

Preparing a home for resale



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

While staging a home or apartment is technically optional during the selling process, it really shouldn't be. The home you're trying to sell is the same as any other commodity: it needs to be marketed. It should be made appealing to the type of person you are trying to sell it to, and if you skimp on this step, you run the risk of ending up with less than your asking price or dealing with a longer marketing period. If you're an investor who makes a living flipping houses, these risks aren't worth the time you'd save skipping the staging.

When you stage a house, what you're really doing is setting it up so that the prospective buyer, when viewing the outside and walking through the home, can see themselves living there. You want them to walk in and think that this is the perfect place for them, to start imagining how they'll decorate this room, or where they'll put that furniture, or the lovely dinner parties they'll have in the kitchen. Staging is the way realtors accomplish this.

The definition of staging is evident in the word itself: it's like setting the stage for a play. Everything should be intentional, pleasing to the eye, unoffensive or obtrusive. You want it to appeal to the type of person you would like to sell it to, and if you're just trying to flip the house, chances are you want it to appeal to many different types of people. There are several ways that realtors stage houses.

Cleaning

Deep clean the house: Possibly the most important step, if not the easiest, is to deep clean the entire house. You want the walls to sparkle, the floors to shine, everything down to the grout should be scrubbed. There shouldn't be

dust anywhere, and windows should be gleaming. You want the prospective buyer to walk through and see the house itself and all it has to offer, not the dust on the air vents or the smudges on the fridge. You're trying to sell something, and while buyers obviously know that the house has been lived in, it's not brand new, you want them to feel like it was made just for them.

Declutter: Almost as important as scrubbing the house is decluttering it. Clear counters, tidy bookshelves, and open floor space all serve to open up the house and make it welcoming, while at the same time leaving space for the buyer to envisage their own belongings in the house. If the house is full of nothing but personal knick-knacks, it doesn't allow room for the buyer's imagination. It also detracts from the feature your house has to offer. A buyer is less likely to be excited about the built-in bookshelves in the children's room if the shelves are covered in toys scattered haphazardly around.

Clutter also makes it seem like the house doesn't have enough storage space. After all, if there is space for all of these things to be stored out of sight, why aren't they? Also important to note is that buyers will likely be interested in seeing cabinets and closet spaces, so tossing everything into a closet may not be the best solution. Often an outside storage unit will come into play, or a kind friend or family member's garage.

Make it smell nice: A buyer shouldn't walk into your home and smell your pets, or last night's dinner, or laundry. These things, as well as kids, a mildewy bathroom, and garbage disposals can all contribute to a less-than-attractive home smell that you may not even notice. The sense of smell is

very closely linked to memory, and when a buyer is later trying to decide between properties, their memory of your home will likely be swayed by the type of scent it had.

There are easy ways to ensure that these memories are good ones. Coating an apple in cinnamon and baking it in the oven gives off a homey vibe reminiscent of the holiday season, which many find to be comforting and warming. Other methods are to pop a tray of slice and bake cookies in the oven, burn a vanilla scented candle, or put a pot of water on to boil with a homemade potpourri of lemon slices, cinnamon sticks, and other aromatics.

Another good tip is to put pieces of lemon into the garbage disposal to help get rid of food odors. You could use disinfectant and scented sprays to rid your home of unwanted odors, but often they leave a more industrial, artificial scent behind, while the tips listed above serve to make the house feel more homey, which is, after all, what staging is about.

If you smoke in the home, try to limit yourself to smoking outside. Making sure all fabrics are freshly washed before an open house also helps to keep the home smelling fresh, as well as ensuring the carpets are clean, though that's a step that should be taken care of when deep cleaning the house.

Decoration

Maximize curb appeal: This may be something you've heard over and over on home decorating shows, but the truth is it's actually very important. Many prospective buyers will drive by a house before ever deciding to do tour or attend an open house, and often they make their decision based solely on

how appealing the outside of the house is. Make sure your home makes a good first impression by taking care of the following:

- Ensure the house numbers are large, well-placed, and easy to read
- Plant greenery and blooming flowers
- Repaint or stain the porch, shutters, and other wooden fixtures if needed
- Wash the windows
- Power wash the siding and sidewalks

Another way to make your home appealing on the outside is to turn your front porch into a welcoming space. Put out a clean, attractive door mat, some blooming potted flowers, and if there's room, a piece or two of neat porch furniture. Make sure the porch light works, and leave it on after dark, in case buyers drive by late.

Grouping furniture: Most people believe that rooms feel bigger if the furniture is pushed against the walls, leaving floor space in the middle. That isn't the case. Rather than pushing the furniture away, bring it together in conversational groups in the middle of the room, placing pieces so that the traffic flow of the room is clear. This method of furniture placement makes the room feel more user-friendly, as well as opening up the room. Also give yourself permission to move pieces from room to room. You may have bought that chair for the living room, but that doesn't mean it won't look better in a bedroom as a little sitting area.

Painting and color: A fresh coat of paint throughout the house can do wonders to make it feel open, welcoming, clean, and new. Now is not the

time to be creative or show your personality through wall colors, however. Go for neutral tones to make everything look pulled together and sophisticated, as well as providing a blank canvas for a homeowner to be able to envision whatever wall color they would like, rather than your “adventurous” lime green living room wall. Painting is also a great way to make room feel larger. If your kitchen is a bit small, considering painting it the same color as the adjacent dining room, or even the hallway. The seamless look makes the space look bigger. Another trick is to hang curtains the same color as your wall, this also makes the space look bigger.

Paint isn't the only color you should be thinking about when staging a house. Also important are draperies, accent pieces, and bedroom color schemes. Just as with the paint, it's a good idea to go for a neutral color scheme. However, don't be afraid to play with color a bit in more intimate spaces like the bathroom or a bedroom. Painting a single accent wall a darker color, or using darker fabrics on the bed and windows can give the room a more intimate, welcoming feel. For the master bedroom, consider going gender-neutral in the coloring and decorations; you want all buyers to be interested in it and be able to see themselves relaxing in the space.

Decorate: While you want to get rid of clutter, you also want the house to seem able to be lived-in, and this is where decorating comes in. Thoughtfully placed accent pieces or coordinating knick-knacks can do a lot to draw in a buyer and make them want to see more of the house. A good rule is the rule of threes: things in groups of three are pleasing to the eye. Rather than lining up three candlesticks on the coffee table, however, consider varying the pieces in height, grouping them together in the center of the table. Make <https://assignbuster.com/preparing-a-home-for-resale/>

it look effortless, but polished. For maximum effect, group pieces by color or type. Other elements that will make a home feel welcoming are things like a bowl of fruit on the table or a vase of cut flowers on the kitchen counter.

There are smaller elements that should be paid attention to that you may not notice but a prospective buyer may. In the bathroom, make sure that any towels you may have out are fluffy and clean, not pilling or old. Soaps should be new, mirrors should be cleaned. In the kitchen, an easy way to spruce things up is to replace the front of the cabinets and drawers, as well as the drawer pulls. Be sure to open the windows for at least ten minutes before an open house or tour, so it's not stuffy inside.

Lighting: Proper lighting can make a home feel warm and welcoming.

Increase the wattage of bulbs in your lamps and fixtures, aiming for 100 watts per 50 square feet. Vary the type of lighting, not relying on all overhead lights or all lamps. A good way to do this is to make sure that you have three types of lighting: ambient lighting (overhead), task lighting (pendant lights or desk lamps), and accent lighting (on tables and walls). Another way to maximize your home's lighting is to make use of natural light. Open the blinds and curtains, letting sunlight stream in. It makes the house feel more welcoming, as well as more open.

The bottom line when it comes to staging a home for resale as an investor is to strike a balance between spending too much money and not enough. If you skimp, you run the risk of having to settle for less than your asking price, as buyers might not be as taken by your house as they could have been if you'd put in a little more effort. If you spend too much, that's money that's

coming out of your pocket, and in the end, making a profit is what investing is about. It's important to set the stage for the sale, and if you take care, you'll find the house will sell itself.