



Your Guide
to
*Home
Staging*

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The Author, Lisa Miller

My name is Lisa Miller and yes, I am a Realtor®. So, let me take this moment to say, “Hello, and it is nice to meet you.”

I am a native Houstonian and I really love this city. I have seen Houston change with growth and advancement in wonderful ways.

I chose real estate as a career because we as humans will always need a place to live (let’s be real here), but the most important reason is, I love to see the bones of a home’s architecture. It brings me joy and with each new client, the experience starts all over again.

As a Realtor®, I would like you to be smarter and more prepared when entering the home selling process. This is what has motivated me to share the information contained in this guide. I am sure you will find some, if not all, of the content helpful.



Thank you kindly.

Lisa Miller

The Benefits of Staging Your Home

In a slow real estate market, it isn't a great idea to stick a sign in your yard and hope for the best. Remember your house is competing with every other property in your area and price range, and buyers have a lot to choose from. Your home may be beautiful, immaculate, and stylishly appointed to suit your tastes or upgraded with the finest materials and features. It could be all of these things - but it still isn't "staged."

The difference between whether someone is motivated to put in an offer now or wait it out to see how low the price will go, is how much he or she really wants your house. When decorating your home to sell, remember that you are romancing prospective buyers.

Staging a home for sale is not a new concept but is a practice that has gained steam with our more challenging market. Many home sellers confuse staging with decorating and consequently resisting the process and the recommendations of the staging professional.

At its core, staging is all about creating high-impact vignettes to distract the eye. When in doubt, remember, "less is always more."

Make the Front Door Inviting

Potential buyers often drive by before deciding they want to see the inside of a house, so make sure the front door area looks nice and inviting.



Image: Adobestock.com

Decorate for Your Home's Target Market

If you are selling a three-bedroom house in a family-oriented neighborhood, style the home to appeal to families. Even if you do not have children, one of the bedrooms should be shown as a kid's room.

Creating a comfortable and inviting family room is also important. You want buyers to imagine their lives in your home. If they can't visualize where kids will gather and play, they'll move on to the next listing.

Clear Away the Clutter

Clutter may give the impression your home doesn't measure up and is missing necessary storage space. For most of us, our daily lives involve a certain amount of clutter. It could be the car keys and loose change next to the telephone, the infamous "junk drawer," or the little stack of mail on the counter.

Those items on the kitchen countertop such as a toaster, a coffee pot, canister of utensils (you get the idea), can suggest there is a lack of cabinet space to properly store these everyday items. It is wise to clean up all the "stuff" so the buyer can see all functional space. The basic rule of thumb to help decide if something is clutter is, "if you can sit on it, it's not decoration, and if you can't eat it, it's clutter."

Never Leave a Room Empty

Any home seller's top goal is to make a small space look bigger. To get this look, you may be tempted to clear the space and remove all your bulky furniture. But there's a twist: Empty rooms can make them look smaller.

On the contrary, professional stagers manipulate visual perception of a room by using the *right* kind of furniture.

An empty room gives buyers no point of reference for size. Staging rooms with furniture help establish the room's size and helps the buyer visualize how they can arrange their own furniture.

Arrange Furniture to Showcase Your Space

Prospective buyers want to socialize in a home's common areas without having to move things around. Remove extra, unwanted furniture and arrange remaining pieces in a way that creates smooth traffic flow. Good furniture placement can help show off a room and makes a huge impact as a buyer walks through. Creating cozy conversation spaces (think a love seat and two chairs) makes rooms feel larger.



Image: Adobestock.com

In longer rooms, consider creating two separate chat areas and defining them with area rugs to create the illusion of more space. Note: using one rug that's too large will actually make a room look smaller. *The back of a sofa can also be a useful divider between rooms in an open floor plan.*

Let There Be Light

Lighting counts – use brighter lighting to boost sales. Keep drapes open for showings, use higher watt bulbs and if updating fixtures, keep them consistent with your home's price point.

If your home will be listed for \$300,000 or more, don't use the standard builder's fixtures, which reduce your home's perceived value. Using the same logic, don't put an expensive crystal chandelier in a \$100,000 starter home.

Ample lighting gives the illusion of more space. Windows should be cleaned to let the light in. Swap out heavy, room darkening drapes or heavy blinds for opaque, light-filtering window treatments or light curtains. To add more budget friendly wattage, use wall sconces, floor lamps and task lighting. Aim for 100 watts every 50 square feet in layers of ambient, task and accent lighting.

When aiming for more light in a space – don't forget the power of a mirror. Using mirrors creatively captures light and projects it into darker corners, creating textural and spatial illusions.



Image: Adobestock.com

Update the Jewelry of Your Home

You can give your home an instant facelift with new cabinet hardware, taps and faucets. Try to be consistent with the type of metal throughout the house, especially within the same room. Oil-rubbed bronze hardware works well with a traditional home and in a space with dark countertops. Brushed or stain nickel or chrome work best with stainless steel appliances and in homes with a contemporary feel.

Note: curb appeal is important, don't forget your mailbox, house number and front door hardware. This helps buyers form a first impression of your home.

Use Color Creatively

Weaving the same pops of color throughout your home allows your space to flow cohesively from one room to the next. Color can be incorporated in many ways, don't be afraid to use it creatively. Incorporate similar hues across rooms in decorative pillows, unique pieces of art and accessories. A pop of color can really catch a buyer's eye. Generally, stagers recommend dedicating 60% of a room's space to one color, 30% to a second, and 10% to an accent.



Image: Adobestock.com

For a chic, dramatic style, try freshening your furniture with a coat of black paint.



Image: Adobestock.com

Strategically Use Art

I am sure you have heard you should remove all family photos when staging a home, so buyers won't focus on who you are instead of imagining your house as their new home. Replace these with art. Avoid religious pieces, nudes and anything that could be offensive to prospective buyers. Use pieces appropriate to the size of the wall and hang your art at average eye level.

Rearrange your existing art. Displaying art in traditional ways can make it invisible. Display the art in surprising ways and leave the stereotype behind.



Image: Adobestock.com

Highlight Focal Points

Walk into any well staged home, and you'll notice great accent accessories positioned by a room's best attributes. Grouping items from chairs to lighting to artwork to accessories in odd numbers (mostly in threes), forces the eye to move around a space and makes the overall experience more natural and visually rich.

For example, a grouping of (three) vases near a beautiful fireplace or a large plant near a window with a view.



Image: Adobestock.com

Frequently, stagers position furniture at an angle to facilitate better movement in a square or skinny room, or to highlight existing focal points.

Home Staging In A Nutshell

Staging is simply the preparation of any home for sale on the market, and that can mean lots of different things. It is a delicate balance between minimalism and personality. For some sellers, staging just means a quick declutter and a once-over with a mop; for others, it means hiring a professional crew, emptying the home, and renting an entire house full of staging-specific furniture. So, when trying to determine if staging is the

right option for you, it's more about figuring out to what extent you want to prepare your home.

The number one rule of staging is to pare down everything you own. That can mean making donation piles, moving stuff to your new home early, or renting a storage unit. It is never a good idea to stuff closets with miscellaneous items because it will only make those storage spaces feel small. Remember, potential buyers are notorious for peeking into every cupboard, cabinet, and drawer.

An example of a clean and simply staged home:



Quick Staging Guide Checklist

This handy checklist will take you through the steps when prepare your home for potential buyers.

Plan Ahead

- Walk through each room and look at it from a buyer's perspective.
- Ask your real estate agent or local real estate professionals for advice.
- Hire a contractor to handle major projects.
- Sell, donate, or trash anything you don't want or need.

Clean, Depersonalize and Declutter

- Thoroughly clean the entire home.
- Steam clean carpets and drapes. Consider replacing carpet if stains are prominent.
- Clean hardwood floors and tile.
- Repair cracks and holes in the walls.
- Paint interior walls with neutral colors in cream or a light pastel.
- Remove excess and oversized furniture / rearrange furniture to maximize space.
- Organize room closets and store out-of-season clothes.
- Remove family photos, personal collections, and medications.
- Remove items from the garage and store them off site.
- Secure valuable items, including cash and jewelry.

Maximize Curb Appeal

- Check front door, doorbell, address number and welcome mat.
- Paint the home's exterior, including trim, doors and shutters.
- Power wash the siding and windows.
- Sweep home entryway and walkways.
- Mow, water and fertilize the lawn.
- Store any toys or equipment lying on the yard.
- Clean up pet droppings.

Kitchens and Bathrooms

- Mop and polish/wax the floors.
- Clear countertops.
- Replace outdated hardware.
- Clean appliances and fixtures.
- Clean and organize the pantry, cabinets, and drawers.
- Replace old caulking round sinks and bathtubs.
- Keep all toilet seat lids closed.
- Hang fresh towels.

Sense Appeal

- Use fragrant (but mildly scented) room plug-ins.
- Install higher wattage bulbs to brighten rooms.
- Turn on all the lights.
- Turn off TVs.
- Open curtains or blinds to let in natural light.
- Refrain from smoking in the home.
- During open house (if any) relocate pets.

Show Your Home's Best Features

- Remove rugs to show off hardwood floors.
- Pull back drapes to showcase nice views.
- Stage the front porch or deck with furniture and/or potted plants.
- Make sure fireplaces are in working condition.
- Clean the backyard and pool area.
- Paint the home's exterior, including trim, doors and shutters.

Last But Not Least

I hope the information contained in this booklet has provided you with necessary details to help you understand the advantage of staging your home before putting it on the market. Staging is intended to highlight your home's strengths, downplay its weaknesses and assist in appealing to prospective buyers. My goal and intentions are to help you move forward and enlighten you as you prepare your home to be placed on the market. If you are not currently thinking of selling your home but know someone who is, feel free to pass this on.

It would be my pleasure to provide you with a Comparative Market Analysis and I would be honored to serve as your listing agent. If you would like to contact me directly, I am here to help.

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