

THE CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO

Real Estate Staging

The Ultimate Guide to Get the Most Out of Your Staging Investment

Table of Contents

"We sold our 8,000 sq. ft. house during COVID-19 all thanks to professional staging. Given we were in the luxury housing price point, we thought it would take at least a whole season to sell our house. We ended up getting an all cash offer in the second week! Every real estate agent and potential buyer who toured the house LOVED it."

- Alice Yang

STAGING GUIDE

What is Staging? **4**
Staging Benefits **6**
Survey Results **7**
Should I Hire a Pro? **8**
Hiring Home Stagers **10**
Virtual Staging **14**

BEFORE STAGING

Make it Spacious **18**
Common Repairs **20**
Freshen the Paint **25**
Curb Appeal **27**

AFTER STAGING

Photography **29**
Showing Your Home **32**

MOVING GUIDE

6 Weeks Before **34**
4 Weeks Before **36**
1 Week Before **38**
Moving Day **40**

Cover photo by Fine Redesign Home Staging & Decor Inc.

- SECTION 1 -

Staging Guide

GET YOUR STAGING DONE RIGHT

CONTENTS

- *What is Staging?*
- *Staging Benefits*
- *Survey Results*
- *Should I Hire a Pro?*
- *Hiring Home Stagers*
- *Virtual Staging*



Photo by Lori Peterson Home Staging Styling

What is Staging?

THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL SELLING

The Real Estate Staging Association® (RESA®, the trade association for professional real estate stagers) defines staging as, the preparation of residential or commercial properties for sale in the real estate marketplace. The primary objective of staging is not to decorate, but rather bring the property up to a level that it will appeal to the greatest number of potential buyers that will pay the highest price possible. Professional stagers use their knowledge of design trends, real estate ethics, and property renovation solutions to help the seller achieve their goals.

Many people think that staging is the same as decorating. There is a significant difference between the two.

Decorating is about your personal style. As an example, if you love purple and gold and want that in your bedroom then by all means decorate your bedroom in purple and gold.

The way you have decorated your home for your own enjoyment and the way you market your home for sale are very different.

Staging is not about your personal style, displaying your collections, etc. The way we function in our homes in our day-to-day lives is perfect for our day-to-day lives. However, when you decide to list your home for sale, you must think about how to properly merchandise that home so it **appeals to the greatest pool of buyers.**



Anne Kenney Associates

LESS STRESS

When you decide to sell your house, RESA strongly recommends hiring a professional stager for a consultation to view your property & provide recommendations to improve your Return on Investment (ROI).

Working with a professional stager will make the selling and moving experience faster, LESS stressful and more profitable.

A professional stager will be able to work within your budget and help you **invest your dollars for the best ROI.** They will be able to make recommendations on everything from paint choices to knowing when to replace or update items, knowing what stays, and what should be packed up and sometimes complex upgrades or renovations.

Professional stagers will never make you feel bad about your personal taste or insult your belongings, style, lifestyle, etc.

Whether the house is occupied or vacant, a professional stager is the first step in maximizing the sellability of your property while putting it in its strongest position possible so it will be on every buyer's must-see-list.

Staging Benefits

BOTH SELLERS AND BUYERS

Overall, professional stagers agree that staging a property prior to going on the market benefits everyone involved with the sale and purchase of the property. Professional stagers recommend repairs and upgrades that are needed to get the property in market ready condition.

Staging shows buyers the property's true potential

Buyers realize and appreciate the benefits of purchasing a professionally staged property.

- **Professionally staged properties show better** than competing ones for sale, including new construction homes and higher-priced properties.
- **Staged properties sell faster** when compared with properties that have not been staged. Even in a slow real estate market, professional home staging shortens the time between the date of listing until the date of closing.
- Staged properties can **increase the number of offers and selling price** in hot markets.
- Buyers view professionally staged listings as **well-maintained**.
- Buyers' agents recognize that professionally staged listings are "move-in" ready and are **more inclined to show staged properties.**
- Photos of professionally staged listings **look better** on the MLS, as well as in print.
- Professionally staged listings **STAND OUT** in prospective buyers' minds.



Survey Results

2020 SURVEY OF 13K STAGED HOMES

Sales Over Listing Price

85% of staged homes sold for **5-23% over list price**

Return on Investment

With an average investment of 1%, approx 75% of sellers saw an ROI of **5-15% over asking price**

Average Days on Market

Staged homes sell faster, averaging just **23 days on market**

The Investment

60% of stagers reporting 15-25% ROI charge 1.5% or more of list price for staging services

Should I Hire a Pro?

PROFESSIONAL STAGERS VS. DOING-IT-YOURSELF

Real Estate Stagers provide a professional service that will help you save time, avoid costly mistakes, reduce your time on the market, and improve your bottom line.

PRO VS. DIY

Actively studies and understands current home market trends.	Generally have to guess at what the home buyer market trends are doing.
Use their knowledge of the trends to design staging that makes your home the most attractive.	Will likely have to guess at what might look good and risks having the home not look as attractive as it could.
Are objective in their analysis of a home and what it needs to attract top dollar.	Because of their close association with the home, being objective isn't as easy and effective, so key opportunities may be missed.
Can "see what the buyer sees" so this enables them to deliver exceptional results.	Have a homeowner's perspective rather than a buyer's perspective which makes it difficult to deliver what a buyer is looking for.
Understands how buyers make their decisions so they are able to create the best scenario for a buyer to see the home's potential.	Without training and experience in the art and science of staging and how certain things affect a home buyer's mind, the DIY approach is not as effective.

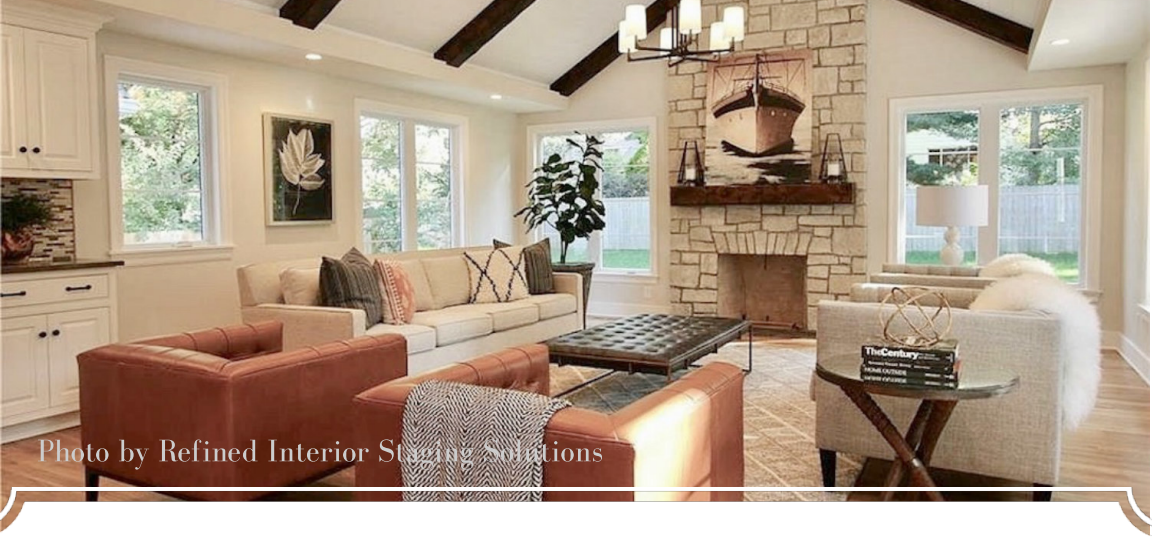


Photo by Refined Interior Staging Solutions

PRO VS. DIY

Work with professional photographers and the real estate agent to ensure photographs will provide perceived value, additional showings and, commonly, more potential buyers.	Photographs of properties that have been professionally staged look better.
May provide more online exposure of your home sale so more prospective buyers could see your home.	Limits you to whatever exposure your REALTOR does for you. Nothing more.
Professional stagers develop relationships with industry partners like painters, carpet installers, carpet cleaners, roof repair, etc. and as a result of these relationships they can pass on the savings to you. Additionally, you'll gain peace of mind knowing you are more likely to get quality service from people they work with on a regular basis.	Many homeowners who hire for painting projects, roofing work, carpet cleaning, flooring installs, and other work required to get their home in ready-to-sell condition won't have the peace of mind developed by working over time with industry service providers, or the luxury of special discounts.

Hiring Home Stagers

FINDING THE RIGHT PROFESSIONALS

Finding a professional home staging company that you trust and like working with will make your home selling experience smoother and more enjoyable. It's worth taking time to find the right one.



1. Research the Options

Ask your real estate agent if there are any stagers they recommend. You can also search the web for stagers in your area. Then do some research on each option.

2. View Their Portfolio

Is the stager's work professionally photographed? Professional staging companies understand the power of professional photography and their portfolio should reflect that.

Does their staging style fit the architecture of your home? For example, ultra modern furniture may look quite odd in an old victorian home. Most established staging companies excel at staging to compliment multiple home styles, but if you have any questions, ask them about it.

Additionally, sometimes new companies will use stock photos on their website, but **stagers should showcase only their original work** on their website. If you'd like to be sure, copy a photo URL from their website and paste/search it in Google Images. If the results don't show that image for sale on stock photo sites, that's a good sign!

Hiring Home Stagers



Photo by Attractive Interiors

3. Inquire About Their Resources and Insurance

Do you see a range of furniture in the homes they are staging or does everything look the same? If you see the same living room setting in every photo, it may be an indication they are limited in their resources and/or are not staging very many homes.

Inquire if the stager **owns** their own furniture or if they rent furniture. If your home is vacant, it's important to understand if you will be entering into an agreement for rental with the stager or a third party. **Are all the parties involved properly insured?**

4. Check References

It's a good idea to **ask for references** and check them out. A professional stager understands the importance of great references and they should have them available.

Also consider asking them for their personal statistics on projects they complete as well.

5. Interview Before You Hire

After you've researched and narrowed down the options, **request consultations** from the stagers you're leaning towards. Getting bids from 2 to 3 staging companies will help you get a feel for them and the value they can bring to your home.

Don't price shop. Basing your decision on price alone is risky because you often get exactly what you pay for. If you receive a bid for services that is significantly lower than the others, this is a red flag.

Because professional staging will help your home **sell faster** and for a **higher price**, it is well worth the investment to choose quality. Choose the stagers you feel confident will bring the most value to your home selling experience.

6. Understand the Contract

Be sure you understand their contract. Written contracts provide you with a legal document outlining the scope of the work and expectations. This will ensure that no one can claim any misunderstandings later. Should a dispute arise, you can simply refer to your contract for a resolution. If you don’t understand something, ask for an explanation. If your stager does not offer a contract, this is a red flag.

7. All Set!

Get the process started with the stager of your choice, and sit back, relax and let them work their magic.

Hiring Home Stagers



Virtual Staging

THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Virtual Staging has certainly become a topic that is being addressed with real estate agents, Multiple Listing Services, and professional stagers.

Using photo editing software to create a conceptual rendering of what a room or property could look like, as if it was staged for the purpose of marketing and selling real estate property.

Editing techniques include but are not limited to:

- Applying digital photos of furniture, mirrors, artwork, plants, etc. into a photo of an empty room
- Removing existing furniture from a photo and replacing it with digital images of furniture mirrors, artwork, plants, etc.
- Paint color changes
- Floor changes
- Removing or replacing fixtures, walls, cabinets, counter tops, appliances, etc.
- Editing cosmetic flaws or existing damage
- Adding or removing drapery
- Changing the visual views from windows

Costs

The initial expense for a virtually staged property will of course be less than one that is staged. If working with a reputable company, you will have beautiful photos that might bring a lot of foot traffic to the property. However, keep in mind that when the potential buyer arrives, what they will find is still a vacant property with all of the flaws and problems on display. A staged property allows buyers to imagine themselves living in the home - even falling in love with the home - no one falls in love with an empty room.

Ethics

Be aware that there are very strict guidelines on how edited property photos can be used on the Multiple Listing Services; removing or editing property features that would be evident when the buyer is viewing the property in person. Examples are: telephone poles, power lines, walls, views from windows, defects, cosmetic changes, air conditioning units, heaters, and windows. Make certain that the photos that you use are not in violation as it is a serious violation of Real Estate Ethics.

Does the MLS allow virtually staged photos?

Not all MLS markets allow virtually staged photos to be used when marketing your home. RESA recommends you check with your real estate agent for the MLS rules locally.

RESA encourages sellers to really investigate the pros and cons of using virtual staging on a property to ensure your selling goals are addressed and met.

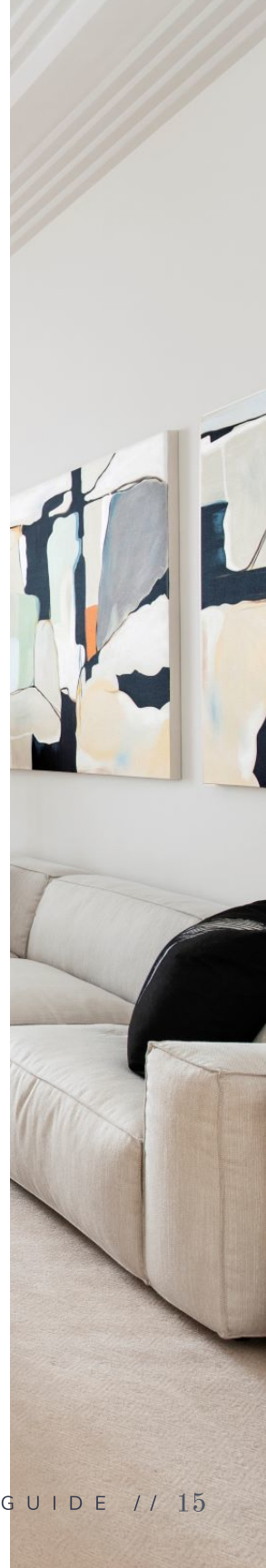




Photo by Well Dressed Home

STAND OUT

Professionally staged listings stand out in prospective buyers' minds.

- SECTION 2 -

Before Staging

UPDATES WITH THE BIGGEST RETURNS

CONTENTS

- *Make it Spacious*
- *Common Repairs*
- *Freshen the Paint*
- *Curb Appeal*

Make it Spacious

HELP YOUR HOME FEEL BIGGER

1. Reducing clutter helps your home look organized and attractive to buyers. Renting a storage unit to hold extras for awhile can be helpful.
2. Removing excess furniture throughout your home makes it feel open and roomy.
3. Hanging mirrors can make a narrow room feel much wider.
4. Adding lights inside closets is a classy touch and helps the closets feel bigger.
5. Removing half the contents of your closets can allow them to look more spacious to potential buyers.
6. Removing clutter from the closet floor tidies it up.
7. Color coordinating and organizing clothing in closets adds an impressive flair buyers will love.
8. Removing clothes and other items that are out of season is a good idea.
9. Minimizing what is on your countertops makes them feel more spacious.
10. Removing all small appliances that are not used on a daily basis clears space and makes a kitchen feel bigger.

CLEANING TIP

Consider hiring a professional to clean your property. Their fees are reasonable and it frees you up to take care of other matters. Do your cleaning AFTER you have made repairs, upgrades, painting, etc. This will ensure your cleaning is not ruined by the dust from repairs and upgrades.



Photo by Stylish Staging

Common Repairs

MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ATTRACTIVE

Properties that have had issues repaired are more attractive to potential buyers than properties that still need repairs.

Item	Repair	Replace/Upgrade
Worn carpets		✔
Broken light switches	✔	✔
Loose door knobs	✔	✔
Leaky faucets	✔	✔
Running toilets	✔	
Sticky locks	✔	
Slow drains	✔	
Broken garbage disposal	✔	✔
Cracks, holes in walls	✔	
Broken screen doors		✔
Clogged shower heads	✔	
Ripped window screens		✔
Sticky windows	✔	✔
Damaged cabinet door knobs	✔	✔



FIXTURES

- **Update** lighting fixtures. Installing new lighting is one of the most economical face lifts you can give your property. Outdated fixtures make your property feel outdated to buyers.
- **Install** new light bulbs. Make sure to use the correct wattage for the light fixture.
- **Repair or update** the faucets in sinks and bathrooms, including shower heads.



Photo by Curated Home Staging

WINDOWS

- **Clean** windows both inside and outside.
- **Repair** broken windows.
- **Make sure** windows slide on tracks easily.
- **Wash** window screens and replace damaged ones. Remove windows screens, label them, and store in the garage. This will greatly increase the light in the house.
- **Update** blinds if current ones are old or damaged.

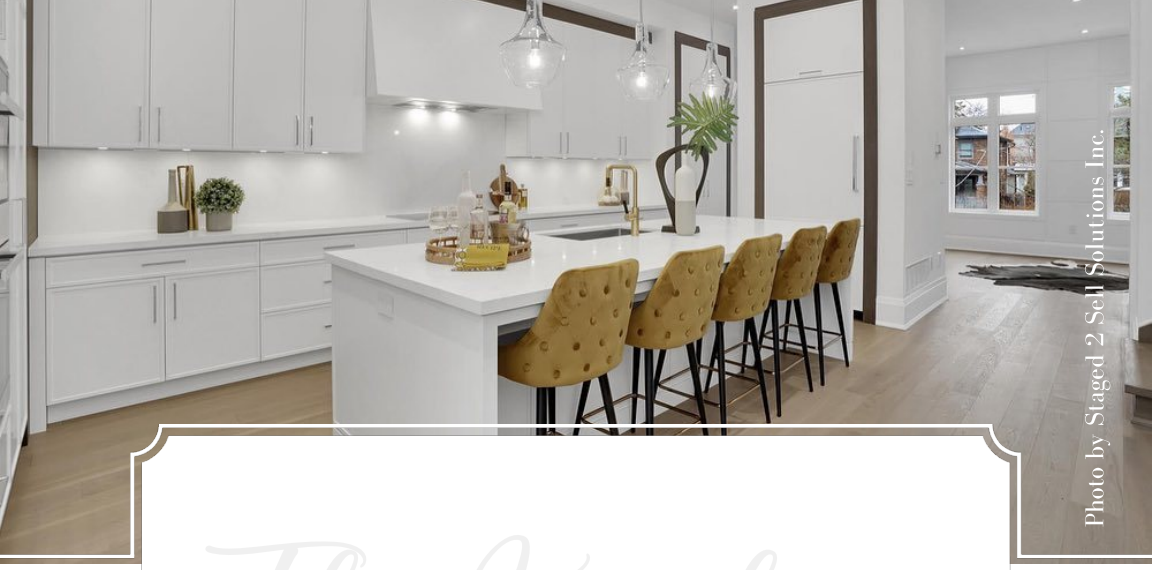


Photo by Staged 2 Sell Solutions Inc.

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen is the heart of the home, and buyers will pay special attention to it. It is so important to be sure that the kitchen is in the best condition possible. A sparkling clean kitchen will make a great impression.

- **Clean** every surface to get rid of dust, splatters and crumbs. Remember to clean under appliances and even the ceiling if necessary.
- **Check** doors and cabinets to make sure they open smoothly. Repair if needed.
- **Tighten** knobs/handles on cabinets and drawers.
- **Touch up** paint on walls, ceilings, and/or cabinets.
- **Re-caulk** around sinks.
- **Replace** any missing or broken tiles.
- **Replace/repair** the garbage disposal if needed.
- **Air out** and **clean** inside of cabinets and under sinks.
- **Update** appliances if possible.
- **Keep** the sink free of dishes to make the kitchen feel fresh and clean.
- **Remove** trash cans from view to create a cleaner-feeling space.

BEDROOMS

Consider showcasing a bedroom as an office if the demographics of the neighborhood support a home office.

- ☐ **Make** your master bedroom look and feel like a private retreat.
- ☐ **Buying** new bedding in neutral tones dresses up bedrooms.
- ☐ **Making** beds every day keeps bedrooms looking inviting and prevents surprises when showing your home.
- ☐ **Use** a closed hamper or other way of storing dirty laundry out of direct view to make rooms feel cleaner.

BATHROOMS

Bathrooms are the one room buyers especially want to see spotlessly clean. These tips will help you get your home into showing condition.

- **Check** doors and cabinets to make sure they open smoothly. Repair if needed.
- **Tighten** doorknobs, if needed.
- **Re-caulk** and **re-grout** showers, tubs and sinks.
- **Touch-up** cabinet paint.
- **Clean** and/or **upgrade** bathroom mirrors.
- **Replace** missing or broken tiles.
- **Air out and clean** inside of cabinets and under sinks.
- **Install** new toilets if the current ones are old or damaged.
- **Make** your master bathroom look and feel spa-like.
- **Place** all personal care items under the sinks in the bathrooms to keep counters looking their best.



Freshen the Paint

GIVE YOUR HOME A PAINT LIFT



What Color?

Neutral wall colors are best for selling homes. *Color can be added with the accessories used in staging.*

PAINTING

A fresh coat of paint does wonders to a home. Consider asking your staging professionals for color suggestions and referrals to painters they love.

Exterior Prep Tips

- **Remove** light fixtures and shutters, prior to painting.
- **Make repairs** to light fixtures and shutters so you can replace them after painting.
- **Power wash** the house to remove dirt and paint chips. If power washing loosens mortar, **repair** this before you paint.
- For loose paint, **use a paint scraper.** (Be sure to wear eye protection)
- To get clean lines, **tape off** areas you don't want painted.

Interior Prep Tips

- **Move** the furniture to the middle of the room and cover.
- **Remove** artwork from walls.
- **Patch** holes in the walls and sand them.
- **Remove** electrical switch plates and use masking tape or painters tape over the outlet.
- If painting the ceiling, r**emove or cover** light fixtures.
- **Clean** the walls with TSP. Follow the manufacturers directions.
- To get clean lines, **tape off** areas you don't want painted.





Photos by Ready-Set-Stage, LLC



Curb Appeal

THE REAL FIRST IMPRESSION

You only have one chance to make a positive first impression.

- **Maintain** regular watering, mowing, edging and weeding schedule.
- **Add** fresh mulch to all beds.
- **Repaint** front door, if needed.
- **Power wash** the outside of the house.
- **Remove** lawn décor & equipment.
- **Tidy** the front porch/entry way so it is clean and inviting.
- **Check** that the porch lighting is working and free of cobwebs and spiders.
- **Add** nice outdoor furniture to create inviting spaces.
- **Trim** trees or bushes so they don't touch people as they walk up to the front door.
- **Test and repair** sprinklers.
- **Remove** any dead plants and **replace** with seasonal colorful plants when appropriate.

Same tips apply to backyard.

- SECTION 3 -

After Staging

GET THE MOST OUT OF HOME STAGING

CONTENTS

- *Photography*
- *Showing Your Home*

Photography

ATTRACT MORE BUYERS

Why Have Your Home Professionally Photographed?

In an age when over **90%** of homebuyers search for their next home online, **professional photographs** of your staged home are a fantastic way to make your home **stand out above the crowd** and **attract potential buyers.**



DIY VS. PRO

Buyers love professional photography! It makes the home feel more valuable.
Thanks to Simply Splendid Photography & Staging for the example photos.

HOMEOWNER



PROFESSIONAL



FASTER AND FOR MORE MONEY!

"Staging is everything! ... My listings sell in less time and for more money than comparable homes that have not been staged."

— Cynthia A Lindsey



Pro Tip: Request a Nighttime Shot

Impress buyers with a nighttime exterior photo

Including a nighttime exterior photo in your home's listing photo gallery showcases your home's exterior lighting and helps buyers envision coming home to this house after a night out.

Showing Your Home

TIPS FOR A GREAT SHOWING

Living Room/Office /Family Room

- ☐ **Clean** and **tidy** rooms.
- ☐ **Put away** magazines.
- ☐ **Hide** remote controls.
- ☐ **Turn off** computers.
- ☐ **Hide** any documents with identifying information.

Bedrooms

- ☐ **Make** all beds.
- ☐ **Pick up** and put away all clothes.
- ☐ **Straighten** and dust dresser tops.
- ☐ **Put** jewelry out of sight.
- ☐ **Tuck away** any personal items.

Kitchen

- ☐ **Put** dishes away.
- ☐ **Remove** clutter from counter tops.
- ☐ **Wipe down** the kitchen counters.
- ☐ **Put away** dish rags, towels, sponges and soap.
- ☐ **Wipe** appliances so they shine.
- ☐ **Empty** and hide all trash cans.

Bathrooms

- ☐ **Make** bathrooms spotlessly clean.
- ☐ **Remove** water spots from glass.
- ☐ **Make** towels look clean and tidy.
- ☐ **Clean** toilet bowl and **install** a bowl freshener. **Close** toilet lid.
- ☐ **Remove** or **hide** medications.
- ☐ **Empty** trash can.
- ☐ **Clean** mirror.

Miscellaneous

- ☐ **Vacuum** carpets.
- ☐ **Sweep** floors.
- ☐ **Turn on** lights.
- ☐ **Play** soft music.

Curb Appeal

- ☐ **Sweep** walkways.
- ☐ **Pick up** any trash.
- ☐ **Remove** cobwebs.

- BONUS SECTION -

Moving Guide

YOUR PERSONAL MOVING CHECKLIST

CONTENTS

- *6 Weeks Before*
- *4 Weeks Before*
- *1 Week Before*
- *Moving Day*

6 Weeks Before

YOUR MOVING CHECKLIST



Pro tip: *Moving is an excellent time to purge! Really take a look at items that you have stored in the garage, basement, etc. Chances are if you have not used it in 6 months you most likely no longer need it. You may also find that the strong emotional attachment you once felt for some items has faded, making it easy to let them go and clear space.*

WHAT TO DO

- ☐ Start talking to your children about the move so they are not anxious.
- ☐ If you are an active service member, decide whether you want to make a DIY move, or have the government handle everything for you.
- ☐ If using a moving company, call and get estimates and choose a company.
- ☐ If you are moving yourself and need moving trucks, call now to book the truck. If you wait you will risk not having an available truck.
- ☐ Pick an afternoon or evening for everyone in the family to go through their clothes.
- ☐ Make piles of clothes to toss, to give to charity, and keep.
- ☐ Create an inventory of everything to be moved.
- ☐ Collect everything that is not to be moved and have a garage sale or donate to charity. (Charitable donations are tax deductible so save the receipts)
- ☐ Get boxes and start packing!
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____

Moving Companies:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Estimates:

_____

_____

_____

_____

4 Weeks Before

YOUR MOVING CHECKLIST

Pro tip: *Use Google to search "Chamber of Commerce _____" and fill in the blank with the city you are moving to. The chamber of commerce will have lots of resources in your new community.*



WHAT TO DO

- ☐ Notify any mail subscriptions of a change of address.
- ☐ Check out your new community if you are not familiar with it; use the Internet to locate all of the stores and places you use in your current community.
- ☐ Get children's school records. Find the schools your children will go to and make arrangements for them & look into new daycare, should you require it.
- ☐ Collect everything from neighbors or friends that you have lent out and return every thing you have borrowed.
- ☐ Check with your veterinarian for pet records. If your pets are micro chipped, notify the chip company of new address and phone numbers. If you are traveling to your new location, give them cell numbers and have them post notes that you are in transit in case the pets escape during the move.
- ☐ Stop shopping online so you don't have packages delivered that won't make it before you move.
- ☐ Set up a disconnect date with the utility companies; make sure they have your new address so they can send you a final statement or deposit refund if its due.
- ☐ Service power mowers, boats etc., drain all gas/oil to prevent spills and/or fires when moving.
- ☐ Check with doctors and dentists for all family records and prescriptions.
- ☐ Check freezer and use all the food you can use until you move. Check your pantry for expired canned items or items almost empty. Toss what you don't want to take with you.
- ☐ If you have a safe deposit box and are moving out of the area, remove your contents so you can take them with you.
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____

1 Week Before

YOUR MOVING CHECKLIST



Pro tip: *Putting all boxes and items to be moved in one large, easily accessible room in the house helps the movers' job go faster.*

WHAT TO DO

- ☐ Handle your banking needs, close accounts if needed etc.
- ☐ Change your address online at USPS.com
- ☐ If moving long distance have your car serviced and fill all fluids.
- ☐ Request a change of address from the post office.
- ☐ Dispose of combustibles and spray cans as they can explode, especially if moving in the heat.
- ☐ Finish packing and don't forget to mark the boxes.
- ☐ Cancel newspaper and garden services.
- ☐ Don't forget your pets; make any arrangements to ensure their safety in the move.
- ☐ Review the entire list to make sure you have not overlooked anything.
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____

Notes:



Moving Day

YOUR MOVING CHECKLIST

Pro tip: *If you are moving locally, have one person go to the new house when delivering the first load and one person stay behind to keep the process going.*

WHAT TO DO

- ☐ Have small children stay with friends or family as children will slow the process and get bored.
- ☐ Make a final check of the entire house including closets, shelves, attic, garage, every room.
- ☐ Make sure the movers have your correct new address and they know how to get there.
- ☐ Exchange cell phone numbers with the driver.
- ☐ Moving does take a lot of time and energy and can be a stressful experience for everyone in the family. Be sure to plan ahead and remember that moving affects everyone in the family so everyone needs to be considerate and mindful of each other's feelings.
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____

Notes:

RESA®

REAL ESTATE STAGING ASSOCIATION®

For more information on Real Estate Staging or to find a professional real estate stager visit RealEstateStagingAssociation.com. RESA® is a 501(c)(6) tax-exempt non-profit association.

888-201-8687

RealEstateStagingAssociation.com

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