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## Your Home is a Stage

### Staging tips for readying your home for the market

By Gayla Moghannam

Would you like to increase your home's value by tens of thousands of dollars? Would you like to receive multiple offers the day your home goes on the market?

Of course you would, and you can do this by using home staging techniques, the process of decorating your home for sale.

According to Peggy Selinger-Eaton, a leading home staging professional and author of *Peggy's Corner, The Art of Staging*, "Homeowners can use their existing furnishings and accessories and turn them into something very chic, trendy or elegant." Moreover, staging can be fun and inexpensive.

"I have never walked into a home and not found the necessary items to turn an average home into a model home," says Selinger-Eaton. If you're preparing your home for sale or if your home has been overlooked by prospective buyers, Selinger-Eaton offers these ideas:

1. Think clean and open spaces for your home as you stage: Don't be afraid to let in the light and clear out the dust. The better it looks, the better the sale.
2. Take a tour of your home: Pretend that you've never seen the house before, and give it a critical look. Examine the exterior, interior, and smell around for odors. Get picky. Make a list of things you'd like to improve.
3. Clear off all surfaces and keep only a few decorative accessories.
4. Think of ways to clean, eliminate clutter and modernize. "When in doubt," Selinger-Eaton advises, "pack it out. You'll be happy to have your home packed up when it sells faster than expected."



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*Quality is easy to recognize*

5. Eliminate odors from smoking, pets and cooking: If possible, send your pets to grandma's house. Keep your place smelling clean, fresh, and new.
6. Remove all personal items and photographs: Homebuyers have an easier time envisioning themselves in your home if personal items are removed from the home. Don't forget to remove diplomas and certificates from office walls.
7. Let the homebuyers see rooms: If you're using the family room as the twins' bedroom, consider returning it to its original state by adding a borrowed sofa and coffee table. A dining room should be a dining room and the living room should be a living room.
8. Clean your carpets and touch up the paint. Keep out only a few essentials to give your home generic appeal—throw pillows, candles, and fresh cut flowers are all nice touches. The goal is making every incoming homebuyer feel like they immediately belong. Homebuying is an emotional process, and getting people to feel attached to your home helps bring you more money on the sale.
9. Clean your exteriors: Sweep and dust the front door entrance. Put out a new doormat and clear away cobwebs and dust. Landscaping should be cleared of dead brush and overgrown plants.
10. Clear off the countertops in your kitchen and bathrooms. Bring in new towels and finish the look with a vase of fresh cut flowers and candles. They add color and great aroma.

"You don't need to be a decorator to stage a home. Check out leading department and home furnishing stores to see what colors they are using and copy them," says Selinger-Eaton. Bringing in trendy colors immediately modernizes any home, as will fresh linens in the bedroom and bathroom.

That first impression on prospective buyers should be a lasting and positive one. Remember, says Selinger-Eaton, "Homebuyers will be in a home for three to four minutes. You want to make those moments memorable and profitable."

