and entertaining guests.

Stage the living room / family room area with this in mind. Make it warm and inviting, with good use of space and a conversational arrangement.

Here are some specific tips to help you stage this key area of your home.

Staging the Family Room / Living Room

- Clear the room of family portraits and other items that say "you don't live here" to buyers.
- Arrange the room in a conversational way, if it's not that way already. Try different furniture arrangements until you get the best fit.
- Choose a nice and warm paint color for the living room. Use neutral tones in this space. That doesn't mean you are limited to beige. There are plenty of warm colors that will neutralize the space, while also adding visual interest. These include the softer shades of green, blue and brown.
- "Neutral" does not have to be boring. You can liven up a neutral color scheme with colorful accent items, such as pillows and rugs. Color-coordinate these items for a professional and "put together" appearance.
- Let the room breathe. If it's crowded or hard to walk through due to having too much furniture, remove some items and place them in storage.
- Consider renting furniture for staging purposes. If your family room ensemble consists of that old couch from college days and a cheap table with wobbly legs, replace them with some nice rental pieces.
- If the furniture is a bit worn but otherwise intact, use a slip cover as a low-cost way to enhance the appearance of your couch and chairs. Slip covers can also help you neutralize overly bright or "loud" fabric colors.
- If you have a mantle, make sure it's not overloaded with knick knacks. A couple of well-placed items (like a vase or flower arrangement) are all you need.
- If you have a fireplace in this room, make it the focal point and the star of the show. Arrange seating to face the fireplace. Remove the TV if it's too large -- a huge television will draw attention away from the fireplace.

Remember, people want a living room or family room area that seems open and inviting. Make the room airy and bright, and arrange furniture for the best possible flow. Replace or cover worn furniture as needed. When people naturally want to sit down and spend time in the room, you've achieved your home-staging goals for the room!

Part 6 - Stage the kitchen to wow buyers



The kitchen is a key area of the home for many reasons. Kitchens have a lot to do with resale value, so the buyers will want to be impressed with this area of the home. People also spend a lot of time in their kitchens, so a nicely staged kitchen will help them see themselves in the home.

All of these things will help you increase the likelihood of a sale, and that's the whole point of home staging in the first place.

With that in mind, here are some ways to stage your home's kitchen in order to wow buyers.

Staging the Kitchen

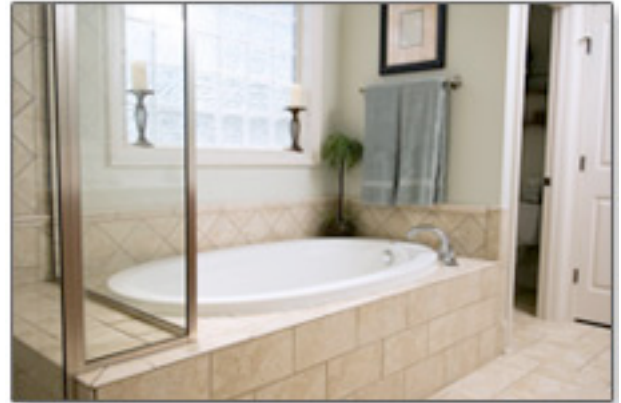
- Spend some extra time de-cluttering. Kitchens are notorious for being full of clutter. So when you stage this area of your home, be ruthless about removing unnecessary items. This includes countertop appliances, utensils, the coffee pot, etc.
- Clean like the sale of your home depended on it ... because it does. Pay particular attention to the sink, counters, stove, etc. "Clean and bright" should be your motto for kitchen staging.
- Turn the lights on and open the curtains to showcase the sparkle. Shed some light on the subject. If you have dark areas of your kitchen, you might even consider adding supplemental lighting, such as recessed lighting around the edges. Remember your kitchen staging motto — *clean and bright*.
- Consider making upgrades. If you're in a buyer's market, it might be wise to go beyond cleaning and actually upgrade some of your kitchen features. Cabinets and counters is the rule of thumb here. If your cabinets and counters are outdated or ugly, an upgrade can make a huge difference in resale.
- If, based on your circumstances, it doesn't make sense to pour extra money into cabinetry, you might try staining the cabinets. This can make a big improvement at a fraction of the cost. In addition to staining, you could also paint the cabinets.
- If your cabinets are in decent shape, you can modernize them simply by updating the knobs and handles, or adding them if you don't have any. This is a low-cost way to improve a kitchen, and that's what home staging is all about.
- The same goes for your kitchen faucets, lights and other fixtures. You can make the entire space more modern just by updating these items.
- Give the walls a fresh coat of paint, following the paint tips mentioned previously. If the kitchen is connected to the family / living room, use the same color paint -- or one shade lighter or darker. This will make the eye flow from one room to the next, making the entire place seem more spacious.
- Do you have an eat-in kitchen? If so, accentuate it by setting a small table. This will showcase the fact that the space serves double duty. Don't leave it up to the buyers to envision the eat-in kitchen — show it to them!

Remember, people spend a lot of time in their kitchens, and most people realize that they are a resale value item of importance. If you spend some extra time or money anywhere while staging your home for sale, the kitchen is probably the place to do it.

Part 7 - Staging bathrooms for function

"Kitchens and baths" ... that's the expression used by real estate folks to indicate the areas of a home that carry the most resale value. Kitchens and baths. We already talked about staging your kitchen. But what about those bathrooms? How do you carry your home staging efforts in there?

I can sum up your bathroom plan-of-attack with two simple words — cleaning and updating. If you remember, "clean and bright" was our motto for staging the kitchen area. That same motto applies to the bathrooms. Bathrooms should be sparkling clean and well-lit (but not overly bright).



If you add "luxurious" onto that motto, you'll score extra points with home buyers. Clean, bright and luxurious. Those are the keys to staging a bathroom.

Here are some specific tips for carrying your home-staging efforts into the bathrooms of your house.

- If your bathroom fixtures (handles, spigots, etc.) are outdated, replace them with sleek and modern fixtures. Stay away from brass fixtures — they bring the 1980's to mind.
- Put some high-quality plush towels on the towel rack. Color-coordinate them with the bathroom's color scheme (matching them to the rug, flower arrangement, etc.).
- Fresh flower arrangements do a lot for a bathroom, both in appearance and aroma.
- Before showing the home, clean those bathrooms until they look like they're in a model home. Signs of use, such as soap scum and recently used sinks, will turn buyers off.
- Glass shower door a little gross? Remove it and take it outside for cleaning. Use a solution of one part muriatic acid to 10 parts water (wear goggles when mixing). Scrub it with steel wool, rinse it clean, and replace the door.
- If you have the budget and you really want to increase your home's appeal, consider installing a pedestal sink. They are very popular with buyers right now, and they make the bathroom seem larger by freeing up space.

Remember, when potential buyers tour your home their agents will probably be whispering "kitchens and baths" in their ears. So when staging your home to sell put some extra effort into those bathrooms. Your motto is clean, bright and luxurious.

Part 8 - Stage those bedrooms for comfort



When potential buyers enter the bedrooms of your home, they want to see one thing about all else ... comfort. Bedrooms do not have appliances or fixtures. Not usually, anyway. So home staging in a bedroom usually consists of painting, furniture arrangement and some light decor.

Think "neutral, comfortable and spacious" when you stage your bedrooms for buyers. Keep those words in mind during your staging process, and you will be in good shape.

Here are some specific home staging tips for the bedrooms.

- Use soft, neutral colors with paints and color schemes. Earth tones are always a safe color that will appeal to the majority.
- Make bedrooms appear larger by limiting furniture to a bed, dresser and a couple of small items. Too much furniture makes a bedroom seem cramped.
- Remove the bulk of your clothes from closets and pack them away in storage. You will have to pack them soon anyway, and doing it early will make your closets appear larger.
- Invest in some new and luxurious bedding (comforter, sheets, accent pillows). You can take them with you when you move, and they will improve the look of the current bedrooms while it's on the market.
- Remove personal items such as photos. Remember, you want buyers to see themselves in the home ... not you and your family.

Remember, your motto when staging those bedrooms — neutral, comfortable and spacious. Open up the room by reducing the amount of furniture items. Neutralize the overall color scheme and add a little bit of "controlled color" with accessories like pillows. Update your bedding if needed. Make your bedrooms relaxing and tranquil.

Part 9 - Home staging resources

StagingBug.com

This website offers [staging advice](#) in room-by-room fashion. It also has a blog that will focus on such topics as home staging, selling a home, and interior design tips for sellers.

<http://www.StagingBug.com>

Designed to Sell - HGTV Program

This show on HGTV is an excellent source of home staging tips. The host, Lisa LaPorta, is a something or other, and she pulls off some amazing transformations with minimal budget. The show's website below is also full of tips to help you stage your home for sale.

http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/shows_hdts/

Designed to Sell - The Book

Expert advice from Designed to Sell host Clive Pearse and interior designer Lisa LaPorta on selling a home quickly and getting top dollar for the property. Filled with clever and useful information for getting a home ready to sell or for making the right improvement to increase the home's value.

[Available at Amazon.com](#)

Home Staging: The Winning Way to Sell

Filled with organizing tips and checklists, plus before-and-after staged photographs that dramatically show

how Staging can transform your home inside and out, Home Staging has all the answers you'll need when looking to increase the sale price of your home.

[Available at Amazon.com](#)