

Sellers: Staging is a Must

by Carla L. Davis

You may not have the budget to hire a professional stager, but every home seller can follow a few helpful staging tips to make sure their house looks like a buyer's dream home.

As a seller, you want your home to make a positive first impression. In order to do this, you repair, clean, and strategize marketing for your open houses, but home staging takes it one step further.

It allows the buyer both the mental space to imagine their own belongings in the rooms and the ability to get excited about the life they could have in your home.

Here are some tips to get you started:

Declutter: Less is more. It's a motto that is true for so many things, and staging is no exception. Grab a box, label it "living room" and go through and remove the unnecessary decor. Remove family pictures and trinkets. A buyer needs room to see *their* lives in your home, not themselves in your life.

Remove Furniture: Bulky pieces, or too many furniture items, can clutter the buyer's vision of the room. There should be enough furniture to clearly spell out what the space is intended for (e.g. dining room), but not so much that the room seems smaller than it is. Also, do not "multipurpose" a room during staging, meaning that your "craft/living room" should now just function as a staged living room.

Fireplaces: If your fireplace is stained black, a cheap and easy fix can be paint. A simple white or cream can compliment many modern styles. If your fireplace has a tile surround, consider updating it as a do-it-yourself project.

Avoid Themed Rooms: Resist the temptation to redecorate your den in the theme of your favorite sports team, or make your daughter's room a princess palace. You want your home to appeal to a wide range of buyers. A single buyer will have a hard time imaging their exercise equipment next to all that pink.

Keep it Neutral: This doesn't mean monotone taupe, beige, and more eggshell. It means have the walls painted a neutral and then accent with color throughout the rooms with pillows, throw, artwork, and minimal accessories.

Clean Again: This should go without saying, but deep cleaning is an essential part of staging. Febreze is your friend. If you have animals in your house, you may have become acclimated to the odors. Consider having your carpets cleaned. Burn welcoming -- and odor covering -- candles, such as vanilla and gingerbread. Hang new shower curtains. And hang clean towels. Cover dirty couches with new, inexpensive slipcovers.

And finally, consider some of these inexpensive updates that can add value and staging appeal to your home. Outdated light fixtures can be changed rather inexpensively. Paint or stain patios and concrete that look dingy. Vinyl tile can be laid using easy snap lines. Carpet squares can be pieced together to freshen up tired flooring. You may also think about buying new appliances. These are great selling points, especially the stainless steel version, and you should be able to get money back on your investment.

Use these tips for your home staging and you're sure to impress your prospective buyers.

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