



The
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Top 10 Rules for Staging Homes from the Stagers

And Some Words from a professional that SELLS them

Matthew Finlason gives his home staging tips to help you get ready for a home sale. Comments and examples added by Debbie Irons (in green) Credit: HGTV website at www.HGTV.com

1. Grab them from the curb.

You've seen them. Buyers hunkered low in their cars in front of your house, doing drive-bys before deciding whether to request a showing or attend an open house. Make these potential buyers fall in love with your home from the street by adding potted plants and flowers, power-washing patios and walkways, weeding the garden and mowing the lawn. It's your first chance to make a good impression, so you've got to make it count. I also recommend paying special attention to the color/condition of your front door. This can make a HUGE difference in the overall "POP" of the entire home. Make sure it is clean, bug free (that goes for your entire front porch my Florida friends and yes, the mud dabbers will remove paint GRRRRR), and that the door knob is in great shape. Consider a new coordinating WELCOME mat. If you would like someone to cover their shoes, add a friendly sign with booties in the foyer. These can be purchased very cheap at your local home store.



2. Make it sparkle.

Pretend that your mother or mother-in-law is coming for a visit. Think hotel clean. Mop, dust, vacuum, wash windows, baseboards — even the cat. Remember that people will look in your cupboards, under your sinks and in your closets. Also, pay particular attention to odors. You might even consider consulting a neutral nose by having a friend come by for a smell test. For me, these are your TWO most important points...make it clean and be diligent about the smell. Remember, if you live with pets or smoke, you most likely don't even notice it. At times you will need to paint, replace carpet, change AC filters, or even clean out the AC ducts. I promise you, funky smells will kill a deal every time. I once had a listing where the cat did his "business" DURING a showing every single time. SERIOUSLY?? I guess I know what he thought about moving and buyers couldn't focus on anything else. Anyway, be very careful about your placement of the litter box or consider removing it during the 10-20 minute showing. Also, be careful with your fragrance plug-ins. Make sure to choose something very subtle. Many buyers are sensitive to super fruity or perfume smells and they can be just as much as a turn-off as your stinky dog (I love dogs by the way). Yes, baking and vanilla are STILL highly recommended.

As for cleaning, it is the time to de-clutter, have a garage sale, or donate! Remove all clutter on kitchen countertops, side tables, bathroom counters, entertainment centers, kids' rooms, book cases, etc. etc. Please, please, please, no one wants to see your razors, washcloths and used towels in the bathroom. I cannot stress this enough. Ask your stager or real estate professional to recommend a cleaning service to help you for the day. We even suggest organizing weekly service to relieve some of the stress...I get it, you are busy and you still have to live in your home. Get help, even for a short period of time. Ask your teenagers to help...ok, never mind, that was completely wishful thinking.

3. Pay attention to color and light.

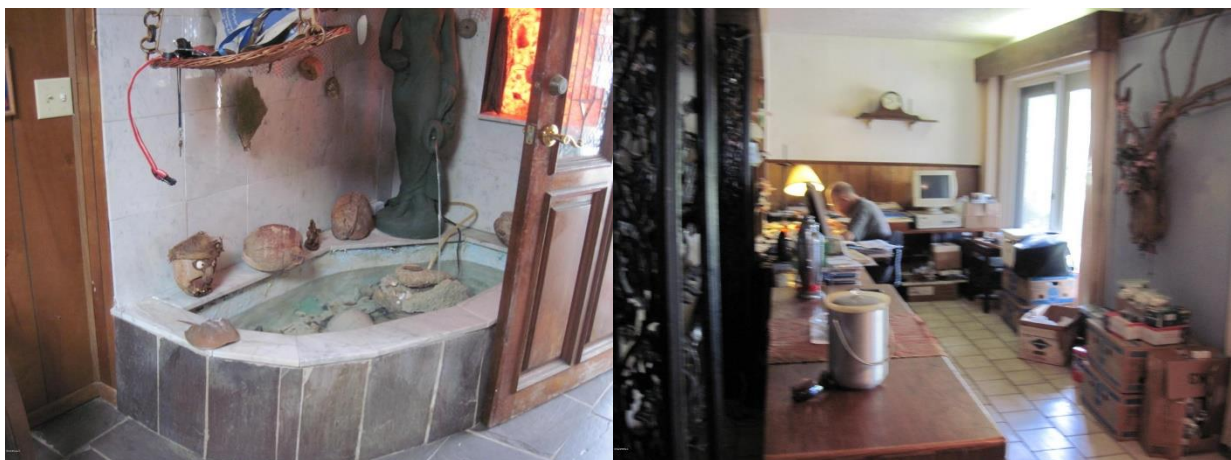
You may love hot pink in the living room, but too-bright colors turn buyers off. Neutralize strong colors for the broadest appeal. A neutral home appears larger and has less chance of offending someone. Also, open up blinds and draperies to make sure there's sufficient natural light throughout the home. Remember, lighting is the most effective way to set a mood. Add lamps and other lighting in dark rooms. If you have the energy efficient bulbs, turn on lights a bit early to make sure they are not dull. Turn on ALL lights for showings. If you are an out of area owner, ask your agent to turn them on or add a note in the showing instructions that you recommend the agent arrive a bit early to turn on the lights for best showing results.

4. Depersonalize.

Few things deter buyers more than a cluttered home. They need to see your home, not your stuff. Excessive personal items like photos, collections, personal awards, electronics and collectibles will make it difficult for buyers to see past your personal style and may deter a sale. Taking yourself out of the picture makes it easier for buyers to imagine themselves, and their stuff, in your space. For de-clutter, refer to #2. If you have no idea where to start, hire a real estate team that has a FREE or cost effective home organizer/stager. Everyone can roll up their sleeves and pitch in to get the home "SHOW READY". It is worth way more than a \$1000 print ad that no one sees. Remember, your pictures on the internet are everything.

We recommend no more than 2 personal pictures per room. If you have a strong theme in the home, remember you want to keep the house desirable for the largest amount of buyers possible. I may catch some flak for this one but please remove your animal head wall trophies. It freaks out 90% of the population.

THESE PICTURES I FOUND TODAY IN THE MULTIPLE LISTING SERVICE AND IT IS SYNDIATED TO OVER 400 real estate websites around the world!! I'm not kidding...what the what??



5. Consider replacing furnishings.

Think about removing or replacing worn or outdated furnishings and get rid of extra pieces. The time has come to move beyond matching furniture, so break up your sets; dated can easily become eclectic with editing and rearranging. Consider consulting with a professional staging company for design direction and advice on rental furnishings to create an inviting home with broad appeal to a wide range of buyers. Bringing in new furniture can be

cheaper than you think and often the cost can be tied back into a higher commission rate instead of up-front costs. This is often necessary for both vacant and occupied homes.

6. Invest in new artwork.

Displaying new artwork is a great way to breathe new life into a room. Photography can be used to contemporize a room and add a splash of color as well. Cheap options exist online, at your craft stores, and places like TJ Maxx. Again, keep them G rated and un-offensive. I can't even believe I have to say that but I do. Hanging the Bob Marley poster smoking a doobie is probably not the best choice. 😊

7. Make repairs.

Make your home a high-maintenance zone. Repair squeaky doors, chipped or smudged paint as well as broken fixtures and fittings that you've neglected. I'm often asked what to repair and what to replace. The answer is "it depends" and ask your professional for their advice. In Florida, AC units and roof are HUGE considerations for buyers, for inspectors, FHA/VA appraisers, and homeowners' insurance providers. I often recommend an AC service before listing and if you have any roof issues, get them repaired (including any ceiling stains) ASAP. Nothing scares buyers in Florida more than the possibility of the M word...MOLD!

8. Apply a fresh coat of paint.



It's the best bang for your buck that will quickly refresh a dull, dated room. Slap a fresh, neutral color on the space. Choose a beige or taupe for living spaces and a neutral green or blue for bathrooms. Gone are the days of your yellows, oranges, reds, and dark browns in every room. Sorry, my Mediterrean décor lovers, whites, grays, and other neutrals are the rage for the main color. Pop your color in your accessories...pillows, vases, rugs, and artwork. Side note for kitchens: Can you believe those white cabinets you ripped out 10 years ago are now back! If you kept them, add some simple, sleek door handles and you are good to go. If you didn't and your cabinets are rough, try out of the new cabinet paint products. I've seen them work wonders.

9. Don't forget the floors.

Get rid of worn carpets, and consider refinishing shabby hardwood floors. An inexpensive new area rug is a quick fix and can disguise the look of old floors. I'm going to disagree slightly with this one. Carpet is a maybe depending on the cost, the price of the home, actual condition and your ideal buyer. Offering buyer credits can be a better option as they may be replacing floors any way to wood or tile. If it is heavily stained or has an odor, yes replace it with a low cost carpet option.

10. Spring for new light fixtures.

Renew the look of the room by replacing old or dated light fixtures, door hardware, light switches and outlets. If it's tacky and older than you, get it out of there. This is also true for ceiling fans. We have come a long way in fans that are so popular in Florida so spend the extra \$150 to get something more modern. I'm often asked to write in that certain light fixtures or ceiling fans do not convey with the sale. Let me say this, unless you have a personal connection with the fixture or it cost over \$1000, please leave it. It is not worth the hassle in most cases to remove, purchase, and install another fixture.

Bio: Debbie Irons is a real estate professional, native Floridian and mom of 4 girls in Orlando, Florida. With over 12 years' experience and over 500 homes sold, she thoroughly enjoys sharing her knowledge, advice, and crazy real estate stories to help others in the real estate journey. You can find her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DebbieIrons or Debbie@TheIronsteam.com.