

HOME LISTING PREP & STAGING CHECKLIST

The #1 Question to Remember: “WHAT ARE WE SELLING?”

It sounds deceptively simple, but agents (and stagers) forget this all the time. **Asking this question will:**

- ✓ **Help you stage for SALE.**
- ✓ Help you avoid over-staging (aka, hiding the house).
- ✓ Help you maximize features that increase the home’s value and minimize ones that decrease it.

CURB APPEAL & APPROACH

- Vegetation and landscaping neat and trim?
- Roof and gutters clear of debris?
- Walkways, driveway and steps very clean/bright, or in need of pressure washing?
- Is vegetation (or anything else) partially blocking the physical or **visual** path to the front door?
- Does the front door color create a nice contrast to the exterior paint or door trim, so that it “pops”?**
- Are there color spots (i.e. flowers, plant pots) guiding visitors from where they park to the front door?

EXTERIOR ENTRYWAY

- Exterior entryway clean and neat?
- Door threshold and kick plate clean and shiny (if metal)?
- Front door in good condition, or does it need to be repainted/stained?
- Door lock in good condition, or is it worn, dated, dingy looking?
- How are the front lighting fixtures – do they send the right message or make the house look dated?
- Could the entryway use a bright color spot to guide visual interest?
- New, fresh-looking front door mat with crisps lines?** Ideally one that says “Welcome.” (If not, buying one is a good investment.)

Question: What will home shoppers be gazing at while they wait for the door to be opened?

INTERIOR ENTRYWAY

- What is the first impression when you step into the home – naturally pleasant, or something you need to work around? (i.e., cramped, dark, dated, over-decorated, etc.)
- What is the first thing that meets the visitor’s gaze – can this be improved upon by adding/removing decor?
- Is unnecessary furniture making the entry feel cramped?
- Is the entryway lighting OK, or does it make the home feel dated?

Question: Where do you want visitors to look when they first enter, and where do you want them to go?

→ Guide them into the house using decor and/or plants as visual points of interest.

KITCHEN

- What could be taken off the counters to magnify what you're selling (counter space)?**
- Are kitchen towels hanging on expensive appliances hiding what you're selling (the appliances)?
- How is the color scheme – do you need to bring in some color contrast with items on counters?
- Consider adding colorful cookbook on stand, colorful oil bottles, wine bottle and wine glasses, colorful coffee cups or bowls, and/or tasteful artificial plant/flower décor. (But not too much!)
- Have you removed the dish rack, sponges, detergent bottles? (Can stash below sink for occupied homes.)
- Have you considered removing at least some of the following items?
 - Jars used as containers for kitchen utensils (usually look messy, especially in photos).
 - Coffee maker
 - Toaster
 - Blender
 - Knife block
 - Various stuff – hot plates, oven mitts, etc.?
 - ➔ Fine to leave a few items as visual interest/accent points but choose carefully.
 - ➔ Remember the main question is: **“What are we selling?”**

LIVING ROOM / FAMILY ROOM

- How is the paint color and condition?
- Is there a “Lord Voldemort” furniture item that overpowers the entire room? If so, can it be removed?
- Does any other furniture need to be removed in order to create a feeling of spaciousness?
- Is the art work dated or the wrong size for the room?**
- Too much stuff on coffee table?
- Do bookshelves need to be substantially cleared out in order to not look cluttered in a photo?
- Any dated furniture that would be easy to replace?

DINING ROOM

- Is the table the right size – not too big or too small?
- Not too many dining room chairs? A 6-person table usually looks best with only 4 chairs in photos.**
- Is the furniture dated? If so, can any be replaced?
- Is there good contrast, i.e. place settings or chairs vs. the table? (Not too much dark on dark.)

Common Dining Room Staging Mistakes:

- ➔ **Over-staging** with too many plates, utensils, tall glasses, napkins, candles, etc.
- ➔ **Huge centerpiece** that looks “artsy” but blocks flow and view. (Remember what you're selling: the room, space, flow, functionality.)
- ➔ **Tablecloth** – very hard to get away with without looking dated. Place mats usually look better.
- ➔ **Not removing a furniture item** that crowds the room – usually a china hutch, extra chair, etc.

BEDROOMS

- Does the bed need to be repositioned to make the room look larger?
- Would removing a large piece of furniture (usually a chest of drawers) make the room look larger?
- Is the art work OK and appropriate for the spacing in the room?
- Does the bed headboard need to be removed in order to make the bed not look overwhelming?
- Is the bedspread a non-distracting pattern/color**, or do you need to bring in your own? (Usually “yes”.)
- Is the paint a good color and in good condition?

BATHROOMS

- Contrasting color towels hung neatly on racks?** (Usually will need to bring your own.)
- Contrasting color washcloths/small towels rolled and set on countertop as color spot(s)?
- Small painting over toilet, or somewhere in bathroom where gaze falls?
- Wide colored candle or small artificial plant on top of toilet?
- Added matching stylish cup/toothbrush holder/soap dish with new soap?
- Artificial plants for countertop decor?
- Put away seller’s soap/towels/toiletry items?
- Are the bath mats a plus, or do they hide what you’re selling (i.e. a nice tile floor)?
- Is the shower curtain distracting or dated looking?** (Usually need to bring your own, can hang it outside of seller’s shower curtain or outside of clear vinyl shower curtain if home is occupied.)
- If bathroom is dated, can you work around it?
 - ➔ Bright, retro color towels (lime green, indigo, etc.) can work surprisingly well to give old bathrooms “pop” and make them look stylish (“retro and working it”) rather than looking drab and dated.

DECKS, PATIOS, & YARD

- Are there color spots guiding visitors visually from the house to the deck or yard?
- Would staining or pressure washing the deck or patio make a big improvement?
- Does the yard look neat and well maintained?
- Are there crisp, clean landscaping lines?** Cedar bark is “the great equalizer” – excellent for making flower beds and landscaping areas look neat and crisp.
- Are there color spots to perk up the yard?
- Is pruning needed? If so, think resale, not the perfect pruning strategy for 5 years down the road (as long as it won’t harm the plant). Don’t prune if it will make a plant look awful prior to sale.

FOR LISTING PHOTOS, REMEMBER...

- ✓ **The camera magnifies clutter** and makes the room “gain 10 pounds”.
- ✓ Small items that are identifiable in person turn into “What the...?” in a photo. They create subconscious mental static that hides your marketing message.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY KITCHEN & BATHROOM UPGRADES

- Danish Oil** – makes old wood cabinetry look much newer – **very useful for faded oak cabinets.**
- Cabinet hardware** – even inexpensive handles can make old cabinets look much more modern.
- Appliance(s)** – if there’s one old appliance that kills the feel of the kitchen, may be worth replacing it even if it’s just with a used but newer model from Craigslist. *Quantify the trade-off in Seller Cost vs. Value to Buyer.*
- Flooring** – click-lock Luxury Vinyl Plank flooring is easy to install, relatively inexpensive, and can totally change the feel of a kitchen that’s being devalued by very old/damaged flooring. It’s also easy for the buyer to rip out and replace (make sure it’s click-lock and not glue-down).
- Lighting** – IKEA sells inexpensive overhead lighting that looks good.

UNIVERSAL STAGING OPTIONS

All Homes – Vacant and Occupied - Interior:

- Thoroughly cleaned. Use Kilz on subfloors and replace pad and carpet if there are pet odors.
- De-cluttering, removing furniture, rearranging items to improve space and flow.
- Replacing carpet if necessary. 8-lb (rather than 6-lb) pad can make carpet feel higher grade.
- Changing/removing items that severely date the home, i.e. huge window drapes, old style lighting, etc.
- Artificial trees and plants – can buy second hand. (Live plants in vacant homes turn you into a gardener.)
- Appropriate art work that looks good, doesn’t make a huge statement, and doesn’t date the home.
- Staging the countertops in kitchen and bathrooms.
- Paint – **Sherwin Williams Kilim Beige and Softer Tan** (usually in Eggshell sheen) are great resale colors.
- Patio table with colorful flower pot.
- Colorful vases/bowls/pottery for empty shelves. You can find many items like this at TJ Maxx, Ross, etc.

All Homes – Vacant and Occupied - Exterior:

- Spruce up landscaping with cedar bark, edging, exterior flowers, and flower pots.
- Clean roof and gutters.
- Clean windows inside and out.
- Pressure wash driveways, walkways, and patios.
- Keep a clear physical and visual (mental) path to the home, with color spots to guide visitors.

Tip: The #1 rule of staging is “First do no harm”. This means sometimes “nothing” is better than “something”.

For example, if big heavy drapes or valances or the wrong color curtains make a home look dark or dated or block a good view, the home’s value may be higher with no window treatments at all. *Remember what you’re selling!*

Stay in the loop and be notified of new course offerings!

Grow your skill level fast and learn core techniques
that boost your conversion and referral rates.

Sign up for updates at <https://labtestedrealestate.com/>