

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Set the Stage

If you're planning to sell your home, you may hear your REALTOR® suggest staging, which helps to set the scene in your home, making it more appealing to buyers through renovation or redecoration. It can help make your abode more appealing by allowing prospective buyers to envision themselves living there.



With proper staging, something as simple as painting your walls can go a long way towards selling your home faster and for the best possible price. According to a 2006 study by Accredited Staging Professionals, homes listed for sale without being staged lasted, on average, 163 days on the market. Staged homes averaged only 8 to 13 days on the market.

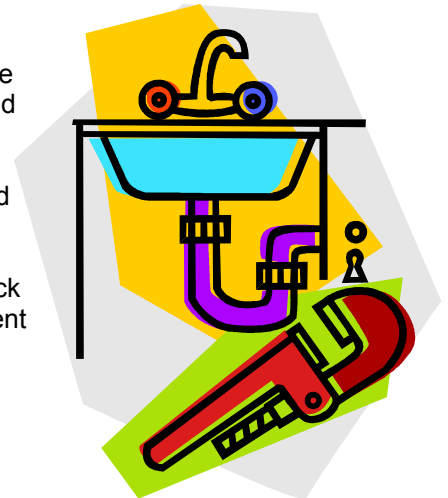
Staging costs vary depending the scope of the project. Some staging techniques, like rearranging furniture or simplifying the décor, are free. Other projects, such as installing granite countertops or new kitchen appliances, can be costly but might help boost your home's appeal. Costs also differ depending on where you live. According to Barb Schwartz, author of "Home Staging: The Winning Way to Sell Your House For More Money," the cost of staging a home on the West coast averages \$2,800, compared to \$1,800 in the Midwest and approximately \$3,800 on the East coast.

Save Some H₂O

The average American uses between 80 and 100 gallons of water per day. Not surprisingly, cutting back on your water consumption can save you money and help the environment. The experts at www.earth911.org, an environmental resource network, have some tips to decrease your water usage so you don't get soaked by your water and energy bills.

Indoors

The bathroom consumes the most water in the house, and a leaky toilet is often the culprit. To determine if you have a leak, drop some food coloring into the toilet tank. If that color appears in the bowl, you have a leak. Check for worn-out, corroded or bent parts. If your toilet handle frequently sticks in the flush position and the water is constantly running, replace or adjust the handle. And if your toilet is already in good working order, you can still conserve water by avoiding unnecessary flushing. Dispose of tissues and similar waste in the wastebasket instead.



To reduce water consumption even more, consider purchasing some of the low-flow products and attachments at your local hardware store. A low-flow model toilet can reduce your indoor water usage up to 20 percent, while an ultra low-flow showerhead can save up to 2.5 gallons of water per minute.

Outdoors

Be careful not to over-water your lawn. Generally, lawns only need watering every five to seven days, and a heavy rainstorm might mean that you don't need to water for a couple of weeks. Try to water during the early morning hours, which reduces evaporation. Micro or drip sprinklers and soaker hoses are the most water-efficient systems to use.



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