

# Staging Your House to Sell

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## **Step 1: Depersonalize and de-clutter your home.**

Everyone has their own style and needs with their house. When you live in your house you tend to personalize it to your own tastes. However, when selling your house you want it to appeal to as many people as possible. A plain, blank canvas is what most buyers are looking for so that they can make the space their own. You are also shooting to make your house look as large as possible because buyers are looking to get as much house for their money as possible.

Since you are hopefully going to be moving in 30 to 60 days when your house sells, start packing up everything you don't use on a daily or weekly basis. A lot of stuff packed into a room or closet makes it look small. Take down anything personal in nature such as wedding or family photos, children's art, trophies, your collection of beanie babies and anything else of that nature. Get rid of any magazines on the coffee table and paperwork on the counters. The kitchen is one of the biggest selling points of the house. Clean off any magnets and stuff you have stuck to the fridge. Don't leave dirty dishes or food lying around and make sure the kitchen sink is empty and clean. Counter space is very important to most buyers, so make sure you clean as much stuff off the counter as you can. If you have a blender or toaster on the counter you don't use very often, pack it away. If you have walk in closets in any of the bedrooms, make sure the floor is clean of clothes or any other items that will make the space seem smaller. Make sure your closets aren't overstuffed, if they are, move some of the clothes to a different closet. A cramped closet makes it look like there is not enough storage space in your house. Next, go through and pack away anything you don't plan on using in the next month or two. If it is summer, pack away your winter clothes and ski gear; if it is winter pack up your swim suit and camping gear. You get the idea. Once you get your extra stuff all packed into boxes, store it at a friend's house if you can or at least stack it up nicely in the garage.

## **Step 2: Clean your house like you would if the President was coming over for dinner.**

It is very important to get your house as clean as possible and to keep it that way for the entire time you are listing the house. When buyers come and view a spotless home it shows pride of ownership and makes the buyer believe that the house is well taken care of. Inversely, if your house is dirty and cluttered, it tends to make buyers feel like the house is being neglected and could be full of problems. Make sure everything gets wiped down and cleaned including window sills, curtains and blinds, stove, microwave, lamps, and anything else that usually gets skipped when you do normal house cleaning. First impressions are important, so make sure the entryway and any rooms visible when you first enter the house are especially clean. Scrub the tubs and showers really good to get any mildew or soap scum off and make them shine. Consider replacing the shower curtain if it is old or dirty. If you have cats, make sure you clean the litter box frequently and keep it out of the way in the garage, laundry room or far back of the house. The smell of a litter box is a big turnoff to most buyers. Once you get it clean, vow to keep it clean. You never know when someone is going to want to look at your home.

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## **Step 3: Curb appeal**

These days most buyers research houses on their own before calling a Realtor to show them the house. They look at the photos online and then frequently drive by the homes to see what they look like from the street. If your house has bad curb appeal, buyers may not even give it a chance and look inside. So make sure your lawn is watered and kept mowed and trimmed. Prune your bushes and consider adding flowers around the yard to add color. If you have planters consider adding fresh bark or mulch to make everything look fresh and clean. Campers or trailers in the driveway are distracting to people viewing your home, so if you have these items you will want to find another place to store them while selling your home. Make sure your mailbox is in good shape and clean, if not replace it with a new one. Clean the front porch area including your front door. If the front door is scuffed up consider re-painting or staining the door if it won't come clean. Get a new door mat. Though not as important as the front yard, you still want to make sure the backyard is well maintained. If you have dogs, make sure you clean up after them daily, you don't want a buyer stepping in anything nasty while touring your home.

## **Step 4: Repairs and modifications**

Now is the time to take care of any repairs you have been putting off. Missing a knob on a drawer or closet? Get it replaced. Make sure all the light bulbs work. If you have creaky doors, get them oiled. If there are bigger issues with your house that need repair such as an air conditioner that doesn't work or a furnace that is on its last leg you will need to get those fixed. You have to disclose these things to your buyers, plus their home inspector will find them anyway, so it is better to get them fixed first so you aren't negotiating over them later. If you have any rooms with extreme paint colors or wallpaper, you should consider repainting these rooms a neutral color. Kid's rooms are usually the biggest issue here. If you have a young child whose room is painted pink with unicorns on the walls, you will want to paint this room because the likelihood of finding a buyer with a child the same age as yours and into the same things is slim.

## **Step 5: Staging furniture**

There are two aspects of furniture staging. The first is to remove anything that doesn't belong in a specific room. If you have a treadmill set up in your living room because you like to watch TV while you work out, move it out of the room. Sewing machine set up in the kitchen? Remove it. If you have a formal dining room, the only thing that should be in that room is a dining room set and maybe a china cabinet. An attractive centerpiece on the table looks nice, but piled up paperwork doesn't. The next step is to rearrange the furniture to maximize space and make the room inviting. Most people will have the couch and chairs in the living room set up in a way to best watch the TV. However this may create a room that is closed off and seem smaller than if you moved the couches and chairs next to the walls. Each layout is different, evaluate and see if there is a way you could make the room look bigger by moving or removing some of the furniture. Well lit rooms appear larger so if you have heavy drapes consider removing them or at least opening them as much as possible. Make sure you have bright bulbs in all the lamps and each room is very well lit.

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## Step 6: Daily chores

Once you get your house clean and staged, you need to get in the routine of making sure it stays that way. Make sure all your beds are made each morning. Wash the dishes as you use them and put them away. Take out the trash frequently to eliminate odors. Clean the bathrooms daily and keep the countertops clean. Don't let dirty laundry pile up. Each morning open all the window blinds all the way to let maximum light into the house. Consider getting plug in deodorizers for each room to make sure there are no odors in your house. If you smoke, start smoking outside. The smell of cigarette smoke to a non-smoker is an instant turnoff to your home.

It is a hassle to constantly keep your house clean while showing your home to buyers. However, if you stage your home so it shows well, and it is priced right, your house should sell a lot sooner than comparable homes that didn't put the extra effort into getting their home staged.



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