

Home Staging FOR DUMMIES®

by Christine Rae and Jan Saunders Maresh



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About the Authors

Christine Rae is an internationally recognized trainer in the home staging industry. She has been providing ground-breaking staging programs since 2001, after a 32-year career in executive business management. In August of 2005, she developed and launched her innovative certification program throughout North America (Canadian Certified Staging Professionals and Certified Staging Professionals). Through that program, she has personally instructed over 2,600 entrepreneurs on how to start and grow a successful home staging business.

Christine has received many industry awards; among the most recent is the 2007 Real Estate Staging Association Staging Innovator of the Year. Christine has coauthored the *Home Staging Business Guide* e-book and countless articles in industry trade publications, like Canada's *Real Estate Magazine*. She is editor and contributing writer for the staging industry trade magazine *Staging Standard*. She has acted as subject matter expert for CE Network, an online staging program for real estate agents, and an assortment of other real estate one-day programs. She is a platform speaker with thousands of hours dedicated to the staging industry. For information about her staging background go to www.christinerae.com.

Christine's other credentials include Interior Redesign Industry Specialist, Canadian Vice President of Real Estate Staging Association, Affiliate Member of Women's Council of Realtors and Interior Design Society, Certified Dewey Color Instructor, Certified Home Marketing Specialist, Certified in Management, and Professional Manager.

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Jan Saunders Maresh is a nationally known journalist and television personality specializing in sewing and home decor. Home sellers and real estate agents bank on her training as a Certified Staging Professional, Certified One-Day Decorator, and a Certified Dewey Color Instructor and her more than 25 years of design experience. Jan is also the bestselling author of 15 books, including *Sewing For Dummies*, Second Edition (Wiley, 2004).

In 2005, Saunders Maresh founded Naked Room Solutions, a home staging and interior redesign company. She speaks for Realtors and teaches home decorating, staging, and color classes at national industry events, paint and fabric stores, and home furnishing and design centers.

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Introduction

A complete and proper home staging takes an occupied house from *okay* to *wow*, and it elevates a vacant property from cold and empty to warm and welcoming. It gives home sellers an opportunity to secure more equity and to sell their properties faster.

If you have a house that's just sitting on the market drawing no offers, or if you're getting ready to list a property for sale — as a real estate professional or as a homeowner — staging the property gives you a marketing edge. Your staged property stands out from the competition in the neighborhood and from the unstaged houses in your price range — and did we mention that staged properties sell faster?

In a soft market and with foreclosures on the rise, home sales are slowing all over North America, so staging your property has gone from a nice thing to do to a necessity.

About This Book

Whether you're interested in home staging for personal or professional reasons, you can get what you need from this book. The basic truth is that staged properties sell faster than those that are unstaged. And a staged vacant house sells faster than an empty property. In a hot market, a property that has been staged sells for more money, and in a slow market, staged properties sell faster than those that aren't. So why isn't everyone staging their properties? We'd like to know.

We wrote this book to show you how to prepare a house for sale so it sells faster and secures more equity. We know that reading this book and doing what we suggest gets you closer to a sale, so we've done our professional best to share what we know about preparing a property for sale so it can be as trouble-free an experience as possible. Yes, it's a lot of work, but it's well worth doing.

Conventions Used in This Book

To assist your navigation of this book, we've established the following conventions:

- ✓ We use *italic* for emphasis and to highlight new words or terms that we define.
- ✓ We use `monofont` for Web addresses.
- ✓ Sidebars, which are shaded boxes of text, consist of information that's interesting but not necessarily critical to your understanding of the topic.

Foolish Assumptions

As we wrote this book, we made some assumptions about you and your needs. We assume that you might be

- ✓ A homeowner getting ready to list a house with a real estate professional and wanting to know what to do to get top dollar
- ✓ A real estate professional or property stager who wants to use this book to help clients ready their houses before you list or showcase them
- ✓ A real estate professional who wants to know more about the ins and outs of staging to gain a marketing edge
- ✓ A homeowner looking for information that will sell her already-listed house faster
- ✓ Interested in finding out more about staging as a career
- ✓ Rehabbing or flipping properties and interested in how staging helps properties sell faster
- ✓ A builder who wants to know how best to sell a vacant new property

If any of these sound like you, you've come to the right book!

How This Book Is Organized

Unless you've been through a recent move, you may not know how the market has changed and what the home seller and real estate professional do to ready a property for sale. But you're in luck because you have this book.

The following sections give you a rundown of where you can find what, so you can use this guide to your best advantage.

Part I: Preparing Your Property for Sale

In this part, we tell you what buyers are looking for in a new property and help you identify what you're selling, so you can go into the selling process with your eyes wide open. We give you some of the basic principles of staging and show you how to start putting those principles into action, starting with color, light, and furniture placement.

Part II: Three Staging Steps Toward Hitting a Home Run

Property staging is *not* decorating! Our three-step staging process helps you look at your property through the eyes of the buyer — warts and all — and then tells you what to do to get your property sold. In this part, you find out what to expect from a staging consultation, the kinds of things you're going to need to do to get your property in shape, and how to show off your work through photographs and to real estate agents.

Part III: Working Through Your House, Room by Room

What you do in a bedroom isn't necessarily what you do in a dining room — staging-wise or otherwise. In this part, we give you the goods you need to get each room into showing shape by taking into account its purpose, its architectural features, and the things buyers are going to want from it. We take you through the front door and out the back with stops at every room (and closet) along the way.

Part IV: Addressing Special Staging Considerations

Sensitive issues can get between you and a sale. In this part we tell you how to deal with your mother-in-law's teacup collection, your affinity for sports paraphernalia, or your kid's pets. We give you the ins and outs of staging when you're flipping or rehabbing a property.

You find in this part an introduction to the Feng Shui practices that can help direct energy (and buyers) through your house, and we wrap things up by giving you eco-friendly staging ideas.

Part V: The Part of Tens

In this part, we share ways to avoid common mistakes home sellers and real estate professionals make when it comes to staging properties. We run you through reasons to bring in a professional stager and show you our favorite staging products, tools, and ways to get your house (and yourself) ready for the sale.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, we guide you toward important points by using the following icons:



Next to this icon, you find information that you should keep in the back of your mind as you prepare your house for sale. These points are key to efficient property staging.



This icon highlights information, techniques, or products that professional stagers use to get a space ready for the sale.



Anything that saves you time, energy, or money gets special treatment with this icon.



The home selling process is stressful enough without putting yourself, your home, or your sale in danger. The information you find next to this icon can help you avoid frustration.

Where to Go from Here

Most *For Dummies* books are set up so that you can flip to the section of the book that meets your present needs. You can do that in this book, too. We tell you where to find the information you may need when we refer to a concept, and we define terms as they arise to enable you to feel at home no matter where you open the book.

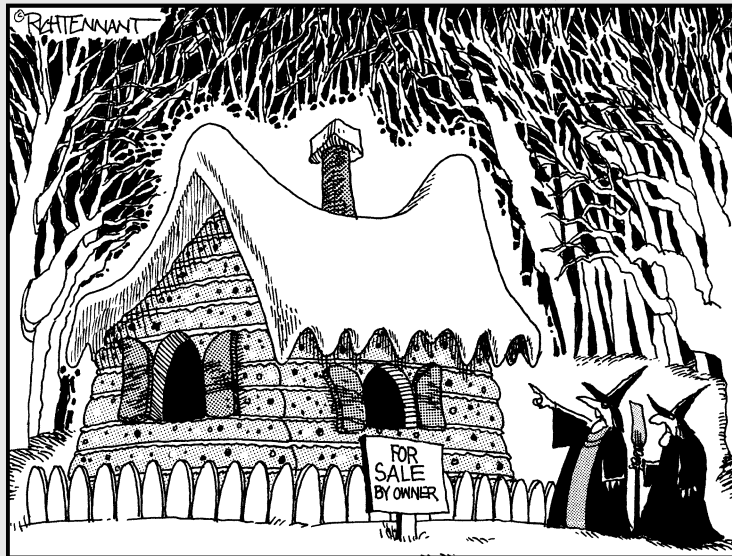
Does your living room need special attention? Head straight for Chapter 12. Want to find out what you can expect from a consultation with a professional stager? Chapter 6 has what you need. If you're an overachiever or want to ensure that you find out everything you need to know to get your house in tip-top shape before you put it on the market — well, then turn the page and keep on reading until you hit the index.

Part I

Preparing Your Property for Sale

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Most of the gingerbread is still in good shape and I had the roof re-frosted just last year."

In this part . . .

Putting your house on the market is kind of like dating. You don't show up for a first date in your comfy sweats with the salsa stains down the front. You want to smell good, look good, and make a good enough first impression that you score a second date. Before the first potential buyer comes through your door, you want to get your property into first-date shape. This part of the book shows you how to take a long, hard look at your house as a product you're selling. Consider these chapters a reality check for anyone getting ready to put a house on the market.

Chapter 1

Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Make Me an Offer

In This Chapter

- ▶ Coming to grips with selling your house
 - ▶ Looking at your house with fresh eyes
 - ▶ Harnessing the power of staging
 - ▶ Running down reasons to stage
 - ▶ Discovering staging's three steps
 - ▶ Finding ways to stage with minimal stress
-

Moving is stressful. And we have more good news for you: Securing the highest return on the sale of your house is a lot of work — exhausting, emotional, and often back-breaking work. And even when the house is priced right and in a great location, you have competition for buyers.

You can become blind to the wear and tear and the flaws of your house that jump out to a prospective buyer. The objective eye of a professional stager can make all the difference. A local, trained stager knows what's right for your market and can uncover areas that need attention to earn you the most equity from the sale of your house. You can emulate that process yourself by following the tips we give you throughout this book. The important thing is that you do it — getting the most money from your house depends on it.

So whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or want to call in the pros, we set the stage for the rest of the book by acquainting you with the staging process and why staging can secure the most equity from your home. And we hope that what we share here takes some of that stress out of moving.

Turning Your Home Back into a House

Home staging (*house doctoring* in British English) is the process of preparing a private residence before listing it in the real estate marketplace. This process includes

- ✓ Cleaning
- ✓ De-cluttering
- ✓ Repairing
- ✓ Showcasing to show off the property's best selling features or minimizing its least desirable features

A *professional stager* has been trained to look at a property and suggest improvements that will help it appeal to the highest number of buyers. A professional stager knows how to look at a property and recommend changes that lead to a sale. They know how to position furniture, artwork, and accessories to sell the room and minimize its flaws. A professional stager can recommend color schemes, suggest vendors for repairs and other projects, and for vacant properties, source rental furniture, artwork, and accessories to create a feeling in the house that buyers can see themselves moving into. For information about hiring a professional stager, see Chapter 6.

If you watch Home and Garden Television (HGTV) you've probably seen shows on home selling and staging properties. Property staging has been around for more than 20 years but more recently has become a serious marketing tool for selling houses. Why? Because it works! As professional stagers, we believe staging requires a trained eye, elbow grease, psychology, marketing, and a generous dose of staging training thrown in.



Staging a house means taking the time and investing the money up front to prepare your house for sale.

We outline clear steps for staging your house, but you have to do the work, and one of the toughest parts of that work is the emotional challenge of letting go — while you're still living in the house that you're selling. Over and over we talk to sellers who really haven't faced the inevitable; they know one day they'll have to pack everything and move — *one day* — just not now.

The memories you made in a house connect you to it, but those memories also can be roadblocks to successfully marketing your house if you wait until late in the process to uncover them. Severing any emotional ties early saves

you equity later by freeing you to make the changes you need to make to sell the house (like saying goodbye to the orange shag carpet you had installed when the kids were little). When you depersonalize and pack away the memories, you make the house less “your home” and more a commodity.



The sooner you face the music, the better you’ll be able to move forward with your selling plans. Do yourself a favor: After you make the decision to sell, walk through the house and revisit your memories, room by room. As you do this, take photos so you can make an album of how things were.

Feeling better now? Great. Now start packing away those memories to make room for that perfect buyer who will pay top dollar for your house.

Seeing the Property Through the Buyer’s Eyes

Trying to see what a buyer sees in your house can be tough, but getting that glimpse is extremely important for preparing your house for sale. Remove your rose-colored glasses and take an honest-to-goodness look at your property, warts and all.



Starting at the street, take an unbiased tour of the house, noting where your eyes are drawn. What is it that you notice first? Write down all the things you see that might turn off a buyer, from outdated carpet to leaky faucets, cracked sidewalk to cracked ceiling, risqué artwork to religious symbols. Paying attention to even the smallest detail might earn you equity later.

As you tour the house, take pictures or jot down some notes of the areas that need attention. Based on what you want to invest in getting your home ready for sale, the notes and photos will help you prioritize your to-do list later on. Chapter 2 tells you more about prioritizing your repairs.



The goal of staging is to sell a house in the shortest time for the most money by attracting the highest number of potential buyers. A 2007 HomeGain.com survey of 2,000 real estate professionals nationwide found home staging can average 340% on the return of investment. Figure 1-1 shows you the results, and that expending your energy in some areas pays off more than it does in others.

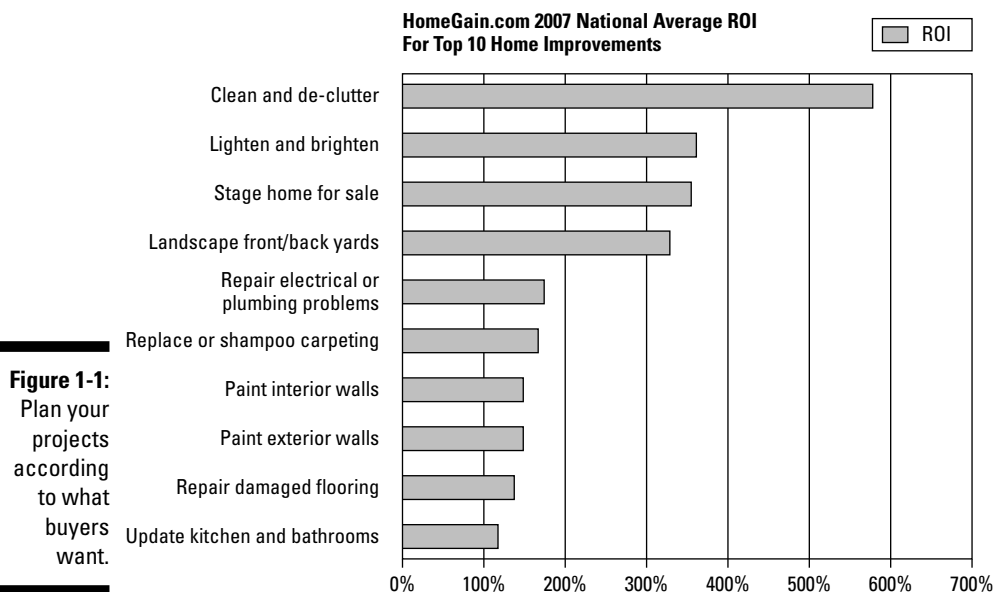


Figure 1-1:
Plan your
projects
according
to what
buyers
want.

When prospective buyers review your property you want them to put their full attention on how the property *feels* and what it will be like to live there. Through our research, we know that most buyers take between three to six minutes to tour your home. *Three to six minutes* to decide whether this is the place they want to spend the next part of their lives. You can't waste a moment.



TIP

Minimize and remove any and all distractions that throw off the buyer from taking a closer look at your property. What are these distractions? Usually the day-to-day items, like a collection of teapots, spoons, china, and so on. Any collection may pull the buyers eye and waste some of those precious minutes, whether it's a fabulous art collection, designer clothes, CDs, or gothic posters in the kids' rooms — anything that derails the focus of the buyer from your house to your belongings. As harsh and premature as this may seem, do yourself a favor and pack away those personal items. Chapter 7 tells you more about depersonalizing your house.



Buyers talk of falling in love with a house; however, it's not the house they actually fall in love with but the concept of living in the house. The key to successfully staging your house is starting a romance with the lifestyle your house represents. You find out more about igniting the flames of house passion in Chapter 2; Chapter 8 tells you about showcasing to sell a lifestyle.