

TIPS ON STAGING YOUR HOME TO SELL

ARTICLES ABOUT HOME STAGING & CURB APPEAL

One of the most effective, and one of the easiest, ways to make sure your home looks its best—Home Staging. The following pages include articles about home staging as well as curb appeal, offering helpful suggestions and easy-to-follow advice in order to sell your home for the highest dollar, in the least amount of time.

Most Popular Home-Staging Suggestions

Source: Albany Times Union, Stephanie Earls (04/05/07)

In a slow market, it's particularly important to get a house ready to sell quickly. How do you help a client get their home in prime shape for showings?

Beverly Tracy of Beverly Tracy Home Design in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., walks through a client's home and sticks Post-It notes on things she believes they need to do to get their home looking its best. Here are some of her most frequently made suggestions:

- Fix any visible problems that might be a red flag for potential buyers, including repainting stained walls.
- Cover damaged kitchen or bathroom floors with inexpensive peel-and-stick vinyl floor tiles — if a more expensive change seems out of the question.
- Repaint public rooms that will garner a lot of a buyer's attention, including the kitchen, dining room, and living room.
- Clean up the exterior of the house, added potted plants, repair damaged walkways, and put a fresh coat of paint on the front door.
- Rent a storage unit and get rid of about half the furniture and most of the personal items.



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- When showing the property, turn on every light in the house and tune radios on each floor to the same classical music station.
- Suggest that the owners refrain from doing much cooking (baking sweets is a good idea, however) and put good-smelling soaps in all the bathrooms.

Home Staging Basics

By Jeanette Joy Fisher

Selling a home is always a stressful time, but there are ways you can lessen the amount of time your home is on the market and increase the selling price. The process is called home staging, and you can do most of it yourself. It just takes time and a little elbow grease.

First, make sure everything in your home shines--showers, tubs, countertops, ovens, floors, appliances, and anything else that buyers will be looking at as they tour your home. Although they can be a pain, that also includes windows and skylights.

Besides being spotless, all the rooms of your home should also be odor-free. That includes the bathroom, the laundry room, and your teenage son's room. Offensive odors are often the first thing a potential buyer notices, which means odors are also one of the biggest reasons why buyers turn around and look elsewhere.

Get rid of clutter throughout the house. Remove all small appliances from kitchen countertops and organize the pantry. If you have walls that are full of family photos, take the pictures down. What you see as treasured memories are seen by buyers as clutter that detracts from being able to see the wall underneath. Keep all closets neat and box up any excess items you don't use every day. You want your home to appear neat and spacious, and nothing destroys that image faster than clutter.



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Clutter can come in many forms, including excess furniture, so if you don't use a particular piece of furniture on a regular basis, it's better to cart it off to a storage place, or give it to your local charity, than to let it sit around and make a room look smaller. Temporary storage units can be your best friends in staging your home for sale, and the amount of money you'll get from a faster sale and higher sales price will more than offset their cost.

Try to look at your house objectively, as if seeing it through a stranger's eyes. Are there things you'd like them to notice, such as your gorgeous hardwood floor? If that floor currently is covered by an area rug, it's time to cart it off to the storage facility and put a coat of wax on the floor to make it look as beautiful as possible.

Staging your home doesn't have to be expensive. In fact, if you do it yourself, you can recoup your time and effort toward staging your home handsomely--in a higher sales price and quicker sale.

One simple, relatively inexpensive thing you can do to enliven your home's décor is to add some plants. They almost always add a touch of hominess and vigor to a room. Of course, you'll need to make sure they thrive. Few things look worse, or give a more negative feeling to a room, than dying plants do.

Looking dispassionately at your home is critical to staging it for sale. For instance, if you have a prized collection, regardless of what it may be, it's probably worthwhile to pack it up and send it to your temporary storage facility while your home is on the market. The key is that while you see "a collection," a buyer sees clutter. That means that they get psychologically caught up in the clutter of your collection and forget to look at the house itself, which may cost you a sale.

Sometimes it can be helpful to ask an impartial friend or your agent to walk through the house with you and offer their suggestions and first impressions of rooms as they enter



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and walk around. This can be an eye-opener, but never take what they say personally. Remember, you have asked their honest first impressions, regardless of what it may be. The more you can remove your personal feelings from your home and begin to see it through the eyes of potential buyers, the better your chance of selling your home quickly--and at a better price.

14 Ways to Make the Most of Your Curb Appeal

By Dana Dratch

Curb appeal is the equivalent of charisma in a home. It's that quality that makes you say "wow" when you first see it. You feel good when you pull into the driveway. You want to walk in the front door. Whether the home is yours or one you're considering, curb appeal can make a big difference in how you feel about the property.

If your home has that star quality, you won't have any trouble getting more for it than similar homes in the neighborhood. It also means you won't have any trouble getting potential buyers into the home.

It works the other way, too. "A lot of people won't go into a house if it looks bad from the outside," says Tom Silva, general contractor on the PBS series "This Old House" and "Ask This Old House." "Curb appeal is the beginning of getting people to look at the inside." If your home doesn't shine, there are plenty of things you can do to unleash its charm.

Here are 14 ways to amp up the appeal of your home:

- Manicure the yard.
- Clean the windows, doors and front entryway.
- Scope out the front door.
- Don't skimp on flowers.
- Pressure clean.
- Talk to your friends.
- Head for the trees.
- Paint your house.
- Call an arborist.



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- Reseal the driveway.
- Hire a professional designer.
- Examine the shutters.
- Make a plan.
- Look for elements that draw too much attention.

1. **Manicure the yard.** Some of the prime elements: Nurture and mow the lawn so it's trimmed and healthy. Make sure plant beds "are edged with nice, crisp edges, and mulched," says Roger Cook, landscape contractor for "This Old House" and "Ask This Old House." "It makes everything stand out. It gives the feeling that if the outside is being taken care of, maybe the inside is, too."



2. **Clean the windows, doors and front entryway.** Get rid of those spider webs on the light fixtures, shine any metal work and change all the bulbs. Visitors will notice whether the front of the home looks clean, even if it's on an unconscious level. And if everything is shined and bright, it's not only inviting but it signals that the rest of the home is well maintained.

3. **Scope out the front door.** It's one of the first things people will notice in a home, so make it count. But that doesn't mean you have to break the bank because there are good options at every price level. You can paint it for the cost of your time and a little paint or have it professionally replaced for \$1,000 or more.

4. **Don't skimp on flowers.** "It's always nice to have flowers in front of the house," says Cook, whether it's hanging baskets, beds of annuals or both. "And, for some reason, people like red flowers better than anything else," he says.



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5. **Pressure wash/clean.** It can give a new appearance to walkways, driveways and (depending on the construction of your home) sometimes the house itself, says Cook. You can even rent the machinery and do it yourself.

6. **Talk to your friends.** "Get a fresh eye," says Silva. "You don't see something starting to look old or run-down because you see it so gradually." Bring in a couple of people you trust and ask their opinions.

7. **Head for the trees.** "Trees, planted in the proper spaces," can enhance the appeal and value of a home, says Cook. Consult a professional to help you select the variety, size and location. And if you want to plant larger trees, have them professionally installed.

8. **Paint your house.** If you want to really amp up that curb appeal, "painting your house makes a difference," says Silva. Use colors that are appropriate for the style of your house. For instance, in historical buildings, that often means soft colors and warm colors, he says. "You want to have a color that's warm and inviting," he says. "It's one of the easiest ways to get curb appeal."

9. **Call an arborist.** Get the low-hanging branches -- especially those hanging over the



house -- removed, says Cook. And that's an area where you do want to use a pro. If you're ever hiring anyone to work on your home, Cook says, get several free estimates. Don't automatically choose the cheapest one. Instead, select the one in whom you have the most confidence. And verify that your choice has liability and workman's comp insurance. (Ask to see the certificate.)

10. **Reseal the driveway.** Do it yourself in a weekend or hire a pro, says Cook. For a pro, the best thing you can get is a recommendation from someone who's had the work done fairly recently, he says. If you do it yourself, wash down the driveway one day and let it



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dry. Then seal it the next day. If it has cracks that you need to seal, allow an extra day for the job.

11. **Examine the shutters.** Many times they're the wrong size and most people hang them upside down or put them too far away from the windows, Silva says. What that does is throw off the proportion of the house.

12. **Look for elements that draw too much attention from the rest of the house.** One example is the garage door. "A garage door should blend in. It shouldn't stand out and be the whole focus of the garage," says Silva. "You don't want it to dominate."

13. **Hire a professional designer.** If the front of your home needs a little cosmetic work, that's a good time to call in a designer, says Silva. You might want to change the porch or add a new type of railing, or select a different style or number of columns. A designer is also a good option if you sense there's something out of whack with the way the front of the home looks, but you can't quite put your finger on it. Prices vary. A designer can give you options, a plan and a budget.



14. **Make a plan.** If your landscaping lacks luster, sometimes it's a matter of moving things around, says Cook. One good move: If you're going to stay in the house, consult a professional to give you a long-range landscaping master plan, says Cook. "You can pick little things and keep working and after four to five years, you're done," he says.



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Secrets of Stagers

13 Ways to Make Your Home Look Like a Million Bucks

By Leah Hennen, Home & Garden Television

Ever walk into a Sunday open house or a model home and notice how...well, inhumanly perfect it looks? If so, chances are the property is "staged"—in real estate parlance, dressed with paint, furniture arrangements, art and accessories that are all carefully designed to highlight the home's strengths, downplay its weaknesses, and appeal to the greatest possible pool of prospective buyers. Whether you're designing to sell or designing to dwell, here's how the home-staging pros get that "I have to have it!" look—and how their tips and tricks can make your own humble abode look like a million bucks.

1. Make an Entrance

You know the saying: You never have a second chance to make a first impression. "The outside of your home is the first thing guests see," points out Christopher Breining, owner of HomeStagers, Inc., (www.HomeStagersInc.com) in San Francisco. And like it or not, it speaks volumes about what's inside—and about its owner. A quart of glossy paint in a bold, cheerful color for the front door, new



hardware (or a little elbow grease applied to clean and polish the existing knocker, lockset, porch light, house numbers, and mailbox), a fresh coir or seagrass mat, and a trio of seasonal potted plants on the landing will dramatically brighten and refresh your home's entry and make visitors feel welcome, Breining says. Bonus: This small investment pays personal dividends, too, giving you an emotional boost and a dose of house-pride with each homecoming.



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A welcoming entry, such as this one designed by Pamela Berstler, helps to set the tone for the rest of the house.

2. Conquer Clutter

Admit it: You have too much stuff. "The most important thing most people can do to improve their home is to clear out, clean up, and get rid of clutter," says Lisa LaPorta, cast designer on HGTV's hit *Designed to Sell* and owner of Lisa LaPorta Design in Los



Angeles. Be ruthless as you go about purging your belongings. If you haven't used it in three months, stagers say, box it up and store it away; if you haven't used it in a year, get rid of it. And make a house rule that for every new item that comes in, an old one has to leave. Any mixed feelings you have about tossing life's accumulated detritus will quickly be replaced with a sense of relief and appreciation of

your Zen-like new surroundings.

Sound daunting? Take it one room at a time. If your bookshelves are bursting at the seams, for instance, "clear them off and start over," suggests Michelle Yackel, owner of Divine Redesigns in Atlanta. "It's okay to have empty space around your books and knickknacks." Inexpensive baskets make great hiding places for unsightly paperbacks, and add texture and visual interest. Books stacked vertically serve as pedestals to show off prized pottery or other objects d'art. You can even remove the dust covers from hardbacks and group them by color, turning a busy jumble into a decorative addition to the room.

If you simply can't part with your collection of *Architectural Digest* or your kids won't let you anywhere near their 300 carefully assembled Lego creations, it's time to get creative about storage and organization. Retailers like the Container Store and Target sell handy rolling bins designed to slip under a bed and house everything from household supplies to kids' toys. And if you can't get rid of it and can't hide it, flaunt it with style: "Places



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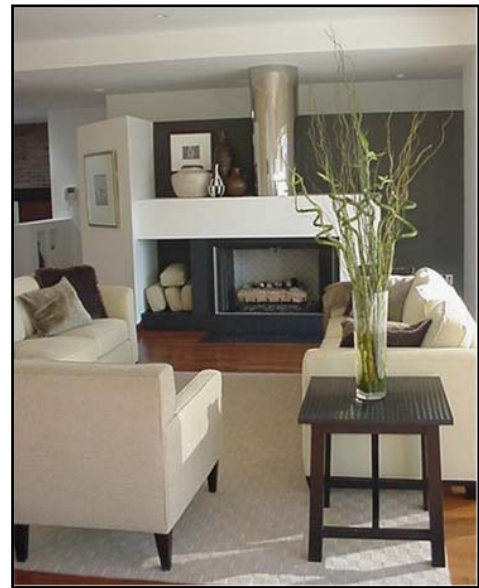
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like IKEA sell colorful and inexpensive fabric, cardboard, or melamine magazine holders. Lined up on a shelf, they look a lot cleaner than stacks of magazines everywhere and add a unified visual element to the room," says Michael Friedes, owner of Nest Home Design in Oakland, California.

Your home will be far more inviting, as this home office by designer Sue Adams is, if clutter is out of sight.

3. Make "Less is More" Your Mantra

Don't forget, too, that a cluttered look can also come from too much furniture. "People tend to line their walls with furniture—one piece after another," laments Christopher Breining. When professional fluffers descend on a home being prepped for market, they often whisk away as much as half of the owner's furnishings—and the house looks miles better (not to mention bigger) for it. You don't have to whittle that drastically, but take a hard look at what you have and ask yourself what you can live without. "You really only need two pieces of furniture per wall: A bed and a nightstand, say, or a dresser and a chair," Breining advises. Another rule of thumb: If you don't use it regularly, lose it. While you're doing this sometimes-painful pruning, remind yourself that every square foot you free up is prime real estate.



Designer Simon Temprell kept this living area clean and uncluttered for a contemporary look.

4. Float Furniture

If your couches are clinging to your walls, you're not alone—it's a typical decorating mistake,



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stagers say. "There's a common belief that rooms will feel larger and be easier to use if all the furniture is pushed up against the walls, but it's simply not true," says Lisa LaPorta. Instead, furnish your space: Float furniture away from walls, reposition it into cozy conversational groups, and place pieces so that the traffic flow in the room is obvious—in most cases, this means keeping the perimeters clear. "When you place furniture in a room, envision a figure-eight or the letter H in the middle, with clear pathways around it," LaPorta suggests. Not only will this make the space more user-friendly, it will open up the room and make it seem larger.

If you're nervous about doing something that can seem a bit radical, "Try an area rug on an angle first, then move the couch and see how it looks. But just try it," Christopher Breining implores. If the new arrangement doesn't strike your fancy, you can always put things back the way they were. But chances are, you won't want to.

Giving your furniture some breathing room, as designer Phyllis Harbinger does in this living room, makes a room look larger.

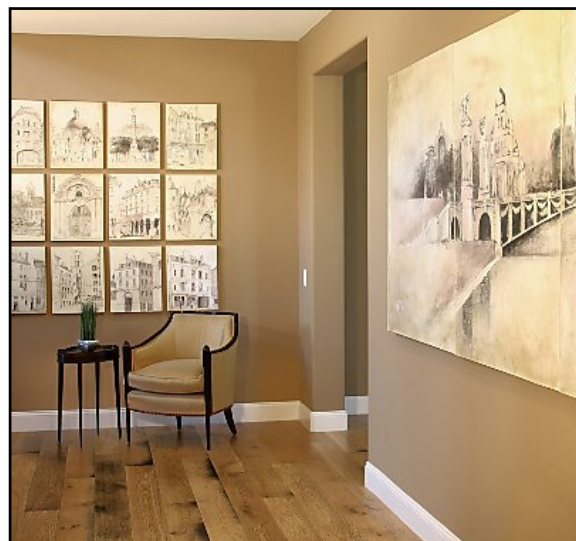
5. Mix It Up

You'd never consider donning the same clothes for days on end, would you? So why force your home to endure the same tired decor year after year? "We get used to our surroundings, but they can become stale and stagnant. If a chair has been in the same spot for five years, move it!"

admonishes Barb Schwarz, owner of

StagedHomes in Seattle, Washington, and Concord, California, and coauthor of *Home Staging: The Winning Way to Sell Your House for More Money* (John Wiley & Sons).

Think of your digs as a nesting superstore, with the added bonus that everything in it is free. Give yourself permission to move furniture, artwork and accessories between rooms



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on a whim. Just because you bought that armchair for the living room, for instance, doesn't mean it won't look great anchoring a sitting area in your bedroom. Or try perching that little-used dining room table in front of a pretty window, top it with buffet lamps and other accessories, and press it into service as a beautiful writing desk or library table. And as for that now-empty dining room? Flank an ottoman or cocktail table with a loveseat and comfy chairs for a conversation nook. "When you move things to new spots, you appreciate them again—and give your house a whole new look for nothing," Schwarz says.

Designer Ammie Kim creates a gallery effect in a hallway by grouping a living room chair and a small table.

6. Rediscover "Lost" Spaces

"A big part of what stagers do is create fantasy spaces: An exercise room, a meditation space, an art studio, a family game room," says Linda Russell, owner of HouseDressing in Montclair, New Jersey.

"We take that unused space on the third floor or in the basement and turn it into something you've always dreamed about having." So if you have a room that currently serves only to gather junk, repurpose it into something that will add to the value—and your enjoyment—of your home. Move those boxes to a rented storage space (or better yet, have a yard sale or donate their contents to charity) and get to work creating the space you yearn for. The simple addition of a comfortable armchair, a small table, and a lamp in a stairwell nook will transform it into a cozy reading spot, Russell suggests. Or drape fabric on the walls of your basement, lay inexpensive rubber padding or a carpet remnant on the floor, and toss in a few cushy pillows. Voila! Your new meditation room or yoga studio.



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7. Let the Sun Shine In

"We almost always take off old, heavy drapery and put something light, airy, and gauzy in its place," says Russell. This ushers in natural light and makes a previously closed-in space seem larger. Simple sheers on a tension rod are great for screening an unattractive view and providing a bit of privacy but still letting in lots of light and visually enlarging a room. If you have lovely vistas from a set of windows, try doing away with treatments altogether. If privacy is paramount, top-down, bottom-up Roman shades will block the neighbors' view of your bathtub but still let you gaze at the sky while you soak. Lisa



LaPorta favors bamboo or parchment shades and simple curtain panels made from fine cotton twill or translucent linen – all of which let light stream in during the day, provide privacy at night, and add touchable texture to a room. Or consider investing in Christopher Breining's favorite window treatments: Sheer fabric shades with built-in blinds (Hunter Douglas offers several options). "They look great and offer so much versatility," he says.

Other window-treatment tips: If windows are narrow, extend curtain rods a foot or so on each side to suggest width. If your ceilings are low, hang rods right at the ceiling line and consider window treatments with vertical stripes to create the illusion of height.

Designer Ammie Kim uses a combination of minimal window treatments in this light-filled living area.

8. Light the Way

One of the things that make staged homes look so warm and welcoming is great lighting design. As it turns out, many of our own homes are improperly lit—either we have too few



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fixtures, or our lighting is too dim or too harsh (or all of the above). To remedy the problem and make your home more inviting, increase the wattage in your lamps and fixtures (aim for a total of 100 watts for every 50 square feet). Then install dimmers so you can vary light levels according to your mood and the time of day. This is a relatively simple project for a do-it-yourselfer, or you can hire an electrician for a couple of hours to do several at once. (And while you're at it, be sure to replace those dingy, almond-colored light-switch covers with crisp white ones. New covers cost less than a buck apiece and are a quick, easy update.)



Don't depend on just one or two fixtures per room, either. It's just as important to layer lighting as it is to have sufficient wattage, Breining points out. So go for ambient (general or overhead), task (pendant, undercabinet, or reading), and accent (table and wall) lighting. "A combination of overhead, floor, table, and accent lighting creates great ambience," the San Francisco stager says. "Having lights on different planes provides good illumination and makes the room interesting." One thing that's always in Breining's bag of tricks: uplights. "You can buy one for as little as \$5 at home-improvement stores and hide it behind a potted plant—it creates incredible drama." Another hint: Place mirrors, silver or glass bowls, or other reflective objects near lamps to bounce light around the room and make it glow even more.

Recessed lighting gives this bedroom designed by Baylor Anne Bone a subtle glow.

9. Make a Splash with Color

"Painting is the cheapest, easiest way to give your home a new look," says Designed to Sell's Lisa LaPorta. Even if you were weaned on off-white walls, take a chance and test out a quart of paint in a warm, neutral hue (you can always paint over it if you don't like



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the effect). These days, the definition of "neutral" extends way beyond beige— from warm tans and honeys to soft blue-greens.

Even deeper shades—long verboten for interiors—are enjoying a renaissance. "Don't shy away from dark colors in a powder room, dining room, or bedroom," says Oakland stager Michael Friedes. "A deep tone on the walls can make the space more intimate, dramatic, and cozy—and surprisingly, it can even make a small room seem bigger because there's no delineation of the corners."

How to start? With a pillow, textile, or piece of art you love, LaPorta suggests. "The background color is often great for walls, and you can pull out the other colors for



accents around the room." You could also try painting an accent wall to draw attention to a dramatic fireplace or a lovely set of windows. Either paint the wall a contrasting—but still complementary—color (such as a rich red flanked by taupe walls) or a more intense version of the paint used in the rest of the room (say, a deep butterscotch that will play off the soft camel walls surrounding it). If you have built-in bookcases or niches, experiment with painting the insides a color that will make them pop—a soft sage green to set off the white pottery displayed within, perhaps.

If you're too timid to whip out the paintbrushes, add punch with richly colored accessories, pillows, and throws, LaPorta says. Bonus: When seasons change or you're ready for something new, these couldn't be simpler to switch out. Designer Lori Dennis used calming blue punctuated with crisp white in this restful bedroom.

10. Paint It Black

Using white-painted furniture is a tried-and-true tactic for freshening a room, but don't



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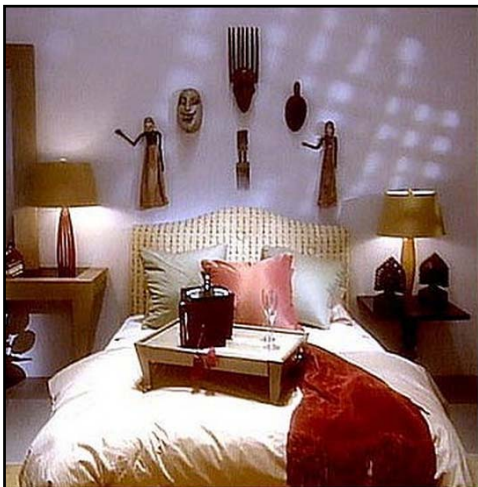
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forget its opposite: A coat of satiny black paint can revive tired furnishings and lend a chic, dramatic flair to just about any space. "Painting an old piece black immediately updates it," says Michael Friedes. "We use black in staging all the time. It's a great punctuation—it has a graphic quality, provides contrast, and makes a real impact." And not only does black work with every other hue, it makes the colors surrounding it pop and melds with most any décor, from vintage to ethnic to modern. The key, as always, is moderation: Use black as an accent in picture frames, lampshades, accessories, and small pieces of furniture. "The big black leather couch of the '80s is black gone awry," Friedes warns.

Designer Andreas Charalambous uses a black table and frames to add sophistication to this corridor.

11. Make Your Art Sing

If your home is like most, art is hung in a high line encircling each room. Big mistake: Placing your pictures, paintings, and prints in such stereotypical spots can render them almost invisible. "Art displayed creatively makes the art stand out more and shows off your space," Friedes says.



So break up that line and vary the patterning and grouping by hanging a row of art diagonally—with each piece staggered a bit higher or lower than the next (great for directing the eye toward an architectural feature like a window or arched doorway), triangularly—with one picture above, one below, and one beside (a nice accent for a table-and-chair vignette), or in a vertical line (perfect for accentuating a high ceiling). "Hang pictures on different planes so that your eye goes up and down as it travels around the room—it creates interest on your walls," says Friedes. Try hanging things a bit lower than you're used to, as well, so that



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wall art relates to furniture groupings rather than floating (and getting lost) in its own space.

Display your art creatively, as seen in this bedroom designed by Robert Noble.

12. Accessorize with Flair

Now that you have your furniture placed, your rooms dappled with color, and your art hung, it's time to layer in accessories for the finishing touch. When it comes to eye-pleasing accessorizing, three is the magic number—though one and five work well, too.

And rather than setting your trio of accessories out in a row, imagine a triangle and place one object at each point. Scale is important, too, so in your group of three, be sure to vary items by height and width, with the largest at the back and the smallest in front.

"On a side table, for instance, you might have a lamp, a plant or flower arrangement, and



a book or a small box," Barb Schwarz explains. For impact, group accessories by color, shape, texture, or some other unifying element, stagers suggest. Another hint, courtesy of Monclair stager Linda Russell: The eye naturally "reads" the room from left to right, so putting a striking object in the far right corner will automatically draw your gaze

there and make the room seem bigger.

Mixing the right accessories, as designer Phyllis Harbinger does here, can make a room all the more inviting.

13. Bring the Outdoors In

Staged homes are almost always graced with bountiful fresh flowers and pricey orchid arrangements, but you can get a similar effect simply by raiding your yard. "Take clippings of branches or twigs and put them in a large vase in the corner of a room to



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add height— it's a great structural piece that doesn't cost anything," says Michelle Yackel, the Atlanta stager. It's also an easy way to incorporate seasonal greenery. Budding magnolia clippings or unfurling fern fronds herald the arrival of spring, summer blooms add splashes of cheerful color, blazing fall foliage warms up your decor on chilly autumn days, holly branches heavy with berries look smashing in winter, and airy feather-grass plumes add elegance and texture any time of year.

Above all, "Get creative! Don't be scared to try something different," Yackel says. Indeed, just about every stager has tales of home sellers who, upon seeing their once-tired abodes transformed, were so blown away by the results that they decided to stay put. Who knows—you, too, may just find that you love your "new" home so much you'll never want to give it up.



Designer Ann Morris adds color and style with a well-placed floral arrangement.

How to Improve Curb Appeal

by Janet Wickell

Home Selling Advice to Help You Attract Potential Buyers

A large percentage of home buyers decide whether or not to look inside a house or take it seriously based on its curb appeal—the view they see when they drive by or arrive for a



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showing. You can help make sure they want to come inside your house by spending some time working on the its exterior appearance.

It's difficult to look at our own house in the same way that potential home buyers do, because when we become accustomed to the way something looks and functions, we can't see its faults. Decide right now to stop thinking of the property as a home. It's a house—a commodity you want to sell for the highest dollar possible.

Curb Appeal Exercise

The next time you come home, stop across the street or far enough down the driveway to get a good view of the house and its surroundings.

1. What is your first impression of the house and yard area?
2. What are the best exterior features of the house or lot? How can you enhance them?
3. What are the worst exterior features of the house or lot? How can you minimize or improve them?

Park where a potential buyer would and walk towards the house, looking around you as if it were your first visit.

Is the approach clean and tidy? What could you do to make it more attractive?

Take photos of the home's exterior. If you have a digital camera, view the color versions first, then remove the color and look at it in black and white, because it's easier to see problems when color isn't around to affect our senses.

Make a list of the problem areas you discovered. Tackle clean up and repair chores first, then put some time into projects that make the grounds more attractive.

- Kill mold and mildew on the house, sidewalks, roof, or driveway.
- Stow away unnecessary garden implements and tools.
- Clean windows and gutters.
- Pressure wash dirty siding and dingy decks.



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- Edge sidewalks and remove vegetation growing between concrete or bricks.
- Mow the lawn. Get rid of weeds.
- Rake and dispose of leaves, even if your lot is wooded.
- Trim tree limbs that are near or touching the home's roof.

Don't Forget the Rear View

Buyers doing a drive by will try their best to see your back yard. If it's visible from another street or from someone's driveway, include it in your curb appeal efforts.

Evening Curb Appeal

Do your curb appeal exercise again at dusk, because it isn't unusual for potential buyers to drive by houses in the evening.

One quick way to improve evening curb appeal is with lighting:

- String low voltage lighting along your driveway, sidewalks, and near important landscaping elements.
- Add a decorative street lamp or an attractive light fixture to a front porch.
- Make sure lighting that's visible through front doors and windows enhances the home's appearance.

Landscaping Decisions

There are times that adding elements to your landscaping can improve curb appeal, but there are other times when *removing* something is even more effective.

For example, we had a listing for a large brick house with large white columns. Tall evergreens, planted in front of each column, had grown taller than the roof. They obscured the columns and windows and made it difficult to see the front of the house.

We suggested that the owner remove them. She trimmed them back, but it didn't do the trick—they were unattractive and still kept potential buyers from seeing the true character of the house.



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I sold the house to a couple who could see past the trees. One of their first tasks after closing was to yank them out of the ground, instantly boosting the home's curb appeal.

Most buyers cannot visualize changes, and often won't take a second look at a house if the first look doesn't appeal to them. Home buyers who can visualize changes, and are prepared to make them, expect *you* to reduce the price of the house to compensate for the work they plan to do.

A Few Curb Appeal Tips

- If you can budget it, a fresh paint job does wonders for a dingy house. Drive around your town to find color schemes that are appealing.
- Install a more attractive front door, maybe something with leaded glass inserts.
- If you can't justify the cost of a new door, consider replacing plain doorknob hardware with something more attractive.
- If new hardware is beyond your budget, repaint or stain the door and polish the hardware?

If you brainstorm, you'll find that there's a solution to most problems—one that lets you stay within your budget. The trick is to find the areas where improvements are needed, then work on them as best you can.



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