

Perk up your property to attract buyers
and gain a vital sales edge in a crowded market

Home Staging

FOR DUMMIES[®]

Christine Rae

Founder, Certified Staging Professionals

Jan Saunders Maresh

Founder, Naked Room Solutions

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



FREE eTips at
dummies.com

Shopping for Staging, Room by Room

As you prepare your home for sale, consider purchasing some of the following items, which we use over and over in the homes we stage. (And remember — you can take most of this nice, new stuff with you when you move.)

- ✔ **Backyard:** Benches, outdoor urns with silk trees, outdoor rugs
- ✔ **Bathrooms:** Plush white linens, colored linens as accents, terry cloth shower curtain, large serene art pieces
- ✔ **Curb appeal:** New mailbox, light fixtures, welcome mat, shutters
- ✔ **Dining room:** Crystal or silver objects, large art pieces, floral display
- ✔ **Family or rec rooms:** Artwork, throws, game board, rugs, throw pillows
- ✔ **Front entry:** Sofa table, silk flowers, mirror to reflect light
- ✔ **Living room:** Throw pillows, rug, lamps, silk trees
- ✔ **Kids' bedrooms or extra bedrooms:** Neutral and plush bedding, two sleeping pillows in shams and one throw pillow, bed skirt, table lamps, artwork
- ✔ **Kitchen:** Cookbooks, silk flowers, light fixtures, serving dishes
- ✔ **Laundry room:** Wicker laundry basket, artwork, laundry tins with scoop
- ✔ **Master bedroom:** Six pillows (four sleeping pillows in shams and two throw pillows), bed skirt, white sheets, plush neutral bedding, silk flowers, table lamps, a throw, and art

Sizing Up the Situation

Remember these guidelines for measurements of common household elements to get your house into showing shape:

- ✔ **Area rugs:** Use an area rug to ground furniture or delineate a sitting area. Steer clear of buying a too-small rug. A typical sofa-love seat configuration works best with a 5-foot by 8-foot rug. Don't try anything smaller than a 4-foot by 6-foot size.

If you have nice hardwood flooring in your dining room, we recommend showing it off instead of buying an area rug. But if you decide to use a rug under a table and chairs, look for one that's 24 to 30 inches wider than the table and chairs.

When you're putting one big rug in a room to cover most of the floor, remember to leave 20 to 36 inches between the edges of the rug and the walls.
- ✔ **Artwork and photographs:** When hanging art above furniture, place the bottom edge of the artwork 4 to 6 inches above the surface or back of the furniture. If the art is alone on the wall, place it 54 inches from the floor to the center of the art piece. Chapter 8 tells you more about the finer points of hanging art.
- ✔ **Chandeliers:** To hang a chandelier in the foyer, measure the height of the foyer. The chandelier should hang down 3 inches per foot of the height of the foyer. For example, if the foyer is 9 feet high, the bottom of the chandelier should hang down approximately 27 inches from the ceiling. Install a chandelier in a dining room so that its bottom is 30 to 42 inches above the table top.
- ✔ **Dining room tables:** Remove a leaf and use fewer chairs to make the dining room look more spacious. Avoid using tablecloths because they make the dining room look smaller. If you're renting or buying, choose a dining room table in proportion to the room. If traffic flows around the table, be sure you leave at least 48 inches between the edge of the table and other furniture or walls.

5 Steps to a Successful Open House

1. **Complete all staging techniques before taking the photographs for your online listing and flyers.**

Professional photographs of a beautifully staged property can increase the number of potential buyers who come to your open house because they see an intriguing, warm, inviting property when they see great pictures of your property online, in the sales flyers, and in print advertising.

2. **Set the price accordingly.**

Do your homework and shop similar homes on the market, and then price your property accordingly. If your property is priced right to begin with, staging discourages price reductions later on. When you stage your house and price it right, you get the most bang for your buck by bringing in the most traffic within the first few weeks that your house is on the market.

3. **Curb appeal is your 24/7 storefront.**

Curb appeal (the condition of your house from the outside) is not just important on the day of an open house but every day. You never know when potential buyers might be driving by to decide whether your house is worth touring.

4. **Create a shuffle-duffle bag for the main rooms in your house.**

This handy bag contains quick cleaning supplies and is a great place for you to throw unopened mail and the kids' toys before a showing. Doing the "shuffle duffle" keeps the showcase appearance throughout the selling process. (Chapter 5 gives you the scoop on the shuffle duffle.)

5. **Get out.**

All household members need to leave the premises before an open house — including your pets and all signs of them.

Open House Checklist

Before any potential buyer steps foot in your house, make sure you do the following so that your house is looking its sellable best:

- If the views are good open all drapes and blinds.
- Turn on all lamps; agents will turn on the overhead lights.
- Make all the beds.
- Empty all the garbage and waste paper baskets.
- If you have a good sound system, play music.
- Pick up and put away things that should be out of sight.
- Remove pets.
- Shake out the front welcome mat and sweep away any dust, debris, and spider webs.
- Add fresh flowers to any room in the house and fruit to your kitchen.
- Wipe the sinks after doing dishes or washing your hands.
- Clean the stove top and counters.
- Sweep the floors.
- Mop the floor if you haven't done so in the past two days.
- Clean toilet seat, rim, and lid. Leave toilet lid down.
- Swoosh toilet bowl with brush.
- Wipe off mirrors and faucets.
- Squeegee shower doors.
- Spray entire shower and curtain liner with shower cleaner after every use.

Introduction

A complete and proper home staging takes an occupied house from *okay* to *wow*, and it elevates a vacant property from cold and empty to warm and welcoming. It gives home sellers an opportunity to secure more equity and to sell their properties faster.

If you have a house that's just sitting on the market drawing no offers, or if you're getting ready to list a property for sale — as a real estate professional or as a homeowner — staging the property gives you a marketing edge. Your staged property stands out from the competition in the neighborhood and from the unstaged houses in your price range — and did we mention that staged properties sell faster?

In a soft market and with foreclosures on the rise, home sales are slowing all over North America, so staging your property has gone from a nice thing to do to a necessity.

About This Book

Whether you're interested in home staging for personal or professional reasons, you can get what you need from this book. The basic truth is that staged properties sell faster than those that are unstaged. And a staged vacant house sells faster than an empty property. In a hot market, a property that has been staged sells for more money, and in a slow market, staged properties sell faster than those that aren't. So why isn't everyone staging their properties? We'd like to know.

We wrote this book to show you how to prepare a house for sale so it sells faster and secures more equity. We know that reading this book and doing what we suggest gets you closer to a sale, so we've done our professional best to share what we know about preparing a property for sale so it can be as trouble-free an experience as possible. Yes, it's a lot of work, but it's well worth doing.

Conventions Used in This Book

To assist your navigation of this book, we've established the following conventions:

- ✓ We use *italic* for emphasis and to highlight new words or terms that we define.
- ✓ We use `monofont` for Web addresses.
- ✓ Sidebars, which are shaded boxes of text, consist of information that's interesting but not necessarily critical to your understanding of the topic.

Foolish Assumptions

As we wrote this book, we made some assumptions about you and your needs. We assume that you might be

- ✓ A homeowner getting ready to list a house with a real estate professional and wanting to know what to do to get top dollar
- ✓ A real estate professional or property stager who wants to use this book to help clients ready their houses before you list or showcase them
- ✓ A real estate professional who wants to know more about the ins and outs of staging to gain a marketing edge
- ✓ A homeowner looking for information that will sell her already-listed house faster
- ✓ Interested in finding out more about staging as a career
- ✓ Rehabbing or flipping properties and interested in how staging helps properties sell faster
- ✓ A builder who wants to know how best to sell a vacant new property

If any of these sound like you, you've come to the right book!

How This Book Is Organized

Unless you've been through a recent move, you may not know how the market has changed and what the home seller and real estate professional do to ready a property for sale. But you're in luck because you have this book.

The following sections give you a rundown of where you can find what, so you can use this guide to your best advantage.

Part I: Preparing Your Property for Sale

In this part, we tell you what buyers are looking for in a new property and help you identify what you're selling, so you can go into the selling process with your eyes wide open. We give you some of the basic principles of staging and show you how to start putting those principles into action, starting with color, light, and furniture placement.

Part II: Three Staging Steps Toward Hitting a Home Run

Property staging is *not* decorating! Our three-step staging process helps you look at your property through the eyes of the buyer — warts and all — and then tells you what to do to get your property sold. In this part, you find out what to expect from a staging consultation, the kinds of things you're going to need to do to get your property in shape, and how to show off your work through photographs and to real estate agents.

Part III: Working Through Your House, Room by Room

What you do in a bedroom isn't necessarily what you do in a dining room — staging-wise or otherwise. In this part, we give you the goods you need to get each room into showing shape by taking into account its purpose, its architectural features, and the things buyers are going to want from it. We take you through the front door and out the back with stops at every room (and closet) along the way.

Part IV: Addressing Special Staging Considerations

Sensitive issues can get between you and a sale. In this part we tell you how to deal with your mother-in-law's teacup collection, your affinity for sports paraphernalia, or your kid's pets. We give you the ins and outs of staging when you're flipping or rehabbing a property.

You find in this part an introduction to the Feng Shui practices that can help direct energy (and buyers) through your house, and we wrap things up by giving you eco-friendly staging ideas.

Part V: The Part of Tens

In this part, we share ways to avoid common mistakes home sellers and real estate professionals make when it comes to staging properties. We run you through reasons to bring in a professional stager and show you our favorite staging products, tools, and ways to get your house (and yourself) ready for the sale.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, we guide you toward important points by using the following icons:



Next to this icon, you find information that you should keep in the back of your mind as you prepare your house for sale. These points are key to efficient property staging.



This icon highlights information, techniques, or products that professional stagers use to get a space ready for the sale.



Anything that saves you time, energy, or money gets special treatment with this icon.



The home selling process is stressful enough without putting yourself, your home, or your sale in danger. The information you find next to this icon can help you avoid frustration.

Where to Go from Here

Most *For Dummies* books are set up so that you can flip to the section of the book that meets your present needs. You can do that in this book, too. We tell you where to find the information you may need when we refer to a concept, and we define terms as they arise to enable you to feel at home no matter where you open the book.

Does your living room need special attention? Head straight for Chapter 12. Want to find out what you can expect from a consultation with a professional stager? Chapter 6 has what you need. If you're an overachiever or want to ensure that you find out everything you need to know to get your house in tip-top shape before you put it on the market — well, then turn the page and keep on reading until you hit the index.



**8 full-color pages
of before-and-after
photos**

**Make your home stand out,
sell faster,
and bring in more money!**

Want to have homebuyers knocking down your door? This no-nonsense, practical guide shows you how to make improvements room by room and generate a higher profit in the most cost- and time-effective way. You'll see how — and why — to eliminate clutter, make repairs, arrange furnishings, pave the way for buyers to make an emotional connection to your house, and much more to get top dollar!

Christine Rae is the founder and President of Certified Staging Professionals. **Jan Saunders Maresh** is a nationally known television personality and journalist, specializing in sewing and design.

**THE
DUMMIES
WAY®**

Explanations in plain English
"Get in, get out" information
Icons and other navigational aids
Tear-out cheat sheet
Top ten lists
A dash of humor and fun

ISBN 978-0-470-26026-9



Real Estate/House Selling

**Discover
how to:**

*Make the improvements
that buyers want*

Clear out the clutter

*Show off your home's best
features*

*Woo buyers with curb
appeal*

*Depersonalize and
neutralize each room*

Get rooms photo ready

Get smart!
@www.dummies.com

- ✓ Find listings of all our books
- ✓ Choose from many different subject categories
- ✓ Sign up for eTips at etips.dummies.com

For Dummies®
A Branded Imprint of
 **WILEY**