

Perk up your property to attract buyers
and gain a vital sales edge in a crowded market

Home Staging

FOR DUMMIES[®]

Christine Rae

Founder, Certified Staging Professionals

Jan Saunders Maresh

Founder, Naked Room Solutions

A Reference for the Rest of Us![®]



**FREE eTips at
dummies.com**

*Perk up your property to attract buyers
and gain a vital sales edge in a crowded market*

Home Staging

FOR

DUMMIES®



Christine Rae
Founder, Certified Staging Professionals

Jan Saunders Maresh
Founder, Naked Room Solutions

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



**FREE eTips at
dummies.com®**

Home Staging For Dummies

**by Christine Rae and
Jan Saunders Maresh**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Home Staging For Dummies®

Published by

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2008 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.,
Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, 201-748-6011, fax 201-748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, the Wiley Publishing logo, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, A Reference for the Rest of Us!, The Dummies Way, Dummies Daily, The Fun and Easy Way, Dummies.com and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries, and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: The publisher and the author make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales or promotional materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every situation. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. The fact that an organization or Website is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the author or the publisher endorses the information the organization or

Website may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that Internet Websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008924958

ISBN: 978-0-470-26028-9

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2



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.

When not traveling the world teaching, Christine lives in Canada's Niagara Region. She shares her life with "the Dutch Accountant" Ary, has a son, Lee, a grandson, Lucas, and an adorable Yorkshire woofie named Timmy.

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.

Authors' Acknowledgments

Even though our names are on the cover, it took an army of people to help bring this book alive. We are two cogs in a great big wheel. We couldn't have written this without Wiley Publishing and the incredible Dummies team. Thank you Mike Baker for working our book into the publishing schedule so it hits the market at the right time and for your continuing guidance and support in making sure this project is a success.

Thank you to Traci Cumbay for your patience, courtesy, and understanding, and for making us look brilliant, clever, and funny. You offered continuous encouragement throughout the writing process, and we both really appreciated your help and guidance through the rough patches and those killer deadlines.

Thank you to all the folks at the Certified Staging Professionals organization. The staff is passionate, supportive, and so proud. We couldn't have made this book happen without the special help from Angela Brooks, JoAnne O'Donnell, Lynelle Hartman, Leigh Hagen, Nairn Friemann, Gina McNew, and the many CSP graduates who shared freely their photographs so we could bring you great examples of what we speak about.

Personal thanks go to the family of Angela Brooks, who had to do without her for so many nights while she

edited, researched, and secured photographs for this book. And to Angela: Thanks for supporting and believing in us.

Finally, thank you to all the people who buy and read this book; we appreciate and are very grateful you did. Both Christine and Jan are personally donating 10 percent of any proceeds made to the CSP Pay It Forward campaign for Habitat for Humanity; we are sure they appreciate you, too.

From Christine: Thanks to Jan for her amazing spirit and knowledge of book-writing, for her knack of knowing what the editors were looking for, and for sharing this opportunity.

Thanks also to Ary, who always believes in me, and supports and encourages me while watching the pennies and doing without me in many ways.

From Jan: Thanks to Christine for her willingness to share her incredible knowledge and experience of staging with me, my fellow CSPs, and now the Dummies' readers. Your commitment to excellence, innovative ideas, and raising the bar in the staging industry will outlive us all.

And thanks to my husband, Ted, for your patience, understanding, support, and tolerance of the crazy deadlines. Thanks, too, to our son, Todd Moser, for being so understanding about what I do. I promise I won't rent out our living-room furniture over your winter break again.

A great big thanks to my business partner and fellow CSP, Char Curry, who kept our business growing and

running smoothly by managing all of our projects during the writing of this book.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development

Project Editor: Traci Cumbay

Acquisitions Editor: Mike Baker

Copy Editor: Traci Cumbay

Editorial Program Coordinator: Erin Calligan Mooney

Technical Editor: Linda Barnett

Editorial Supervisor & Reprint Editor: Carmen Krikorian

Editorial Assistants: David Lutton, Joe Niesen

Cover Photo: Leigh Hagen, LH2 Photography

Cartoons: Rich Tennant (www.the5thwave.com)

Composition Services

Project Coordinator: Lynsey Stanford

Layout and Graphics: Claudia Bell, Stacie Brooks, Laura Campbell, Reuben W. Davis, Melissa K. Jester, Brent Savage, Christine Williams

Proofreaders: Jessica Kramer, Nancy L. Reinhardt

Indexer: Christine Spina Karpeles

Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies

Diane Graves Steele, Vice President and Publisher, Consumer Dummies

Joyce Pepple, Acquisitions Director, Consumer Dummies

Kristin A. Cocks, Product Development Director, Consumer Dummies

Michael Spring, Vice President and Publisher, Travel

Kelly Regan, Editorial Director, Travel

Publishing for Technology Dummies

Andy Cummings, Vice President and Publisher, Dummies Technology/General User

Composition Services

Gerry Fahey, Vice President of Production Services

Debbie Stailey, Director of Composition Services

Contents

Title

Introduction

About This Book

Conventions Used in This Book

Foolish Assumptions

How This Book Is Organized

Icons Used in This Book

Where to Go from Here

Part I : Preparing Your Property for Sale

Chapter 1: Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Make Me an Offer

Turning Your Home Back into a House

Seeing the Property Through the Buyer's Eyes

Recognizing What Staging Is and Is Not (Hint: It's Not Decorating)

Why Real Estate Pros Embrace Staging (And You Should, Too)

Setting the Stage: Three Steps to Sold

Making Staging Happen with Minimal Stress

Chapter 2: Discovering What Buyers Want

Comparison Shopping: Buyers Do It and So Should You

Identifying and Upgrading the Money-Making Rooms

Speed Dating: What Happens When Buyers Start Looking

Hitting the Target Market

Making the Most of What's Memorable about Your House

[Chapter 3: Finding the Fixes You Can't Ignore](#)

[Having Your Home Inspected Before You Sell](#)

[Addressing the Fixes That Make Your House Safe](#)

[Working with a Home Inspector](#)

[Making the Changes That Sell Your House](#)

[Chapter 4: Color Me Sold: Using Color and Light to Sell Your House](#)

[Grasping Color's Emotional Power](#)

[Staging with Color Psychology](#)

[Finding the Right Way to Let There Be Light](#)

[Chapter 5: It's Not What You Have; It's Where You Place It](#)

[Focal Points: The Start of the Selling Process](#)

[Adding Angles to a Square-Shaped Room](#)

[Balancing a Rectangular Room](#)

[The L-Shaped Room](#)

[Sparing a Bowling Alley-Shaped Room](#)

[Addressing an Unexpected Angle](#)

[Part II : Three Staging Steps Toward Hitting a Home Run](#)

[Chapter 6: First Base: The Staging Consultation](#)

[Knowing When and Why to Call a Stager](#)

[Knowing What to Expect from a Complete Staging Consultation](#)

[Setting Your Priorities: What Are the Top Recommendations?](#)

[What's This Going to Cost Me?](#)

[Can I Do My Own Staging Consultation?](#)

[Chapter 7: Second Base: Earning Equity with Elbow Grease](#)

[Earning Equity: Steps for Every Room](#)

[It's De-lightful, It's De-lovely, It's De-cluttered](#)

[Painting for Perfect Walls and Woodwork](#)

[Hiring the Elbow Grease: Working with Vendors](#)

[Chapter 8: Third Base: Showcasing Makes Your House Photo-Ready](#)

[The Ins and Outs of Showcasing](#)

[Accessories: Jewelry for Your Rooms](#)

[Hanging Mirrors and Art for Maximum Impact](#)

[Finding Ideas for Accessories Functional and Fanciful](#)

[Uncovering Out-of-the-Box Showcasing Ideas](#)

[Chapter 9: Home: Opening Your House to Buyers and Agents](#)

[Romancing the Home with Photos](#)

[Night Lights: Making Sure Buyers Find You](#)

[Offering Broker and Agent Tours](#)

[Living in Your Staged Property](#)

[Keeping Your House Show-Ready with an Open House Checklist](#)

[Part III : Working Through Your House, Room by Room](#)

[Chapter 10: Curb Appeal: Making a Winning First Impression](#)

[Color It Sold: Addressing Exterior Color](#)

[Welcoming Buyers with Fabulous Front Doors](#)

[Bright at Night: Lighting Your Property](#)

[Addressing Driveways and Sidewalks](#)

[Roofs: Tending Your House's Top](#)

[Gussyng Up Your Yard](#)

[Chapter 11: You Had Me at Hello: Entrances, Exits, and Special Places](#)

[Making an Entrance Grand](#)

[Selling Stairways and Hallways](#)

[Exits: Stage Them Right!](#)

[Handling Unique Spaces at Exits and Entrances](#)

[Chapter 12: A Whole Lot of Living to Do: Living, Family, and Rec Rooms](#)

[From Formal to Laid Back: The Family of Living Rooms](#)

[Bringing Luxury and Elegance to Living Rooms](#)

[Finding Focus and Balance in Family Rooms](#)

[Getting the Great Room into Selling Shape](#)

[Staging a Recreation Room, Bonus Room, or Basement](#)

[Getting Your Rooms in Shape with a DIY Checklist](#)

[Chapter 13: A Feast of Dining Room Staging Ideas](#)

[Running Through a Dining Room Staging Checklist](#)

[Placing Furniture — But Not Too Much of It](#)

[Improvising to Set Up Your Dining Room](#)

[When You Don't Have a Formal Dining Room . . .](#)

[Chapter 14: Cashing In on Kitchens and Baths](#)

[Kitchens: Staging the Home's Focal Point](#)

[Bathrooms: Tackling Tub, Tile, and Toilet](#)

[Upping the Wow Factor with a DIY Staging Checklist](#)

[Chapter 15: Inviting Sweet Dreams with Beautifully Staged Bedrooms](#)

[Getting Bedrooms Ready for Buyers](#)

[Mastering the Master Bedroom](#)

[Welcoming Buyers to the Guest Room](#)

[Taming Kids' Rooms](#)

[Making Bedrooms Their Best with a DIY Checklist](#)

[Chapter 16: Office Affair: Stage 'Em Something to Talk About](#)

[Sizing Up the Space](#)

[Restoring the Function](#)

[Building a Workable Work Space](#)

[Bringing Finishing Touches to the Home Office](#)

[Spiffing Up an Office with a DIY Checklist](#)

[Chapter 17: Behind Closed Doors: Staging Closets and Other Hidden Places](#)

[Running Down Things to Do in Every Closet](#)

[Defining Closet Upgrade Options](#)

[Finding the Function and Setting the Stage in Closets of Every Kind](#)

[Organizing the Laundry Room](#)

[Bringing Basements up to Selling Speed](#)

[Getting the Garage in Order](#)

[Part IV : Addressing Special Staging Considerations](#)

[Chapter 18: Dealing with Sensitive Issues](#)

[Eradicating Scent of Wet Dog, Eau de Cat, and Other Signs of Pets](#)

[Protecting Precious Goods \(Or, “Grandma’s in That Jar!”\)](#)

[Quashing Collection Fever: Show Buyers Your House, Not Your Beanie Babies](#)

[Selling Your House During the Holidays](#)

[You See Beautiful Wallpaper, Buyers See Work](#)

[Chapter 19: Staging When You’re Building, Rehabbing, or Flipping](#)

[Climbing the Three Steps of Staging](#)

[Colors Speak Even When They Don’t Say a Word](#)

[Finding Eye-Opening \(And Sale-Making\) Improvements](#)

[Building and Staging with the Buyer in Mind](#)

[Chapter 20: Staging Your House the Feng Shui Way](#)

[Introducing Feng Shui](#)

[Overcoming Clutter's Harmful Effects](#)

[Making the Most of the Five Natural Elements](#)

[Staging to Feng Shui the Sale](#)

[Chapter 21: It's Not Easy Being Green: EcoStaging](#)

[Looking Into Rebate and Eco-Grant Programs](#)

[Using Earth-Friendly Products for Cleaning and Painting](#)

[Finding Flooring That Goes the Eco-Distance](#)

[Finding Practical Ways to Conserve Water](#)

[Part V : The Part of Tens](#)

[Chapter 22: \(Almost\) Ten Mistakes Sellers Often Make](#)

[Overpricing the Property](#)

[Choosing the Wrong Professional](#)

[Going It Alone: For Sale by Owner](#)

[Listing Your House Before You Stage It](#)

[Not Doing Your Homework](#)

[Failing to Target the Right Buyer](#)

[Undervaluing the Power of Curb Appeal](#)

[Neglecting the Floors](#)

[Not Washing the Windows](#)

[Chapter 23: Ten Reasons to Hire a Staging Professional](#)

[Utilizing the Skills of a Certified Staging Professional](#)

[Seeing What the Buyer Sees](#)

[Selling the Property to All Five Senses](#)

[Saving You and Your Agent Time and Money](#)

[Stagers Play the Bad Guy So Agents Don't Have To](#)

[Highlighting Your House with Great Photographs](#)

[Selling Your Property Faster](#)

[Relying on the Stager's Toolkit](#)

[Chapter 24: Ten Tricks of the Trade That Help You Sell Your House](#)

[Bringing Fresh Air In](#)

[Running a Fresh Air Machine](#)

[Choosing Eco-Friendly Cleaning Products](#)

[Hanging Art with Heavy Duty Wall Hangers](#)

[Professional Art Hanging with a Level and Hanging Tool](#)

[Saving Your Walls with Wall Respecters](#)

[Adding a Citrus Scent](#)

[Saving Your Back with Furniture Sliders](#)

[Filling Cracks and Holes Easily](#)

[Misting Naturalaire Home Cleansing Spray](#)

[Chapter 25: Ten Ways to Prepare Your House \(And Yourself\) for the Sale](#)

[Emotionally Disconnect from the House](#)

[Make Room for the Buyer's Vision](#)

[Pack Up and Store Half of Your Stuff](#)

[Organize Closets, Cupboards, and Drawers](#)

[Refresh the Exterior](#)

[Inspect Your House Before the Buyer Does](#)

[Invite the Buyer In](#)

[Buy New House Numbers](#)

[Make Every Surface Shine](#)

[Seek Professional Showcasing Help](#)

[Chapter 26: Ten Reasons Sellers Don't Stage Their Properties \(But Should\)](#)

[We Don't Have Time for Home Staging](#)

[Location and Price Will Do the Work](#)

[I Get Compliments on My Home All the Time, So I Don't Need to Stage It](#)

[My Neighbor's House Sold Without Staging](#)

[My Agent Said I Don't Need to Stage My House to Sell It](#)

[If It's Good Enough for Me, It's Good Enough for Anyone](#)

[Staging Is Just De-Cluttering and Cleaning, and I've Done That](#)

[Homes Have Been Selling for Years Without Staging. Why Now?](#)

[I Can't Afford It](#)

[It's a Hot Market — The House Will Sell Without Staging](#)

[: Further Reading](#)

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.