

Seven Home Staging Basics

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Home staging is a mixed bag because there is so much you can do that knowing where to start, especially if you are doing it yourself, is almost as important as the staging itself. In a down real estate market (or any market) you could find yourself spending thousands of dollars to make your home stand out from the rest of the competition. But will you recoup your costs? How do you know where to start? Read on to see the top seven home staging basics that will save you money and still get buyers to swoon over your home every time.

1. **Check your bulbs twice.** - Home lighting is quite possibly the most effective way to sell your home. When a buyer looks through your home for the first time it's an exploration and as such they are trying to see every detail during their first trip (and impression) of your home. If a buyer spots a burned out bulb or is unable to see all the space in a closet because the lights don't work then they deduct the perceived loss of square footage and needed maintenance from your asking price. Stop this top objection in its tracks by replacing all of your burned out bulbs before putting your home on the market.
2. **Clean the gutters.** - How your home looks on the outside is 50% of the buyer's first impression. If the buyer walks up to the front door and sees gutters weighed down by leaves and other debris it triggers thoughts of deferred maintenance and future home structure problems. A home buyer does not want to inherit a home seller's problems so cleaning the gutters and ensuring they are not sagging will clear the path to a successful home tour.
3. **Pack your family photos and awards before putting your home on the market.** - Your home is your home. It's a very personal space but once you have decided to put your home on the market you have to take into consideration that home buyers are trying to see this as being their next home. Family photos and awards, all great things to have, should be packed before you put your home on the market to avoid creating visual breakers when a buyer tours your home.
4. **Clear the counter space.** - There are two types of real estate a buyer considers when looking at your home. The first is the home and property the home resides on and the second is usefulness of the interior space of your home. Kitchens are the heart of the home and as such the buyers want to know that there will always be room to grow in that space. Clear away non-essential counter appliances and kitchen accessories to give off the impression of more space for the buyer's dollar.
5. **Get the carpets cleaned professionally.** - Carpets are beautiful and make for great floor surfaces but if you haven't had them cleaned since you moved in then you should have it done before putting your home on the market. Dogs, kids and the elements of nature all make their mark on carpeting over the years and the last thing buyers want to do when buying a home is take on a large project like carpet replacement after they move in.
6. **Paint high traffic spaces.** - High traffic spaces are the best places to find dings and marks on the walls which look like deferred maintenance but are in reality the consequence of daily wear and tear. Patch and paint the walls in high traffic spaces.
7. **Define your rooms!** - Buyers have imaginations but not when they are looking at homes. When selling your home the dining room can no longer be the home office and the living room cannot be the catch-all play area and living space. Clearly interpret what your home has to offer to buyers so they don't deduct points (and dollars) when writing an offer for your home.

Home staging is as much about putting your home's best foot forward as it is whisking away the most obvious home buyer objectives before the buyers have a chance to come up with them. By following these seven home staging basics you will be able to command the right price for your home in any market and increase the chances of selling your home quickly.