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12 staging mistakes sellers should avoid

Don't commit these errors, and you'll sell that home faster

Key Takeaways

- Be the driver of staging or hire a professional stager. Staging is marketing, and that's your job.
- Avoid matchy-matchy color palette -- photos will fall flat. Instead, excite with contrasts.
- Designing to live is very different than staging to sell.

Staging a home is not just about decluttering or moving furniture around. It requires a vision of the price point and buyer pool you're selling to. Here's a list of 12 pitfalls to avoid when staging:

1. Seller staging choices

Involving the sellers in the staging process is productive — it builds their trust in you and creates a sense of teamwork.

However, real estate agents should be the driver of the staging or hire a professional stager. You are the one hired to market the property, and you know what buyers are looking for as well as what the competition looks like. Remember — staging is marketing.

2. Too little furniture

Decluttering and reducing furniture is key to good staging — however, make sure you don't remove so much that the home feels empty or cold.

Balance maximizing a sense of space with creating living rooms and master bedrooms that are inviting and warm environments.

3. Bad paint jobs

Old chipped paint sends a message that the home is not well looked after. Intense colors will turn many buyers off.

Choose neutral color palettes like linen-whites, contrasted with decorator white trim and neutral beiges that are warm and welcoming.

4. Flat color palette

Everything's "matchy-matchy." Avoid or transform of homes where color schemes of walls, carpets and furniture match each other closely.

It depletes the energy of the room, and photos fall flat. Buyers won't know why they don't like the home, but they won't. Excite with contrasts.

5. Minimal or modern decor

It's easy for novice stagers to go super modern without warming touches or be too minimal with furniture.

Capture a blend of styles with a clean warm contemporary look and add accessories and pillows that soften the room. Rounded tables also break up rectilinear spaces and provide flow.

6. Old or stained wall-to-wall carpeting

Avoiding the obvious will reduce the maximum selling price. Carpets retain smells, and old carpets turn people off. For wall-to-wall carpeted rooms, get a professional cleaner in or test a small area to check the floors beneath. If the flooring is beautiful, then clean it up, and add an area rug.

7. Too much fabulous art and collectibles

Art in a home is great. However, if there's too much art, buyers will experience the home like a museum or a junk shop.

Select and place art and photographs with the intention of drawing the buyer's eye around the room in a harmonious manner. Years of art on walls will pull focus away from the home and lower offers.

8. The 3-foot-5-foot rule

Keep surfaces in the 3-foot to 5-foot range, such as on coffee tables, credenzas and dining table, clear of clutter. Some stagers love to bring tall vases and place them everywhere, but don't let them.

Although it can add flare, unconsciously, too much visual interruption from where you enter a living space to the windows (which is where buyers' eyes go first) will make the room feel small and cluttered.

Let buyers' eyes flow easily in a diagonal across the room, interruption-free.

9. Too many toys and books

Many of my clients have children, and in small New York spaces, toys and books overtake apartments quickly. Parents get nervous about removing their toddler's toys from the home for fear it will upset their children.

Have parents declutter the room slowly, and children won't miss their toys. Make it a game of choosing the best for now, and they'll pick their special toys then let the rest go, which will deliver a higher sale price.

10. No carpets or area rugs

Many of my New York clients with young children remove their prized carpets to protect them from getting damaged in the early years. But that presents a problem when selling a home.

Furniture placed on wood or stone floors without an area rug appear to just float as though someone left and forgot to finish off the room.

Avoid letting living spaces look cold and college like. Go to sites such as Overstock.com for carpets.

11. Lack of curb appeal

First impressions count. Whether it's the front foyer or the driveway that needs a little updating, spend the money. A bad first impression is hard to recover from.

The same goes for backyard landscaping. Make sure things are alive, fresh and dead plants are removed.

12. No plants

Plants bring a sense of life into a home. Don't forget to add new flowers and a few strategically placed plants in living spaces. Small orchids make a great eye-catcher in bathrooms.

Succulents can also offer a nice dining table centerpiece requiring little care during the showing process.

Remember, designing to live is very different than staging to sell. Staging is about creating the look that will appeal to the most number of active buyers and brokers in the price point that you are selling the home at both online and in person.

Get buyers excited enough online to set the appointment and be thrilled in person to buy it.