



READY. SET. SELL.

THE ERA® REAL ESTATE HOME STAGING GUIDE



ERA® GOLD STAR PROPERTY. A SMART MOVE.





Once you make the decision to sell your home, it's time to start preparing it for sale. Our mission as ERA® sales associates is to help you make your house stand out online, during open houses and showings.

Our home staging guide can help your property stand out from the dozens of houses that buyers see. To become the one that they see themselves calling "home." Home staging is the key to that transformation.

We start with what you love about your home, and through the staging process, we turn that into what a buyer can love about your property. It's not "magic" that will make your home stand out, just solid planning based on proven staging principles, the experience to know what buyers are looking for, and the hard work to make it happen.

The good news is, that when done right, preparing your home for sale by systematically staging it can help you maximize value and minimize time on the market.

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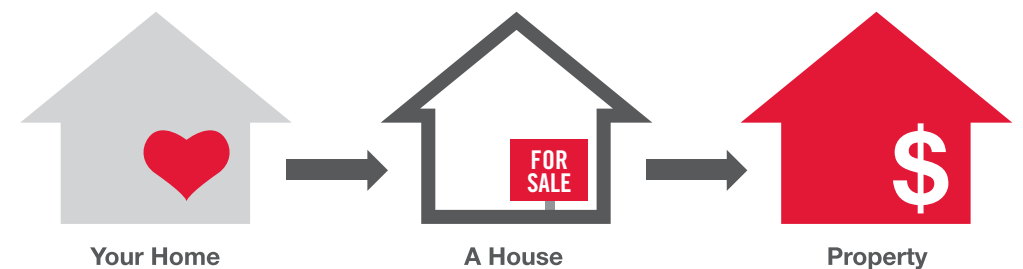
WHAT IS HOME STAGING?

home staging (v.)

1. the act of preparing a home for sale, with a special emphasis on presentation and appearance.

Home staging is different from home repair. It is not the same as remodeling. It does not need to cost a lot of money. Home staging is about creativity, not cash. Your staging budget will vary based on your home's individual needs. It can cost as little or as much as you want. Home staging focuses less on repair and more on creating a clean, open, organized space to help buyers mentally move-in.

When you put your house on the market, you have to shift your thinking. It is no longer your home. It is now a product for sale. And when it comes to selling, the product needs to be as attractive to buyers as possible.

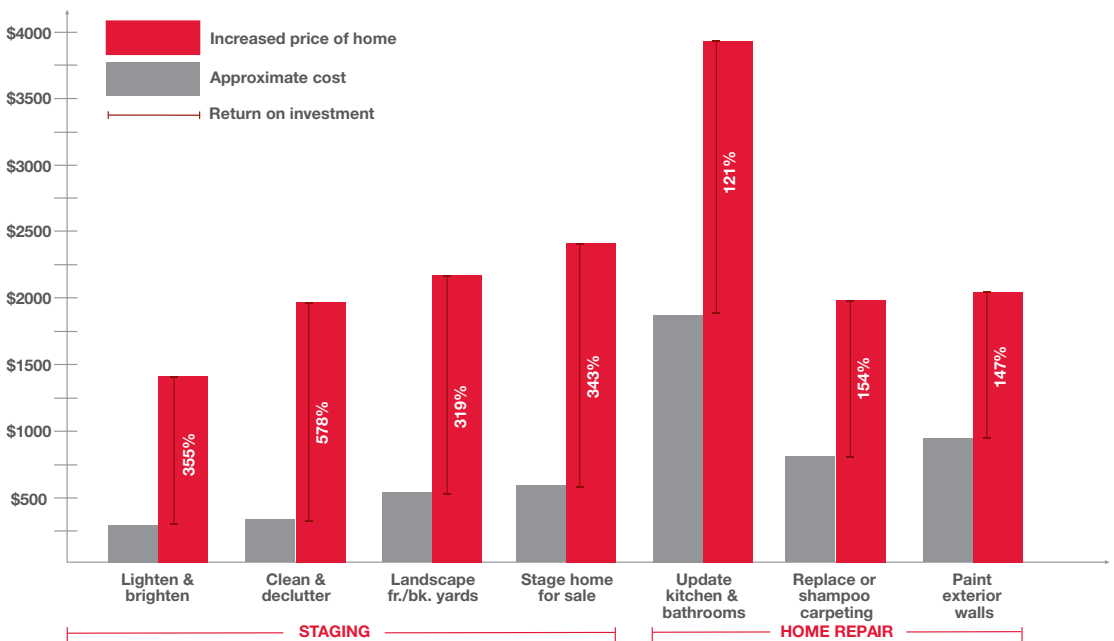


It's like re-selling your car. You would change the oil, check the tires and gather maintenance records. But you would also wash it, vacuum it and detail it—inside and out. You want buyers to see the best features, not just that it was well maintained.

This is where staging comes in. Using a systematic approach and proven techniques, you'll be able to look at your property objectively. By highlighting the strengths, you can improve the property's appearance in the eyes of potential buyers, with the ultimate goal of selling the home more quickly and for the highest possible price.

Staged homes spend **83 percent less time on the market** with **94 percent of staged homes selling in 29 days or less.***

RETURN ON INVESTMENT CHART



From Home Gain's 2009 national survey.



Check the average return on home staging investments in your area. ERA.com/GoldStar

*Based upon a survey conducted by The International Association of Home Staging Professionals® and StagedHomes.com® of over 1,000 homes (62% Vacant, 38% occupied) across the Continental US and Canada prepared for sale by Accredited Staging.

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

- Walk through your house looking at it objectively with the potential buyer in mind. View it as a buyer would—determine what attributes are appealing in each room and what may be detracting attention from those advantages. Do this exercise again with a neighbor or friend to help you be more objective.
- Each room has a positive feature that a buyer will notice. Begin to plan how you will accentuate that feature.
- Get a head start on packing by removing personal possessions like photos and mementos. Potential buyers will feel they are viewing a property and not intruding in your home.


SET THE STAGE: 12 SIMPLE STEPS

Staging your home systematically allows you to plan and prepare your property for sale. We suggest home staging be conducted room by room and that you do not stage the entire house at once. Follow these 12 steps in each room and you'll be done before you know it.

- 1 Assess the room.** Make note of the rooms' function and if it could work as anything else. Take inventory. What would you notice if you were a potential buyer?
- 2 Pick a focal point for each room.** Select one asset that highlights the room's attributes. Start with that point and work to draw attention to it.
- 3 Remove clutter.** Knickknacks and mementos make a home comfortable and lived in, but to sell a house, it is better to remove most personal items. Buyers will feel more like they are shopping and less like they are intruding.

De-cluttering Action Plan

- a. Schedule time, a specific week night, to de-clutter. This keeps you on schedule to put your home on the market.

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- b. Tackle one room at a time. Start at one point in the room, a closet or cabinet, and work from there. Work from small spaces to larger spaces. Start with drawers and move onto cabinets and then closets.
- c. Box up all daily non-essentials including your closet clutter. Ask yourself: What can I live without while my house is for sale?

4 Depersonalize. Remove personal collections and pictures. Your goal is to make your property appeal to the largest pool of potential buyers.

5 Renew, repair or replace. Now is the time to repair and replace all those little items you could live with but that may make a potential buyer wonder “what else is wrong.” Before undertaking major repairs or renovations, check in with your ERA® sales associate.

6 Rearrange furniture. Showcase spaciousness by minimizing furniture in dining rooms, bedrooms and living rooms. The pieces you remove could go into storage or be repurposed in other rooms.

7 Re-accessorize. Highlight the focal point of each room. To do this you may want to go back to boxes of items you removed from other rooms. Is there anything that you can use that will coordinate well with your plan for this room?

8 Fine-tune your work. Make sure all details are exactly as you want them. Walk through each room and make sure your attention goes to the desired focal point. Do this exercise with a friend or neighbor and ask them to identify the rooms’ focal point. If the focal point is still not clear, then revisit steps one through seven.

9 Clean, clean, clean. Cleanliness leads to sales. Straighten up closets, clean inside kitchen and medicine cabinets. Dust and polish dishes in the china cabinet. Generally assume potential buyers will examine every nook and cranny of your house.

10 Add life. Use potted plants, a bowl of fruit, natural lighting, or anything else that brings the outside in to create a warm environment.

11 Prepare to show. Get in the routine of showing your home. A checklist of showing instructions has been provided for you on page 14. These are things that help present your house at its best.

12 Ask for help. You are not selling your home alone. Your ERA® sales associate has many resources to help, from storage facilities to discounts on repair supplies. As you prepare your home for sale, ask before you act.



STAGING

TIPS & IDEAS

As you prepare your property for sale, here are some helpful tips to keep in mind.

LESS IS MORE

- ❑ Remove any items that are personal, including diplomas, family photos and religious symbols.
- ❑ De-clutter every room in the house including garage and closets. If necessary put furniture, books and boxes in storage while your property is on the market.

ATMOSPHERE

- ❑ Create an impression and guide your potential buyer through a room by staging items in groups of three, with a high, medium and a low level.
- ❑ Hang pictures and artwork at about 60 inches high. This is the average height of a woman's eye line.
- ❑ A casual throw can balance out a living space and prevents it from feeling stark or cold.
- ❑ Arrange new, unlit candles in a room to create a relaxed feel.

FURNITURE

- ❑ Group furniture away from walls to create balance in a room.
- ❑ Arrange furniture to emphasize the room and not the furniture.
- ❑ Consider placing bold or dramatic furniture in storage.

LIGHT

- ❑ Add as much light to your house as you can—preferably natural light. Place a small reading lamp behind a chair in the corner to create a cozy feel.
- ❑ Mirrors give the illusion of light because they reflect it. They open up a room, virtually doubling it in size. Place a mirror on a wall opposite a set of windows and suddenly you have tons of natural light.
- ❑ Brighten up your home by taking down dark or heavy draperies and replacing them with coverings that allow light to filter through.

PAINT

- ❑ Paint is a low-cost investment with a high rate of return.
- ❑ Keep the color palette neutral and subdued.
- ❑ Paint wood paneling to create a more contemporary appearance.

HOME STAGING

HOW TO

Home staging begins with identifying what you want the buyer to focus on and creating a plan to do just that. The first step in that plan is not to add more to the space, but to clean and de-clutter and then work to highlight the focal point.

Every room needs its own plan and so does the property's exterior.

CURB APPEAL:

Make your property look good from the outside in.

First impressions create lasting impressions, and that starts outside the house. Give your property the curb appeal that invites buyers to take the next step into your home.

LANDSCAPING

- **CLEAN**

- Prune bushes, trees and shrubs regularly.
- Keep the lawn looking fresh and groomed by mowing, edging and adding seed as needed.
- Weed and maintain flowerbeds, lawns and planters.
- Check your mailbox for chipped paint, dents etc. If it is in poor condition consider replacing.

- **TIPS**

- Create a focal point in the yard to provide a sense of order and unity.
 - Add a bench to incurved areas of the yard.
 - Add a tree, water feature or decorative brick to enhance flower beds
 - A spectacular view needs no enhancement.
- Lay fresh mulch in flower and tree beds.
- Look good at night by adding lighting on walkways or place lights beneath a tree and shine them upward. Keep all existing lights in working condition and remove cobwebs, dirt, etc.



THE EXTERIOR OF THE HOUSE

- **CLEAN**

- Clear obstructions from roof and gutters.
- Inspect the yard. Remove any building materials, scrap wood and/or discarded household items.
- Inspect the condition of the paint or siding and consider power washing.
- Use touch-up paint in those areas that need it.
- Wash all windows and remove screens.
- Paint fencing.

- **TIPS**

- Ensure your house number is visible from the street.

THE DRIVEWAY/GARAGE DOORS

- **CLEAN**

- Fix pavement/driveway cracks.
- Remove visible oil stains.

- **TIPS**

- Keep car(s) off the driveway and away from the front of the house.
- Garage doors should be kept down as much as possible while the house is for sale and especially during an Open House or when the house is being shown.

THE ENTRYWAY

- **CLEAN**

- Keep your entryway swept and clean.
- Clean lighting fixtures.
- Touch up paint or wood staining on front door.
- Keep welcome mat clean and in good condition.
- Polish exterior metal, including door handles, knockers and locks. If necessary, replace door hardware to create a uniform and updated look.
- Make sure doorbell and exterior lights are working.
- Put away all toys, bikes, scooters, etc.

- **TIPS**

- Create a focal point at your entryway that creates a sense of warmth and invitation.
- Hang a seasonal wreath on the front door.
- If space permits, add a rocking chair or bench to the front porch or entryway.
- Use large planters filled with flowers or evergreens to welcome visitors.



ROOM BY ROOM

Getting potential buyers in the door is no small feat. Keeping them interested throughout the house takes planning and preparation. Take the following steps to give each room in your home the greatest appeal to buyers.

FOYER

Create a welcoming environment that looks inviting and spotlessly clean. You want the impact to be impressive and this is the place to make a statement. Remember our goal is to make the buyer feel they are being led effortlessly through the rest of the house.

- **CLEAN**

- Repaint, if necessary.
- Clean interior entry of all clutter.
- Clear and clean out front hall closet.

- **TIPS**

- Add a large throw rug to a foyer with hardwood or tile floors.
- Consider upgrading flooring, if needed.
- A table or bench with a place for keys is a good addition.
- A vase of fresh flowers can add a welcoming touch.



MAIN LIVING AREA: LIVING ROOM/FAMILY ROOM/REC ROOM

For most homeowners the main living areas serve two purposes: entertaining and spending time with family. To help convey dual functions, strive to create an inviting feel and welcome visitors to come and sit comfortably.

- **CLEAN**

- Repaint or touch up walls and ceilings.
- Clean fireplace, mantel, shelving.
- Do not overload mantel with knickknacks.
- Remove family portraits and photos.
- Shampoo carpets and/or wax wood floors. If possible, have the carpets professionally cleaned.
- If needed, clean upholstery and drapes.
- Replace or cover worn furniture.
- Clear off all coffee tables and end tables to just two or three magazines and one nice vase. Magazines suggest leisure, but choose ones that are not too personal or controversial.

- **TIPS**

- If you have a picture window with a spectacular view, or a fireplace, make it the focal point of the room.
- Rearrange furniture to showcase the room's best feature and create additional space.
- Use lamps to create light in darker corners of the room.
- Place furniture away from windows to let natural light in.

KITCHEN

Kitchens are an important factor in the value of a home, so making the most of your kitchen is a good investment of time. The secret to kitchen staging is cleanliness. The cleaner and brighter the kitchen, the greater the appeal.

- **CLEAN**

- Repaint walls.
- Clean and polish everything.
- Clean the inside of refrigerators, ovens, and dishwashers—yes, people do look.
- Clean tile grout with bleach.
- Make faucets and fixtures sparkle.
- Keep the sink empty and clean on a daily basis.
- Put away pet food/water bowls when not in use.
- Keep all soaps, towels, sponges and cleaning products under the sink in a bucket.
- Empty the garbage regularly to prevent odors.
- Remove magnets, photos, etc. from the front of your refrigerator.
- Create more counter space by storing appliances in the cabinets.
- Spend some extra time de-cluttering. Kitchens are notorious for being full of clutter. So when you stage this area of your house, be ruthless about removing unnecessary items.

- **TIPS**

- Place an open cookbook next to fresh herbs to show that the kitchen is the heart of your home.
- Turn the lights on and open the curtains. If you have dark areas in your kitchen, you might even consider adding supplemental lighting, such as recessed lighting around the edges.

DINING ROOM

- **CLEAN**

- Repaint walls if needed.
- Clean the light fixture.

- **TIPS**

- Remove tablecloth from table.
- Remove extra leaf from table to make the room appear larger.
- Four chairs are all you need. Additional chairs can be put in storage.
- Set your dining room with just plates and glasses, allowing the potential buyers to envision cozy dinners with their loved ones.
- Add fresh fruit as a decorative touch.



BEDROOM(S)

Bedrooms should convey a sense of comfort and space. Cleaning and de-cluttering is a fairly easy way to create a bedroom with buyer appeal.

- **CLEAN**

- Repaint walls, if necessary. Use neutral colors.
- Make beds every day.
- Remove all personal mementos.
- Remove off-season clothes to create more room in closets.
- Clear off bedside table except for a small lamp and one book.
- Keep closet doors closed. People will open them, so make sure closets are clean and well-organized.
- In children's rooms, consolidate toys to only those needed.
- Create more space by removing all but essential furniture: bed, nightstand and dresser.

- **TIPS**

- Consider investing in new bedding to create a feeling of comfort.

BATHROOM(S)

Bathrooms, like kitchens, are crucial to the value of a property. The goal in preparation for the bathroom is to create a clean, bright and comfortable environment.

- **CLEAN**

- Repaint walls, if needed. Consider removing any wallpaper.
- Clean tile and grout; and re-grout if necessary.
- Reduce toiletries to a decorative three and place them on a tray or in a basket.
- Switch hand soap to liquid soap.
- Clean or replace shower curtain. Select a solid colored shower curtain and not one with a pattern. Curtain should be drawn at all times.
- Keep shampoos and shower accessories to a minimum.
- Remove toilet seat covers and throw rugs.

- **TIPS**

- Consider updating bathroom fixtures.
- Keep toilet lid down at all times.
- Strategically place river rocks or candles in the bathroom to give it an airy, spa-like feel.
- Coordinate towels, two colors at most.

BASEMENT

Houses with basements have the opportunity to show space that can be used for storage, additional living space, or both.

- **CLEAN**

- Paint walls, as needed.
- Be aware of smells, and use room deodorants and disinfectant sprays to alleviate odors.
- Repair any cracks in the ceiling or walls.
- Clear any drains.
- Organize storage items in bins or boxes.
- Replace light bulbs and/or add lighting if needed.

- **TIPS**

- Use a throw rug and couch to create a living space.
- If space permits, add a craft table or workbench and tools.

GARAGE – INTERIOR

There is a good chance that your garage will become your storage space while your home is on the market. Keep in mind, however that potential buyers will still want to see it.

- **CLEAN**

- Touch up paint in finished garages.
- Keep the garage as neat as possible and create as much space as possible by grouping like items together and utilizing shelving/storage units.
- Remove oil stains from the floor of the garage.
- Clean and replace light fixtures.

- **TIPS**

- Place a welcome mat or throw rug in front of doors leading into the house or out to the yard.

“Your investment in staging is always less than a price reduction.”

Barb Schwarz, The Creator of Home Staging®

IT'S SHOWTIME!

The final preparation is to have a gameplan every time the property is being shown—from open houses to private showings.

- **CLEAN**

- Put away pet food bowls.
- Clear the kitchen sink.
- Pick up all children's toys.
- Close garage door.

- **LIGHT**

- Open shades and curtains.
- Turn on every light in the house.

- **ATMOSPHERE**

- Play soft music on stereo/radio.
- Give the house a pleasant aroma—fresh bread, fire in the fireplace, fresh flowers, etc.
- Set dining room table with just plates and glasses.
- Set the thermostat to a comfortable temperature.

- **SHARE INFORMATION**

Display house and community information prominently.

- Paid utility bills.
- Current property tax receipts.
- Real estate listing sheet.
- Floor plan (if available).
- List of upgrades you've put into the house (with dates if available).
- Map and/or list of community features and points of interest.
- Warranty information on appliances.





HELPFUL TOOLS

SHOPPING LIST

Use the following list as a guide when shopping for your home staging needs.

EXTERIOR	HARDWARE	PLANTS/GARDENING
HEDGE TRIMMERS	LIGHT BULBS	MULCH
LAWNMOWER	CABINETS	FRESH FLOWERS (INDOOR /OUTDOOR)
CAULKING	FAUCETS	PLANTS (INDOOR/OUTDOOR)
POWER WASHER	LIGHT SWITCH COVERS	GRASS SEED
DECK STAIN	INTERIOR PAINT	
EXTERIOR PAINT	PAINT BRUSHES	

FURNISHINGS	CLEANING SUPPLIES	MISCELLANEOUS
CANDLES	ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER	
NEW BEDSPREADS	WINDOW CLEANER	
RAFFIA	DEGREASER	
THROW PILLOWS	FURNITURE POLISH	
THROW BLANKETS	ROOM DEODORIZER	
SHOWER CURTAIN	SPONGES	
NEUTRAL ARTWORK	DUST CLOTHS	
CLOSET ORGANIZERS	MOP/BROOM/BUCKET	
HANGERS	FLOOR/CARPET CLEANER	
VASES	OVEN CLEANER	
TOILET SEAT		

STAGING BUDGET WORKSHEET

IMPROVEMENT/REPAIR	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION	ESTIMATED COST	ACTUAL COST
Tools: (For needed repairs, if applicable)			
Subtotal			
Cleaning Supplies/Services:			
Subtotal			
Paint Supplies:			
Subtotal			
Curb Appeal:			
Subtotal			
Exterior:			
Subtotal			

STAGING BUDGET WORKSHEET

IMPROVEMENT/REPAIR	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION	ESTIMATED COST	ACTUAL COST
Garage/Storage:			
Subtotal			
Accessories:			
Subtotal			
Miscellaneous:			
Subtotal			
Open House Expenses:			
Subtotal			
TOTAL			



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