

Selling your home? Get more money with these easy (and inexpensive!) design tricks



by Emily Hsieh, Shine staff, on Sat Jan 30, 2010 8:56pm PST

[21 Comments](#) | [Post a Comment](#) | [Read More from This Author »](#) | [Report Abuse](#)



It's probably stating the obvious to say that it's a tricky, challenging real estate market out there, and, if you're currently selling your house, you can use any kind of competitive edge. Professional home stagers can help you get it. Part interior decorator, part closet organizer, and part magician, they offer advice on upping the value of your home by sprucing up your interiors—all without any major renovations or shelling out of major cash. Basically, a home stager's job is to maximize your space, making rooms appear larger and feel more inviting (and desirable) with just a few clever design tweaks.

Intrigued by the idea of this home-makeover magic, we tracked down Donna M. Dazzo, president of [Designed To Appeal](#), a New York-based home staging company, to share her tried-and-true tips for capitalizing on the worth of your



house. "With things the way they are, the name of the game is to get your house sold, and sold quickly," Dazzo says, before outlining her essential tricks to do just that:

Depersonalize. Hide anything—family photos, awards, trophies, your collection of antique teacups—that might

interfere with a buyer feeling like your home could be theirs. People get really distracted when they're surrounded by someone else's personal stuff. Make your bathroom look like a hotel's: no one wants to see your soggy loofah and half used bar of soap. Put all your beauty products in a shower caddy, so they can easily be stowed under the sink when you have a showing.

De-clutter. Most people have too much stuff, whether it's tchockkes or paperwork or furniture. The goal is to create a sense of space in a room—and in all your closets. Fight the urge to shove all your stuff in your closets, since you have to be prepared for prospective buyers to open every last cabinet. An organized closet can send the message that as an owner, you're the kind of person who doesn't slack on any aspect (a leaky roof, a busted water heater) of maintaining your home.

Clean. No one wants to walk into a dirty house. Bathrooms and kitchens in particular should be sparkling. Don't just do a surface clean—pay attention to hidden corners like the nook behind a toilet or the inside of your refrigerator. You never know where people are going to look. Use [Febreze](#) or [reed diffusers](#) to remove any odors, and invite a neighbor over to make sure there are no leftover scents, since living there may make you immune to the smell. Only about a third of Americans live with pets, so to be sure you're not alienating the other two thirds of the population, remove all traces (leashes, litter boxes, dog beds) of animals.

Lighten and Brighten. You want to have as much light as possible filtering through your space. Start by cleaning the windows. Ditch the screens, which just add one more darkening layer. During an open house, make sure your shades are up. Check to see if all your bulbs are working, and replace low-watt bulbs with high-watt ones to ensure the place feels bright.

Paint. Walls are the bones of your home, and it's super important to make sure they look fresh. Painting is relatively inexpensive if you do it yourself, and can have a huge impact on the way a place looks. Avoid non-neutral colors like red, purple, or loud yellow, since they won't appeal to the majority of people. White can feel stark and cold, which doesn't do anything to add to the appeal of a room. Try warm beige tones instead like Benjamin Moore's Rich Cream or Natural Wicker.