



## *Five Low-Cost Secrets of Staging Success*

1. Clean! Buyers today are especially finicky. If you can't afford to do anything else, make sure your home is spotless. If you *can* afford it, hire a cleaning service to get in all the nooks and crannies most of us don't clean regularly. And then make sure to keep up with daily cleaning tasks so your home is *always* ready for a showing.
2. Declutter! You are going to be moving soon, so look at decluttering as getting a head start on your packing. This is one time when less is truly more, especially for the photographs that are going to make agents and potential buyers want to tour your home. Get rid of the fridge magnets, and store the kids' artwork for a place of pride in your next home. Watch out for clutter on shelves, mantels and countertops, and take down the dust-catching ivy on the top of your cabinets.
3. Depersonalize – this is probably the hardest thing to do. Keep in mind that the home you love is now a product to be merchandised, and you want to appeal to the broadest range of buyers and allow them to visualize themselves living there. Buyers (and agents, too) can get sidetracked looking at your family photos, trophies and personal memorabilia, and miss the special features you want them to focus on. You don't want the buyer to think of it as *your* home, you want them to visualize it as *their* home.
4. Neutralize. Buyers today want move-in ready homes, and they often think that work they need to do themselves is harder and more costly than it may actually be, so remove that concern. Consider a fresh coat of neutral paint, especially in your main living spaces, and don't forget to touch up the trim. To find out what buyers like, it is as simple as going to your paint store and checking out the best sellers – if a color appeals to the majority of paint purchasers, it is likely to resonate with your potential buyers. The Sherwin Williams store closest to me publishes their best sellers right by the paint swatches. I recommend creating a flow throughout your home buy using colors on the same paint card, which are designed to complement each other. Highlight a focal wall, for example, by painting it two shades darker than the color on the other wall. And make sure your paint color coordinates with your flooring and window treatments – if you are in doubt, take pictures with you to the paint store, and ask!



Bonus – watch out for all white walls, especially with light carpeting and even more so if the home is vacant. These spaces are very hard to photograph and make them appealing to buyers.

5. Inexpensive Updates. Some simple changes can help your home to feel newly redesigned and appeal to today's buyer. Replace old kitchen and bath cabinet hardware with more modern knobs or pulls from Lowe's or Home Depot. Menard's is coming to the St. Louis area, and they have a great hardware collection. Update lighting fixtures. Replace outdated switchplates.

BONUS – Don't forget your curb appeal! Trim shrubbery to show off the front of your home, keep grass mowed, pull weeds, add a fresh layer of mulch, and depending on the time of year, keep a pot of bright-colored annuals on your front porch (keep it watered – having no flowers is better than having a pot of dying ones!). And make sure your front door is freshly painted if necessary, and that the key works smoothly in the lock!