

# To Stage or Not to Stage: There's No Question!

Is it worth the extra time and expense to stage your home when putting it on the market? Yes! Staging your home can help it sell faster and for the highest possible price. While there are professional home staging services, most homeowners can prepare their home themselves on a budget. It can be as simple as a thorough cleaning and fresh flowers in the kitchen, or as elaborate as renting furniture and accessories for a vacant home. Let us show you how!

## CONSIDER THESE STATS:

- 43% of buyers' agents said that home staging influenced most buyers' view of the home.
- 83% of buyers' agents said staging a home made it easier for a buyer to visualize the property as a future home, which can help it sell faster.
- When staging a home, 22% of sellers' agents reported an increase of 1-5% of the dollar value offered by buyers compared to similar homes, and 17% stated that staging increased the dollar value between 6-10%.

Source: *The National Association of Realtors (NAR)*

## WHAT IS STAGING?

Staging your home is simply preparing it for sale by showcasing its best features and making it more visually appealing. Proper staging offers two benefits: First, not all sellers stage their homes, so you'll automatically be at an advantage when you make the effort. Second, many buyers are not able to look beyond clutter, personal items, or outdated décor when house hunting. When you remove these "obstacles," your home will appeal to more potential buyers. A properly staged home will also look better in photographs, which is key to successful online listings.

You can think of staging as dressing for success. Like good clothing, staging flatters and hides flaws, while making a great first impression!

## STAGING MADE EASY

The [median amount spent](#) on home staging is \$300 when done by sellers or handled by the selling agent, compared to \$1,500 when using a specialized staging service. However, some of the most effective staging tips require little to no cost. According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), along with numerous surveys, the best way to stage your home is to:

### 1. Make a good first impression

The first thing most buyers see is your home's exterior. What does it look like from the street? Some buyers will drive by a home and decide not to go in based on a neglected or uninviting exterior. To improve curb appeal, be sure to keep the lawn mowed, pick up yard debris, remove dead branches/plants, neatly prune bushes, and consider a fresh coat of paint. If you can't paint, consider power washing your home's exterior.

Also, keep the driveway and walkways free of toys and other clutter. If possible, plant some flowers or include pots of blooms to brighten the exterior and make your home look more inviting. If time and money are limited, focus your attention on the entryway.



*Potted flowers by the entryway are a quick, inexpensive way to make your home's exterior more welcoming.*

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO STAGING A HOME

### 2. Keep it clean

Nothing makes a good first impression like a clean home. On the other hand, a dirty house can be a big turn off for potential buyers! It screams neglect. You can roll up your sleeves and scrub your home from top to bottom or hire a professional cleaning service. Once you do a thorough cleaning, keep your home clean and tidy throughout the sales process. If you don't have new appliances in the kitchen or updated bathroom fixtures, make sure the ones you have sparkle. When cleaning, be sure to tackle those often-forgotten places like kitchen corners, tile/grout, and dusty ceiling fans. Also, get rid of muddy or dirty welcome mats, which aren't very welcoming.



*Even if you don't have updated fixtures or countertops, you can make sure they're sparkling clean.*

### 3. Deodorize and freshen

We hate to say this, but your house might stink. All houses have odors, but we become "nose blind" to many of them. Unfortunately, [odors are cited as one of the top turn offs](#) for prospective buyers. The worst offenders are pet urine, cigarettes, strong food smells, and musty spaces. If you have carpeting, have it professionally cleaned and deodorized. Clean and deodorize areas where pets eat and sleep, as well as litter boxes, etc. Be sure to take out the trash, eliminate food/cooking odors, and wash damp towels/clothes (including that gym bag!) before showings. If the weather permits, open the windows for a while prior to showings. Potted plants and lightly scented candles are inexpensive ways to keep your home fresh

and inviting – just be sure not to make scents overwhelming! People can be very sensitive to strong smells.



*A few potted plants and lightly scented candles are inexpensive ways to freshen your home.*

### 4. Remove Clutter

If you haven't already packed up items you don't need daily, such as knickknacks, papers, games, toys, and extra clothes and coats, now is the time to do it! Clutter distracts buyers and makes your home appear smaller – and it [ranks in the top five turn offs!](#) Keep countertops and closets as empty and organized as possible – yes, people open doors, and they want to see lots of storage space! In living areas, remove extra tables, chairs, or accent furniture to create the appearance of spaciousness. Too much furniture confuses the eye. If your furniture is too big for the room, you may consider replacing it with smaller rented pieces.



*Keep countertops clear and uncluttered to create the appearance of spaciousness. Neatly organize closets and remove extra items to showcase storage space.*



## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO STAGING A HOME

### 5. Pack up Personal Items

Remember, buyers want to picture themselves in your home. Personal items such as photos, keepsakes, souvenirs, toys, cosmetics, etc. distract buyers and make it harder for them to envision living there. You'll need to pack up these items anyway, so why not do it now.



*Remove personal items like cosmetics from bathroom counters, as well as photos and knickknacks in other living spaces.*

### 6. Create a Neutral Canvas

That floral wallpaper you fell in love with or the bright yellow paint that made you cheery won't appeal to everyone. In some cases, wallpaper or paint colors can make your home seem dark and outdated. Creating a blank slate with neutral colors allows potential buyers to envision their own décor and means less work. Take down wallpaper and paint walls a warm neutral color (avoid white which can look cold). If walls or ceiling have cracks this is also the time to fix them!



*Paint walls a warm neutral color and keep rooms uncluttered.*

### 7. Give rooms one purpose

Many of us have retrofitted rooms to serve many purposes – you know, that guest room/home office/kids' playroom. While this may have worked for you, potential buyers want to see how they can maximize square footage, which means making sure each room has a single, defined purpose. Return the spare bedroom to its original purpose and think about turning that cluttered basement into an entertainment room.



*Return "multi-purpose" rooms to their original purpose, such as a spare bedroom. Keep furnishings simple.*

### 8. Light the way

Good lighting can make your home appear brighter, more inviting, and spacious. If you have good natural light, be sure to open curtains and blinds when showing your home. Also, turn on lights for showings, including lamps and overhead fixtures. If you can't replace outdated light fixtures, be sure they are clean and dust free.



*Be sure to open curtains and blinds when showing your home to take advantage of natural light.*

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO STAGING A HOME

### 9. Replace or refinish flooring

Dirty or stained carpeting ranks high on the “yuck” factor, making it a big turn-off for potential buyers, especially anyone suffering from allergies. Similarly, scratched or worn wood or outdated linoleum can be a deal breaker. It sounds like a big investment (and it is), but new flooring can add tremendous value to your home. If replacing floors is not in the budget, consider refinishing or buffing existing wood floors and/or having carpets professionally cleaned.



*Consider replacing carpeting with hardwood or laminate flooring.*

### 10. Fill empty spaces

Furnished homes often sell faster than unfurnished houses, especially if the furnishings are tasteful and fit the space. It may be that potential buyers can visualize the space better with furnishings or simply because furnished homes look more welcoming and “homey.” If you must leave the house empty, consider renting some furniture and accessories while your home is on the market. Your agent can often recommend rental companies and help you select the best pieces. But don’t go overboard (see #4 Remove Clutter).



*A furnished home is more welcoming and helps potential buyers visualize the space.*

There are many “final touches” you can add to make your home more appealing, such as fresh flowers, new fluffy towels, seasonal décor, and table settings. How much you want to do is up to you. Just remember, your staging efforts should be designed to appeal to the widest possible range of buyers to encourage the highest number of offers.

Keep in mind that your agents can be valuable staging resources, offering suggestions and in some cases, providing staging services.