

Stage It! Sell It!

Home Staging Tips to Transform Your Home Like a Pro



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Table of Contents

- Page 2: Minor Changes, Major Differences
- Page 4: Why Home Staging?
- Page 5: Tip #1 – Clean, Clean, Clean
- Page 6: Tip #2 – Clutter Eats Equity
- Page 7: Tip #3 – First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions
- Page 8: Tip #4 – Only Superman Has X-ray Vision
- Page 9: Tip #5 – This Is Not a Guessing Game
- Page 10: Tip #6 – No Vacancies
- Page 11: Tip #7 – Look Younger for Under \$100
- Page 12: Tip #8 – Go Naked!
- Page 13: Tip #9 – Color Correction
- Page 14: Tip #10 – Bad Hardwood Floors vs. Good Carpeting
- Page 15: Bottom Line
- Page 16: Get Started Today!
- Page 17: About the Author and This eBook

Minor Changes, Major Differences...

“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.”

This quote is credited to Vincent van Gogh who recognized that a great painting is really just a series of small brushstrokes. Alone, these strokes may seem insignificant, even trivial. But brought together...they create a masterpiece.

The same is true of home staging, which is the art of decorating a home to sell quickly and for top dollar. It's all about making a series of small changes to your home that alone may seem trivial or inconsequential but when brought together make your home stand out and shine above the competition.



The word “Staging” doesn’t mean “spend lots of money.” Nor is it a luxury reserved only for high-end homes. Whether you have a townhouse in the city or a mansion in the country, staging can be as simple as cleaning, packing, decluttering, removing distractions, and rearranging furniture.

These simple things are free and have an incredible return on investment.

Staging can be done by anyone—the home owner, a real estate agent, a neighbor, a professional home stager or any combination of these—but as Nike says, the most important thing is, **JUST DO IT!**

The 10 tips I'm about to share will make it easy for you to get started. But before we dive in, I want to stress that in my 10-plus years of staging experience, the most successful home sellers are those who put in the most effort, **NOT** the most money. These sellers also understand the market and price their home competitively because they know...**there is no amount of home staging that will ever make up for a home that's overpriced.**

Remember...how your home looks, how it's priced, and who you choose to promote your property are totally up to you. If you do all three of these things well, you will sell faster and get closer to your asking price with a lot less inconvenience and indigestion.

Now...let's get to those 10 tips.

These proven and highly effective Do-It-Yourself (DIY) home staging tips make it easy for you to transform your home like a pro. Many of the transformations you're about to see cost next to nothing—they just take time, effort, and a little creative thinking. And most homes are staged in just a few hours.

Plus, I've included examples so that you can see the effectiveness of small and simple changes. And they give you a better idea of how to implement each particular tip in your own home.



Why Home Staging?

So what is the goal of home staging?

At a minimum, staging makes your home appear move-in ready.

At its best, staging wows home buyers and creates an emotional connection that makes them fall head-over-heels in love with your home...leading to a faster sale at maximum value.



Hot Tip!

When decorating to sell, enlist the help of a friend, family member, or professional home stager. Why? Because anyone attempting to stage his/her own home will struggle to be objective. It's almost impossible for anyone—even a professional home stager—to view his home with fresh eyes.

The key is to find someone willing to give you honest and constructive feedback based on **his or her** first impressions and fresh perspective.

Tip #1

Clean, Clean, Clean

I'm sure you know the 3 most important things in selling real estate are location, location, location. Well, in home staging the 3 most important things are clean, clean, clean.

Clean sells.



Cleaning is important for all homes, but especially for those that have not been updated. I've seen homes sell *just* because they were clean.

A clean home makes buyers feel like they can move right in and make updates on their own schedule.

How clean?

Everyone has his own definition of clean, right? Do you remember *The Odd Couple*? Well, I want you to bring out your inner Felix Unger. Meaning...there's no such thing as too clean.

Cleaning is the foundation of successful home selling and staging. **If you could do only one thing to prepare your home for sale, cleaning should be it.**

Tip #2

Clutter Eats Equity

Too much stuff and too many personal items distract home buyers.

If people are looking at your family photos and trying to figure out, “Do I know these people?” then they’re probably not looking at the features of your home that would get them to buy. Like the fireplace, moldings, hardwood floors, and views.



So maybe a better word for “clutter” is “distractions.”

Minimize the distractions so that buyers can focus on what you are selling: your home. Not its contents.

Clear the clutter, pack up your chackies, and get organized now!

Tip #3

First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions

And the first impression buyers will have of your home is on the Internet (so be sure to have good, professional photos).

The next first impression is when buyers drive up to your home (the curb appeal).

And finally...when they see the first space within your home—usually the front entrance.



But we also need to keep in mind that each room has its own distinct first impression. I always tell my clients, “Go back to the door,” to see what the buyer will see upon entering each room or new space. You need to do the same as you implement all of these tips.

Tip #4

Only Superman Has X-ray Vision

Your buyers can't see through furniture, window coverings, and other stuff that may be blocking the best features of your home. Don't make them question what they're seeing as they walk through your home for the first time. For example, don't make them wonder what's behind the window treatments or what's under your carpet.

You want buyers to have a positive emotional response when viewing your home. You want to keep them enchanted. And they won't be if they're stuck in their head trying to figure out why you've put the bed in front of the windows.



Identify the best feature in each room—the item or characteristic that adds the most value to your home—like unique windows or a fireplace. **These are the “money” items. Do not hide them. Make them the first thing potential buyers see when they enter that space.**

Tip #5

This Is Not a Guessing Game

Heard of speed dating?

Well, home buying is a lot like speed dating.

Within seconds, buyers are trying to figure out the purpose of each space, whether it meets their needs, whether they're attracted to it, and do they want to make a lifelong commitment.



To help your buyers fall in love and commit...define...each...space.
Give each space one solid purpose or identity.

Tip #6

No Vacancies

If you were shopping for a home online, would the image on the left make you want to drop what you are doing and run out to see this home?

What about the image on the right? Yeah. Big difference!



It may seem counterintuitive, but **vacant homes (homes with NO furniture)** take much longer to sell than **owner-occupied homes (furnished homes in which people are living)**.

Why? Because vacant homes appear cold, small, dark, and awkward to decorate. Not many buyers can fall in love with four blank walls.

Beg, borrow, steal, or rent...but get furniture in your home's main spaces, especially the living room, dining room, kitchen, and master bedroom.

Tip #7

Look Younger for Under \$100

Let's start with a light-fixture face-lift!

A new \$30 light fixture will take 30 years off your home's appearance.

So you might be saying, why bother?

Here's why...



Lighting is a dead giveaway as to the age of your home. And home buyers prefer new, up-to-date, current homes. They don't want "projects."

Just switching up your light fixtures can give your gently aging home a fresh, young look.

Tip #8

Go Naked!

So now that you're looking younger, I'm going to encourage you to...**go NAKED!**



With your *windows*, that is.

Removing window treatments is basically free, easy, and brings in all the light.

Naked windows make spaces feel fresh, modern, and up-to-date. And when combined with all these other minor changes they increase the perceived value of your home.

Tip #9

Color Correction

Paint is one of the most dramatic and cost-effective updates you can make. And it's not a bad DIY project if you like painting and you have the time.

You'll want a neutral palate, but neutral doesn't mean boring.



Take your time picking paint colors because it costs just as much money to paint the wrong color as it does to paint the right color.

This is one place where consulting a professional can save you from an expensive, time-consuming mistake and give you a much higher return on your investment.

(Pssst! Give me a call, and we can set up a color consult.)

Tip #10

Bad Hardwoods vs. Good Carpeting

Bad hardwood floors will win out over any kind of carpeting every time. Because it's perceived to be a lot less work to simply (at the most) refinish existing hardwood floors than to install new ones.



Would you have ever guessed that these floors were under these carpets?

If you were to step into your buyer's shoes, would you pay top dollar for this home without knowing? Probably not.

If this example doesn't convince you to rip up your carpeting and show off your hardwood floors, just remember...if you want buyers to "show you the money," show them your hardwood floors!

Bottom Line

Can you see now that there's no need to gut your kitchen or build an addition to appeal to your target buyers?

You don't need to do "big" things to get "big" results.

Home Staging is all about downplaying the negatives and directing a buyer's eyes to those uniquely special features in your home.

Regardless of your home's size, price, style, or location, you just need to remember the recipe for successful transformations. Simply put... "Minor changes make major differences."



Everybody wins when you stage...

You benefit the most from this investment with a faster sale, less stress, and more money.

And your buyers get a move-in-ready home with more perceived value...a home they love.

There simply are no losers.

Get Started Today!

When it comes to home staging, you can never start too soon.

Start planning now...even if you're not selling for a few years.

More and more of my clients are beginning the staging process as many as 5 years in advance of selling. Starting now allows you to spread out your projects and enjoy the fruits of your labor along the way.

But if you're still wondering, *Where do I start? What projects do I tackle? And how much time and money should I invest?* let me help you out.

At *AtWell Staged Home*, we use our trademarked [Stage to Profit® system](#) to stage your home so it sells fast and for top dollar without wasting your money on unnecessary decorating expenses or turning your home into something it's not.

When we work together, you will:

- Sell your home fast...for the best possible price.
- Enjoy a staging process that's a fun adventure...not an expensive drag.
- Save money by using what you already have (rather than renting furniture, artwork, or accessories).
- Make your home stand out and shine above the rest.

Give me a call at 914-525-0454, and I'll show you how quick, economical, and fun it can be to stage your home beautifully...using what you already have.

About the Author and This eBook

Susan Atwell, President of *AtWell Staged Home*, is a home staging expert who's known for her ability to showcase the beauty and character of any for-sale home so that it sells high and sells fast.



As one of her recent clients said, “Susan’s homes sell!” With her trained eye and knack for knowing what impresses buyers, Susan makes it quick, economical, and fun to organize, arrange, and decorate a home so it becomes impressively beautiful yet highly functional...without making extravagant alterations or expensive makeovers.

Since 2005, Susan has used her [Stage to Profit® system](#) to stage homes of all sizes and in all price ranges in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, and Fairfield counties. From a 750 square-foot post-war co-op to a multimillion dollar 10,000 square-foot historic home.

These experiences inspire her free monthly online resource, [Stage Every Listing Letter and Log \(SELL\)](#), which is full of home staging tips, tools, and transformations. Whether you're a real estate professional, home seller, or just someone who enjoys interior decorating, these tips are for you!

Vacant or [occupied](#), Susan can help you stage your home so that it sells fast and for the best price possible. Give her a call today at 914-525-0454.