



## How to Prepare Your Home for Photography (and Showings)

There is some contention these days as to how much you should depersonalize your home when listing to sell. One camp of experts says that preparing, or staging, your home should be the opposite of decorating. Decorating, or interior design, is about putting your personal stamp on the look of a home; whereas, staging is designed to remove the personal elements so that the potential home buyer can imagine the place as their own. The only problem with this view is that few people have very strong powers of pre-visualization, so cannot really see their furnishings and decor in the new space unless the design styles are similar. That's why selling unfurnished, spec-built homes is often a little more difficult than selling a furnished home – new or otherwise.

The other side of the home staging coin comes down on the side of making your home feel like the most welcoming home in the neighborhood. Personal belongings such as family photos, keepsakes, and other personal items lend a sense of history and spirit to a place – they tend to tell a story and make for a warm and inviting home, instead of a sterile showroom of a house.

The approach you choose will be a matter of personal taste. Hiring the services of a professional home stager is always an option, but the stager should share your feelings about your choice of one or the other of the above approaches. Consult with your realtor, as well, of course. He or she should know quite well what the tastes of the potential home buyers in your market are.

What follows below is a general guide list of things to do to prepare your home for photography and for showings. They are first and second on the list, because first and foremost, the two most important things you can do are clean and de-clutter your home:

1. Clean and dust very well.
2. De-clutter – try to remove at least half of the books, knick-knacks, toys, keepsakes, awards, family photos, kitchen items, off season clothes (makes closets seem more spacious), etc. This can extend even to pieces of furniture in smaller spaces. Remove pieces that make a room feel tight or cramped.
3. If at all possible, when planning to list your home near any holiday, please plan with photography in mind. Either schedule the photography before any decorations go up, or after they come down. No matter what holiday, decorations in the photos date the home.
4. Remove any large portrait photographs or paintings, especially over mantles or in main living spaces, and replace with more neutral art.
5. Remove and secure valuables.
6. Remove and secure medications.
7. Turn all lights on (it will be up to the discretion of the photographer about what to turn off).

8. Replace any burned out bulbs.
9. Consider using newer generation fluorescent bulbs that are white-light or daylight in color.
10. Turn all fans off.
11. De-clutter and dust fireplace mantles.
12. Minimize extra floor coverings - no extraneous, small throw rugs. Area rugs are acceptable.
13. Clear kitchen counter tops. Leave a maximum of only one appliance per counter top area.
14. Counter top microwave and toaster ovens should be removed.
15. Remove everything from the refrigerator front and sides (photos, magnets, kid's art, etc.).
16. Remove table coverings, but consider putting out place settings.
17. Remove garbage and trash cans from sight.
18. Remove all signs of pet bowls, bedding, toys, etc.
19. Please keep cat litter boxes clean with fresh litter and concealed, if at all possible.
20. If possible (again), confine the cat. For showings, to avoid problems with potential buyers and allergies; and for photography, because cats love to get in the middle of a shot composition and plop themselves down for a rest.
21. Toilet lids down.
22. Clear bathroom countertops of all toiletries. Leave only a floral arrangement or house plant.
23. Put out the best towels, neatly folded.
24. Empty the shower of shampoos, conditioners, bodywashes, scrubies, etc.
25. For the exterior, remove trash cans, gardening tools, etc. from sight.
26. Store children's and pet's yard toys out of sight.
27. Neatly coil water hoses.
28. Open patio umbrellas and set out patio furniture cushion (please ensure they are clean).
29. If in season, uncover grills, pools, spas, and hot tubs (again, ensure they are clean).
30. Place dogs in the dog run or garage (if in a dog run, then the animal may need to be moved to the garage for some exterior photography).
31. Sidewalks, driveways, decks, and patios, etc., clear of plant debris and leaves.
32. Garage doors down and no vehicles in the driveway, please.

For the Full HDRI\* photography package, open and raise all window blinds, and open all curtains and other window treatments to reveal exterior view (unless there is something outside any particular window that you just don't want shown).

For the Semi-HDRI\* photography package, lower and partially close all window blinds. Close shears, but leave curtains and other window treatments open (they may be closed for the shoot, but only at the photographer's discretion).

\*Go to <http://www.droberts-photography.com/difference.html> to learn more about High Dynamic Range Imaging (HDRI).