



HOME STAGING THE 5 ROOM FIX

KYLIE M.

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Introduction

Are you exhausted at even the THOUGHT of getting your home ready for sale? Don't be. I've created this e-book JUST for you, to take the stress away and to answer all of those questions you have. Now, that's not to say you've got it easy-peasy lemon-squeezy, no way Jose. You are going to be one busy bee for a wee while; however, I've laid things out in an easy-to-follow format so that you can focus on one room and task at a time.

And this isn't a fluffy book—you won't find me chattin' too much about toss cushions and artwork in here. What we're looking at is the **meat n' potatoes of getting your home ready for sale**. The things that HAVE to be done—not just the decorative touches that come after.

And in case you're starting to panic at the thought of making your home totally void of personality and spending a fortune on things that don't seem to relate directly to more money in the bank, here is why I've created this e-book for you:

- **Ease.** Trust me, this will make your life easier, rather than you flyin' by the seat of your crazy pants WONDERING if you've done everything you could/should (and possibly spending money on things that don't need to be done)
- **Cost-effectiveness.** Although sometimes you have to spend money to make money, that doesn't mean that just because you HAVE money, you should SPEND it. Make sense? What I'm trying to say is that there are many ways that you can improve your home WITHOUT having to spend a ton of money. If I *do recommend* that you spend a bit of coin, then that should carry some serious weight because my goal is to spend as little as possible
- **Mass appeal.** It's not about you—it's about me. You need to take your personal feelings out of the equation when figuring out what is best for your home. So while I joke that it's *all about me*, there is some truth to it, because you want to create a home that I, your neighbor, or anybody else will be able to walk through and picture living in. Just because you live a certain way or like particular things doesn't mean that everyone else will too

And if you're wondering how I came to be writing a book on home staging, read the '**About Me**' page at the end of this e-book, I'd love to tell you!

Chapter 1

The 5 Key Rooms

Whether you have a small home or a sprawling mansion, there are 5 rooms that you need to focus on:



- ENTRYWAY
- LIVING / DINING
- KITCHEN
- MASTER
BEDROOM
- BATHROOM

Why these rooms? These are the *make-it-or-break-it* rooms. If they aren't in good selling condition, then they can literally make or break a sale. Let's take a brief look at why these rooms are SO important...

The Entryway

Other than the exterior, this is the FIRST impression buyers will have of your home. If it's dirty and unorganized you risk losing your buyers within the first few seconds.

The Living room/dining room

Why do I have these rooms together? Well, in *many* layouts, the living room and dining room share the same space and are either divided by minor walls or by NO walls at all.

Now, the living room is often where buyers picture themselves spending the most time. Is it functional? Does it have good flow? How is the quality of light? These are all things that potential buyers will look at.

As for the dining room, whether your eating area is its own space or is integrated with your living room or kitchen (open layout), it needs to be shown at its BEST.

The Kitchen

As the heart of the home, this space must be in tip-top shape. If your kitchen is in disrepair and wretched looking, many buyers will subtract anywhere from \$20–\$30,000 off of your asking price (and even more for high-end homes).

The Master bedroom

In my experience, it's women who tend to get excited about this area of the home. Is the room large enough to fit a king size bed? Can it easily fit 1 or 2 dressers? Is the closet large enough for a lot of clothes? These are just a few of the questions they'll be thinking.

The Bathrooms

All of your bathrooms need to be in tip-top shape if you want to make money on your home. Are they clean? Are they embarrassingly outdated, generally liveable, or livin' large? Can they support a family of 4 or are they just glorified powder rooms?

A small bathroom can cost you anywhere from \$5–10,000 off the asking price if it isn't in liveable condition. A large bathroom can run upward of \$20,000 in a buyer's mind.

“But what about the other rooms in my home—don’t they matter?”

In an ideal world, every room and space in your home would be in top condition for sale; every nook and cranny would be cleaned and decorated, and even the garage would be organized and spit-polished. HOWEVER, seeing as most of us have lives that usually include a mix of jobs, kids, engagements, deadlines, etc, I am using these 5 rooms as the bare minimum.

And it doesn’t matter how updated or trendy your home is (I mean, it DOES, but just hang on). If your home *isn’t* current but IS in **good condition** and clean, you will be ensuring that you are showing your home at its very best. Your realtor will know how to price it based on the fact that it hasn’t been updated, but there is no accounting for how much money you could lose if things are broken, cluttered, or dirty.

Once these rooms are done and IF you have the time/energy, take what you’ve learned and apply it to the other rooms in your home. Of course, the more the merrier, but your sanity is just as important as your sale!

So, get yer’ game face on as we move on to **The 5 Main Rules for Mass Appeal!**



Chapter 2

The 5 Main Rules for Mass Appeal

It's not about you...it's about me.

Remember, how YOU feel about your home becomes somewhat irrelevant when it comes time to sell. Why? Because it's all about me. Me, being the buyer, the person who has to visualize paying TOP dollar for your home and living in it with my personal tastes in mind.

I know it can be hard, but try to emotionally detach yourself from your home as you go through this process. Stepping away emotionally can help you make decisions that have mass appeal, rather than doing things the way you've always done them.

And of course, you can't make EVERYone happy. But there are some easy ways to give your home mass appeal without making it a blank, boring slate.

Rule #1: Declutter and Depersonalize

I know it's going to break your heart to take down the complete pelt of your shaved dog, your blow-up doll named Snooky, or the large oil painting of your nekkid self, but it is *time*, my friend (and yes, these are ALL things I've experienced in my staging travels).

It's not personal. It's business. And there is *no business* like home selling when it comes time to putting some profit in your pockets.

In the photo on the right, the bottom half is fantastic, the top half? Not so good – while it's pretty, it's too personal for mass appeal.

The frames and layout are a great look, but I would replace the photos with more generic ones, landscapes for example.



Rule #2: Clarify the Room's Intended Use

I realize that YOU don't need your dining room and therefore have it set up as your office. Or that you store your deep-freezer and water cooler in your eat-in-kitchen area because it's more functional for you than a table with 4 chairs. However, this AIN'T ABOUT YOU! This is about how the average person would live in your home.



For example, if there were a desk, computer and chair in the above dining room niche, a buyer could assume that there wasn't adequate office space or a good area for the kids to do homework in their own rooms.

You may THINK that they will see beyond your stuff, but they won't—unless they're uber-freaks like me, but I would assume otherwise.

Rule #3: Fix It

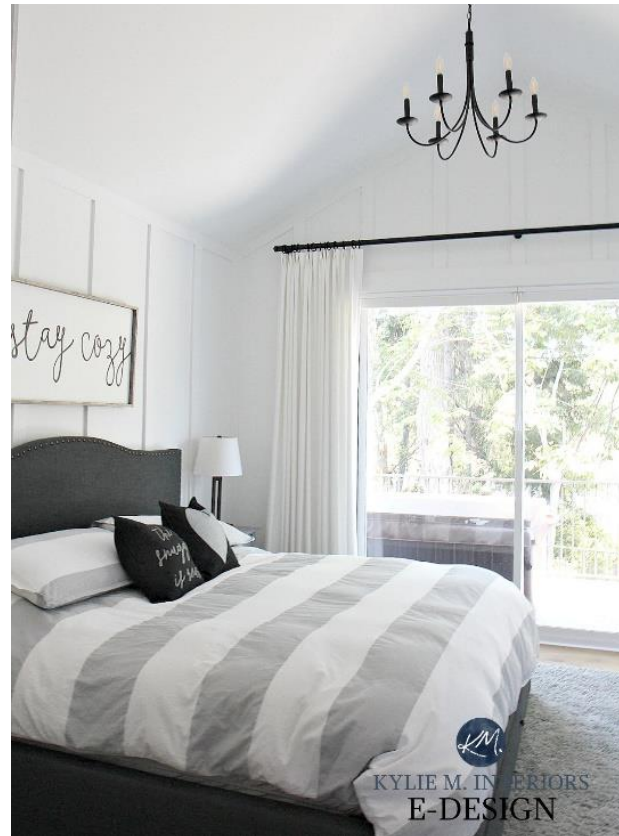
Whether it's a burnt-out bulb, squeaky sliding door track or a broken window, there is NOTHING like a busted-up home to put off a potential buyer. Every broken or non-functioning item is added up in the buyer's head and coming off of your asking price.

Rule #4: Clean It

Your home needs to be clean, and I mean HOME SELLIN' CLEAN. Most homes I've been in are certainly clean enough for everyday living but need that extra touch for staging. This involves a whoooole lot of nitty-gritty work that most of us aren't anal enough to care about on a day-to-day basis (and that's okay!), but for selling, we need to bust out the scrub brush and wine bottle and get down n' dirty.

Now that doesn't mean you have to clean EVERYTHING, but it does mean you have some serious work to do. And to help, I'm going to give you a fabulous CHECKLIST in the next chapter and room-by-room checklists to make your life easier.

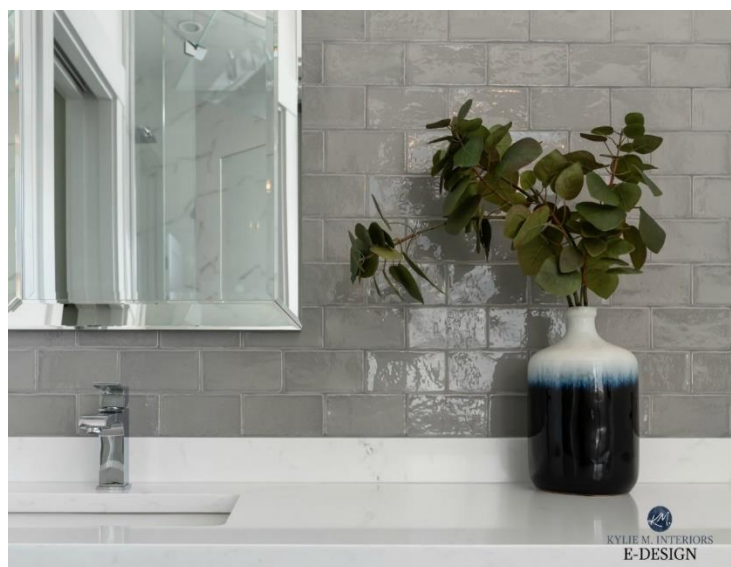
The bedroom on the right is a great example of a clean, welcoming space. The rug isn't all ratty with a grungy wear path in it and the bedding looks crisp and clean.



Rule #5: Make It Pretty

If you watch decorating shows or read magazines, you may assume this means that you need to spend thousands on new or rented furniture.

And while home staging CAN get pretty intense, depending on the needs of your home, your target market and the flexibility of your budget, **this style** of home staging prefers the more budget-friendly approach of using what you have and working out minimally from there.



The purpose of this e-book is to keep things simple and *affordable* – you'll be makin' it pretty just by following the advice provided!



The above photo is a great example of countertop décor that doesn't detract from the patterned backsplash and coordinated countertops/cabinets – the things that a buyer is actually investing in!

Read more...

[5 Home Staging Ideas – Case Study](#)

Now that we've talked about the **5 key rooms** and the **5 key rules**, in the next few chapters we're going to combine these ideas. Not only will these tips and guidelines make your life EASIER, hopefully they will make you some MONEY HONEY!

Chapter 3

Decluttering, Storing, Cleaning and Fixing

Although we'll get into room-specific details a little later, this chapter is one you'll want to come back to again and again for those easy fixes, cleaning, and simple decluttering tips. This is what I consider the 'guts n' the glory'.

Here's what you need to get started...

Packing Supplies

- Cardboard boxes or Rubbermaid containers. What will you need these for?
 - Recycling: Paper, plastic, glass, etc.
 - Donating/Selling: Things you no longer need that can be donated to a worthy cause or sold
 - Packing: Things you plan to take with you, but are too personal to keep in your home while trying to sell it
- Black felt-tip marker—to clearly mark the above boxes or containers
- Tape—to close up the boxes
- Large black garbage bags—fer' all yer' junk
- A dumpster. Just joking...(#notjoking)

Storage Space

The other thing you'll need that is OFTEN forgotten...**STORAGE SPACE!**

You'll need a place to put the boxes full of things you're keeping and an easy-to-access place to put your boxes and bags of items that you're going to recycle, donate/ sell, or dump.

I realize that storage is at a premium in most homes, so if you can't afford to rent a storage unit, here are my best recommendations...

- **The garage.** If you have one, this would be the best choice. You will need a section cleared out for the following:
 - Recycling

- Garbage
- Donation
- Packed boxes that will go to your new home

Place the recycling, donation and garbage items nearest the garage door so that you can get to them easily and throw them in the back of your car (or get rid of them NOW if you're so inclined).

Place the packed boxes that you're keeping on the farthest wall space. This way when buyers look at the garage it will seem less cluttered than if you were to pile them near the entry door (that is, the door from the house into the garage).

- **The LEAST used spare bedroom.** If you are lucky enough to have some reasonably empty rooms, choose one of them for your packed-up boxes. Place the boxes in the closet first and then on the wall farthest from the door—stacking up, not out.

So, now that we have the supplies needed and the space to store everything we don't need, let's talk about how we actually go about decluttering our homes. A lot of it comes down to PILES and remember, it's going to get UGLY before it gets pretty.

Making Piles

Decluttering can get overwhelming really fast, so it's important to make organized piles. And using the tips above and below, by the time you're done, you should have some pretty specific piles of "stuff", including labelled boxes and bags.

ALL of those bags/boxes that are **leaving your home** should have a label on them with a final destination, such as the:

- thrift store
- recycling depot
- garbage dump

Items that are in the pile for your next home should be boxed up, labelled on the top and sides and put in the designated storage area. Labelling a box on the sides helps to find it when they're stacked 5 high.

The only things remaining in your room should be things from Pile #1 (below), and an empty box of wine and main furniture pieces that will be use for staging/daily use.

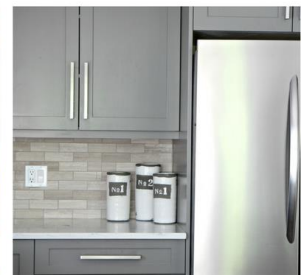
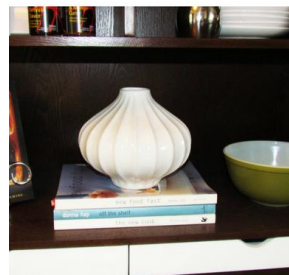
These piles would be broken down as follows:

PILE #1

Decor that you are keeping for staging and essentials

Now don't go all buck-wild—we don't want all of your wee little knick-knacks on full display – buyers generally don't want to see those things. Instead, we want a CAREFULLY curated and minimal collection of decoration, such as the following:

- **Plants:** Limit to three per room—you are trying to sell a home, not a personal jungle
- **Décor:** Keep some good pieces aside, dependent on the size of the room and the surfaces that you need to decorate. LESS is always MORE – remember, we're going for MASS appeal based on your target market. If your stuff is granny-chic or doesn't suit the target market, pack it away – having nothing on your shelf is better than having the wrong thing
- **Photos:** Don't go overboard on the family and personal photos. Although it's okay to have a few family photos (I mean, there *are* humans living in the house, obviously), you don't want to pay homage to your family, making potential buyers feel like they are intruding on YOUR family home
- **Essentials:** Things that you need on a daily basis—that absolutely CAN'T be put away in a closet, cupboard, or drawer



The above photo is just a small sampling of some simple décor that has mass appeal.

PILE #2

Decor, odds and ends, and items that are NOT essential for staging, but you want to keep

Decide which items you want to KEEP, but won't be used for home staging – these can be packed away for your next home. This includes décor items, artwork, smaller furniture pieces and items that are functional, but you don't anticipate needing in the next month or two.

- Remember, these items are only going away for now, not forever. Try to take the emotional attachment away as you decide what to use and what to pack
- Be literal when you label, such as “shoes and boots I don't wear very often.” This will save you a TON of time when you're unpacking or on the search for a one-off item

PILE #3

Decor, furniture, and odds and ends that can be donated, recycled, or sold

I find it easiest to put these items in boxes for easier transport. And I understand that larger furniture pieces can be hard to deal with, so if they need to stay where they are for a SHORT time, that's okay. Just be sure to start making a plan for getting them out of the house ASAP.

- Label the box according to its destination (such as “recycle depot” or “thrift store”) and place it near the exit in your chosen space (or in the trunk of your car)

PILE #4

Papers for recycling or filing

Most people need a spot specifically for paper and paper products that can be recycled or filed.

- Have one box/bag ready for recycle/shredding (or multiple boxes/bags if you have a lot)
- Have one (or more) box ready for papers that need to be filed

Once all of the decluttering and packing is done, your room should be relatively clear and ready for the next stage...

Cleaning and Fixing

This is one of the most IMPORTANT parts of your staging journey, so humor this crazy lil' Ginger and keep on reading...

Rather than flying around the house and hardware store mid-project, it's important that you have the right supplies on hand to get the job done. Of course, there may be bits n' pieces that you'll need to pick on a per-room basis, but this list should get you well on your way.

- Cleaning supplies (including Windex, microfiber cloths, duster, scrub brush, protective gloves)
- Q-tips n' bleach (trust me, it gets ugly)
- Magic Eraser (can work on tougher spots on walls and trims but needs to be wiped with a damp cloth afterward because it leaves a residue)
- Well-rounded tool kit

The Cleaning List: What to Do and Why

This is the down n' dirty of your cleaning list. **You will want to apply this to every room in your home**, focusing on the 5 key rooms first. This list is pretty specific so that you can understand the *what's n' why's*. Once we get into each room in the chapters that follow, I will also give you '*room specific cleaning list's*'. And rather than flipping back and forth, I'm going to summarize ALL of these lists at the end of this e-book so that you can print them out and cross things off.

And in any room, it's best to start at the top and work your way down, rather than doing a bit here and there. This way it will be harder to miss important details.

The General Cleaning List

CEILINGS

Check for cobwebs in corners and around the light fixture. Any stains? If so, you'll want to get your paint out and get to work. It can be hard to touch up surfaces like this, so assume that you'll have to do the entire ceiling. Buyers will see stains and the money ball will roll from there.

Why does this matter? Stains = leaks. Leaks = water penetration. Whether it's an old stain or a new one, you'll want to make sure that (a) the leak is fixed and (b) so is the evidence!

LIGHTING

Take the light fixture down and clean it. Contrary to popular belief, dead bugs are not a selling feature (this is also a good time to check that all bulbs are working and are the correct wattage).

Why does this matter? Every room should be lit to its HIGHEST potential rather than to its lowest.

WALLS

MOST homes have clean walls on the top half; it's the bottom 4' - 5' that take a beating. Grab a slightly damp cloth (microfiber works great) that has a VERY small amount of mild detergent/soap on it and wipe your walls from the 5' and down (or higher if your walls are quite bad).

Why does this matter? Because everyone notices dirty walls, particularly at the eyeball level.

TRIM AND MOULDING

Using the same damp cloth/soap routine, wipe down any door trim, window trim, and baseboards. Again, it's usually only the bottom 4' to 5' of the door trim that needs close attention.

Why does this matter? Paint colors look better when they are paired with a clean trim, and rooms look more updated.

DOORS

Wipe ALL doors, the whole door, and nothin' but the door! Concentrate your efforts more around the door handle where greasy lil' prints build up.

Why does this matter? Again, paint colors look their best when paired with clean-looking doors. It also makes the room look more updated.



In the photo of the hallway, you'll want to wipe trim and doors from where the arrow points and downward (and above if your trim/doors are REALLY dirty).

COVERS

Wipe the faceplate of any light switches or vents.

Why does this matter? This is where fingerprints and dust love to gather! If you don't have clean vents, it's likely that you don't maintain your heating/ventilation system either (so says the buyer...and me).

WINDOWS

Windex any windows (or use a water-and-vinegar mixture) on the inside and—weather permitting—outside.

Why does this matter? Whether your view is of the ocean, your cute neighbor who sunbathes in the nude, or a brick wall, you want any exterior light coming into the room to be crystal clear.

WINDOW CASINGS

If the window has buildup in the corners, use a Q-tip to dig it out. If the buildup includes mildew, create a bleach/water mixture to conquer the beast and help prevent future buildup.

Why does this matter? Mildew or mold is a sign of poor ventilation and/or old windows. Get those things sparkly clean without a whisper of dirt in sight! Even old windows can be acceptable to buyers if they are issue-free. On seeing buildup/mold, the buyers are mentally and financially putting new windows throughout the whole house.

FLOORING

This step should always be done last. And don't neglect these:

- **Corners:** Whether it's the bathroom or the living room, make sure that the corners are dust- and gunk-free (particularly in bathrooms and kitchens).
- **Stains:** Do EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER to get stains out of carpet. A great spot cleaner is Folex (white bottle, green writing).

- **Grout lines:** These should be a consistent color (dirt brown doesn't count...).

And of course, there are OTHER things that need to be cleaned, but we'll touch on those on a per-chapter basis, as well as in the summary at the end of this e-book.

Potential buyers will tend to think that if you're not taking care of the things they *can* see, then you're most assuredly not maintaining the things that they *can't* see, such as the ventilation system, inner plumbing, electrical and gutters. On the other hand, if you care about the *little* things, then you likely care about the *big* things too!

Summary

There is no use having a modern, well-staged home if it is dirty and things are broken. Many buyers will be immediately put off by a home that is even moderately dirty and won't pay attention to the things that are important, such as room size/layout/hard surfaces.

So, before you go any further, make sure that you do the following:

- ✓ Have all of your packing supplies ready.
- ✓ Have all of your cleaning supplies ready.
- ✓ Choose the main room that all of the piles will be made in so that you don't have small piles in EVERY room. Or at the very least, when you're done in a room, move those piles to the main large piles.
- ✓ Have a plan for where everything will end up: recycling, garbage, storage, donation.

And now that we've talked about the **5 key rooms**, the **5 main rules**, and the **cleaning and packing list**, we're going to start on your first room—the entryway!

Chapter 4

The Entryway

Whether you have an entryway the size of a small home or one that is virtually nonexistent, it's VITAL that the area directly inside your front door be in tip-top shape no matter WHAT size it is, and the FIRST step toward that is via decluttering.



In the above photo, everything is gorgeous – except for the dog and dog bed – definitely a no-no for home staging. I might also put a small sofa table at the end of the sectional to give some separation between the entryway and living room, which would define each space a bit more.

Declutter

Stand at your front door and take a look around. What do you see?

There's a good chance you're looking at a mix of shoes, jackets, and bags. And of course, these are things that you and your family use on a daily basis, but they won't do you ANY favors as far as making a good first impression of your home. However, they aren't the only issue.

Put your buyer's goggles on and take a look around. NOW what do you see? On closer inspection you might notice that the knob on the closet is loose, there's a cobweb around

the light fixture, and the back of the door is covered in fingerprints and some unidentifiable substance.

THIS is what a buyer sees. Your buyer sees not only the mix of shoes, jackets, and bags (which translates to a small entryway with not enough room to hold the basics) but ALSO the dirt and the everyday wear and tear, because, trust me...THEY ARE ALWAYS LOOKING.

With first impressions in mind, we want to make sure that your entryway is a *wink* toward what buyers can expect to find in the rest of the home: a clean, organized and well-maintained space.



Use the tips suggested in Chapter 3 to help you declutter...

Clarify Use—Basic Staging

Now that your entryway is decluttered and you've cleaned and fixed things, we want to look at the basic staging elements of the room. These basic items are the bare minimum that a room needs to look its best (size-dependent).

The Basics for a Small Entryway

- An entryway mat that is perfectly clean and reasonably modern – it will be the first thing the buyer steps on!
- A mirror or piece of artwork (or 2)
- A small row of hooks that have nothing more than a pretty scarf or hat hanging on them
- A small bench or chair if there is room
- A console/accent table or small chest of drawers (space allowing)
- A table lamp (if there's an accent table)
- A well-organized and functional closet with only the necessities in it



The Basics for an Average or Large Entryway

- An entryway mat that is perfectly clean
- A mirror or piece of artwork (or 2)
- A small row of hooks that have nothing more than a pretty scarf or hat hanging on them
- A bench or chair, layout allowing
- An accent table or console table (30"–34" h)
- A lamp and basic decor on the table
- A decorative basket/container for umbrellas and whatnot
- A well-organized and functional closet with only the necessities in it



Now, your entryway doesn't need to have ALL of these things, but it should have NO MORE than these things.

DID YOU KNOW?

When buyers see a shoe rack (whether it's full or not) they assume that there isn't enough storage in the entryway. If there WERE enough storage, there would be no rack – makes sense, right?

And while I know it's easier for you to leave your and your kids' shoes accessible, when it comes time to sell your home, they need to be tucked away SOMEWHERE.

Oh, you don't HAVE an entryway closet? The LAST thing you want to do is point this out to buyers via a shoe rack (or overly stuffed coat hooks). Shoes will have to be relocated to a discrete place, even if it's inconvenient for daily use.

Tip: Buy a bench that has storage in it (no exposed cubbies, but a lift-top or drawer) and use this for the everyday shoes.



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Fix It

There are usually a few offenders in the entryway when it comes to broken items. Check this list to make sure that everything is in working order:

- **Light fixture.** Make sure that the light fixture not only works, but that it's holding the right amount of bulbs/wattage. I've been to MANY homes where their 2-light fixture has only 1 measly bulb. Light and bright is vital!
- **Closet doors.** Are the doors squeak-free and moving smoothly? Is the knob wobbly or tarnished?
- **Door sweep.** Is the door sweep in perfect condition (not cracked or covered in dirt/rust/old paint)?



Clean It - Entryway Specific

In chapter 3 you were given the main cleaning list with all of the dirty details. Here is your bullet-point list specific to the entryway:

- Grout (if you have tile flooring)
- Door transition (make sure that it's not all scuffed up and full of gravel bits)
- Railings

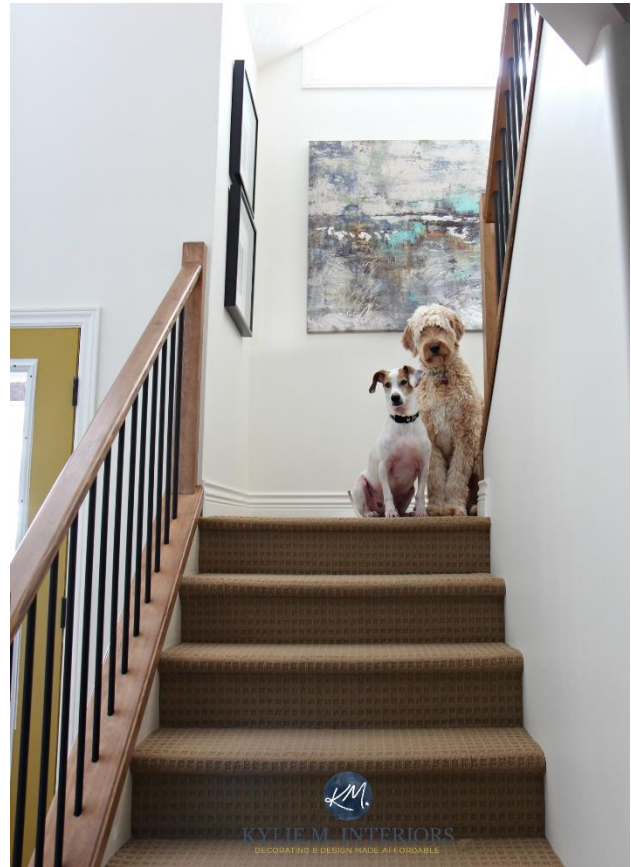
And for just a moment, let's talk about smell.

There is a chance that your home has a particular smell that is *unique to you*; if so, I'd suggest that you diffuse this slightly with a scented candle or with an EXTREMELY inoffensive air freshener.

Floral scents are usually off-putting and slightly nauseating for the average buyer. Find a natural product with a subtle scent (in other words, I'm anti-chemical air freshener).

If you are unaware of whether your home has a strong scent, like "ode de la cat litter" or "smoke a la king," ask your realtor. A good realtor will tell you the truth. Or 1 or 2 brutally honest friends, but don't be too offended when they say yes...they're just trying to help you sell your home!

If you have dogs, like the 2 homely Muppets to the right (who happen to be mine), then be sure to air the rooms out before potential buyers arrive.



Summary

You won't get a second chance to make a first impression, so make sure it's a good one! Whether it's integrated into a living space or a room unto itself, the entryway should look clean, SMELL clean and be free of any clutter – even if it makes your life uncomfortable for a few weeks.

Chapter 5

The Living Room and Dining Room

Why do I have these rooms together? Well there are 2 reasons.

Of all of the rooms that we're focusing on, the dining room is perhaps the **EASIEST** room to fit on the to-do list, mostly because it's usually a controlled space with minimal function other than a table and chairs (famous last words, I know...).

Declutter

Stand at the entrance to your room and take a look around. What do you see?



You probably see an assortment of furniture, most of it needed—some of it not. You might also see a mantel or buffet/hutch full of knick-knacks and treasures that, while adding to the personality of your home, also place *YOUR* personality on your home.

We need generic. Homey, but generic.

You want your buyers to see the beautiful fireplace, the view, the layout, and how easy it would be to socialize and hang out. You want them to see the pathways in and out of the room and any of the room's architectural features. You DON'T want them to see your kid's school photos from K-12 and your remote control collection.



Now take a look at this room (I'm a bossy lil' thang, I know). This is the SAME room from the beginning of this chapter. We spent **ZERO dollars** and it looks 10x better simply by taking out unnecessary items and paying attention to the details!

As you move things out, here's what you need to pay attention to:

- **Main furniture pieces** (explained in the "Basics" lists below): These can stay in the room, although be prepared to move them around for the sake of cleaning and creating the best layout.
- **Necessary items:** Of which there shouldn't be many in a living or dining room (other than the basics listed below).
- **Decor to put back in the room:** Items that are simple and attractive and that suit the room and its furnishings/style (put your decorator goggles on for this one).

- **Decor and other items that are ugly, overkill, or unnecessary.** Again, put those goggles on and try to figure out what is outdated, unnecessary, or just plain ole fugly. From this pile you can decide which items to keep and pack or donate or sell; just make sure that they don't make their way back into the room!
- **Extra furniture:** You don't want your room to be overstuffed, so be sure to take away any random chairs and tables that don't fit into the main layout.

So, based on the tips in chapter 3, you'd better get packin' my friend!

It is ALWAYS easier to decorate with a sofa and 2 chairs than it is with a sofa and loveseat.

If you want to save money, keep your sofa and buy 2 coordinating chairs to update your look.

simple update



KYLIE M. INTERIORS
DECORATING & DESIGN MADE AFFORDABLE

Clarify Use - Basic Staging

When it comes to depersonalizing and staging the living room, it's about getting back to basics. We want to show buyers [how they would live in this room](#), whether it's enjoying the beautiful fireplace or relaxing with an ocean view. Whatever it is, you want your layout to be a clear definition of what happens in that space.

Of course, every living room is different, but this list should give you a good general idea of the main pieces that should be in your room. **EVERYTHING else should be packed in the appropriate pile/box and gone.**

The Basics for the Living Room

- Sofa and loveseat (or just sofa) or sectional couch
- Accent chairs (1 min/2 max)
- Coffee table or ottoman
- Side tables—one on either side of the sofa/1 beside or between accent chairs
- Area rug on hard-surface flooring
- Bookcase
- Basic decor
- TV and TV stand
- Matching table lamps
- Minor decor



The above photo is a GREAT example of some simple home staging, which is easy to say as the furniture and décor are all trendy and have mass appeal. However, even outdated furniture will look better with minimal clutter and simply decorated surfaces (I would just take the piles of magazines off of the coffee table).

The Basics for the Dining Room

It's usually not as hard to get back to basics in the dining room (unless you have it set up as an office, which definitely gets you a spankin' with a wet noodle in my book).



- Dining table—shown to its best potential. If you have a small dining room, 4 to 6 seats should do. If you have a large dining room, be sure to put the leaf in and show it at its capacity (8–10).
- Buffet and hutch (if you have one)
- Area rug (if you have one and it suits the room)
- Basic décor and artwork

If you have a round table with 4 chairs (dining room or eating nook), rather than placing the chairs at 12:00 / 3:00 / 6:00 / 9:00, try placing them at 1:30 / 4:30 / 7:30 / 10:30. This creates a more welcoming and open look.

fun tip



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So that covers the main pieces that should be in your room—now you need to know where to put them! We'll get to figuring out the best layout for your room, but FIRST...you need to find the room's focal point.

What Is a Focal Point?

It is usually the first thing you notice when you walk into a room. It is also what you should arrange your furniture around.



Photo via Jen Wynia Photography

Now that you've cleared the room of miscellaneous crapola (super-technical term), you should be able to spot the focal point, such as:

- Fireplace
- View outside the window (a beautiful backyard is a worthy focal point!)
- Feature wall of some sort

And if you don't have any of the above...

- Entertainment unit
- Shelving unit
- Artwork

In the photo with the large clock, the 'idea' is great as it creates a striking focal point in a room with no fireplace or TV. However, there is a bit too much home décor going on. As well, notice how the chair on the left makes the right side feel unbalanced and a bit empty in comparison.



Once you've established your focal point, you need to position your furniture to flow around it by creating a simple furniture layout. The reality is that while every room has its best layout (or 2), homeowners don't always have the right furniture to accommodate this layout.

This is a problem.

For example:

If you have a sectional in your too-small living room and it looks crammed in, there is NO amount of staging that will make it fit.

If you have a sofa and a loveseat and your room feels blocked in, there MAY NOT be a fix short of keeping the sofa, getting RID of the loveseat and buying 2 chairs (because a sofa and 2 chairs is always easier to work with).

So, what do you do?

Well, you do the BEST you can with what you have using these tips...

LAYOUT TIP #1: The longest piece of furniture (usually the sofa) should go on the longest wall space

If you don't have a long wall space and have open space, this piece of furniture should be placed in the space that is least likely to block the view from adjoining rooms.



If you can't avoid blocking a room, choose the space/wall that is NOT viewed from the entryway. We want the buyers' first impression to be that of a wide-open space!

You'll also want to try to center the sofa on the focal point, a wall or in front of a window (if it's an overly long wall, it doesn't apply). If your sofa is off-center from something it could EASILY be centered on, the room will feel off-whack.

In both photos, notice how the sofas are centered on the windows. And while you can't see from this angle, the other sofas are also centered on the focal points (fireplaces) – PERFECT!



Before: This room was a bit awkward and felt blocked off. The sheer drapes filtered the natural light too much and made the room look fussy and out-dated.



After: Having spent ZERO dollars, we made the room feel bigger and brighter with a better furniture placement and a more subtle drapery application.

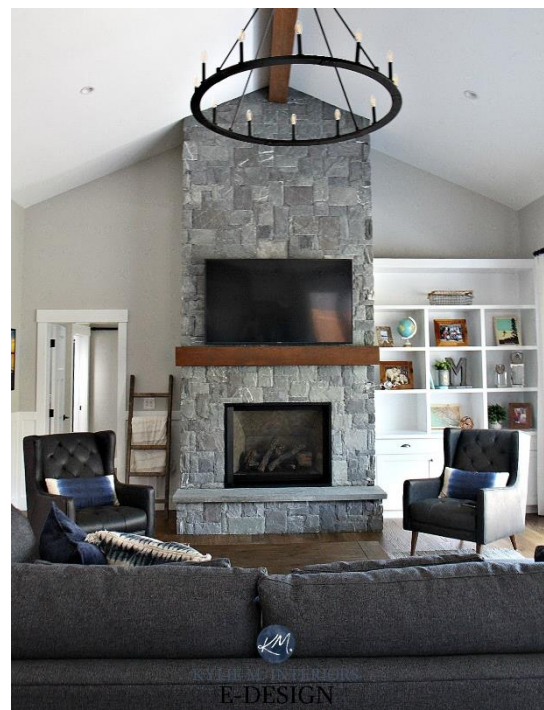
Sure, in the ideal world, the area rug would've been larger and we would've had a more traditional coffee table (glass to reflect light). However, with spending no money and working with what she had - we did great!

LAYOUT TIP #2: It's all about balance

Based on your focal point, you'll want to divide your room into 4 quadrants (ie, relatively equal squares). By the time you are done placing your furniture, the visual balance of your quadrants should be similar.

Now, it's not always easy to obtain this balance, but do the best you can with what you have, while allowing for passageways in and out of the room. You'll find it easier to create balance with a sofa and 2 chairs compared to a sofa and a loveseat as a loveseat ALWAYS feels off-balance compared to the sofa (putting side tables with the loveseat can help a lot).

In the photo of the living room with the stone fireplace, notice how the 2 chairs are



balanced on either side of the fireplace and the main furniture piece is facing the fireplace – which is the focal point of the room.

LAYOUT TIP #3: Think about your pathways

Figure out the main pathways in your room, that is, how you get in and out of it.

Pathways are typically, between pieces of furniture and behind dining chairs. In a typical-size room, each pathway should be approximately 3'-wide). In an ideal world, there would be at least 4' feet going into and out of the room—or MORE if possible, particularly if it's a main passageway!

And you'll want to think about pathways in every room – including the living room, dining room and even bedrooms!

In the photo on the right, notice how there is a clear walkway from the entryway into the dining area and there is a minimum of 36" behind the dining chairs. Also notice how the artwork on the end wall draws you in, creating a focal point of sorts.



LAYOUT TIP #4: If you have laminate or wood flooring, you NEED an area rug

I've YET to meet a living room with laminate/wood flooring that looks good without a rug. Otherwise, furniture looks like it's floating on an ocean of flooring with nothing to anchor it.

And don't be afraid to put an area rug on your carpet, particularly if you have a tightly woven carpet. Adding an area rug with a bit more pile can really define a social area.

(Thicker carpets aren't as easy to put area rugs on as the rugs won't lay as flat).



While the above living room should have fewer family photos in it for home staging, the general palette and layout is fantastic. I might just switch out the toss cushions for NON-shiny ones as there's a bit too much reflection going on there.

Fix It

There aren't too many problem areas in living and dining rooms, but here's a few to check for just in case...

- **The fireplace.** Is it working? If not, invest in a repairman. You don't want to sell a home with a broken fireplace – it's an important FEATURE of your home.
- **Light fixtures/ceiling fan:** Are all of the light bulbs working? Are they the correct wattage for the fixture?
- **Flooring:** Does your wood floor have any scrapes or damage? If so, then this is the time to get some wood filler or a stain pen and get things tidied up! Stains on the carpet? Rent a carpet cleaner or at the very least do some EPIC spot cleaning



Clean It – Living Room Specific

With the basic pieces in place, it should be easier to see where you've got buildup and maintenance to take care of. With the top-down method in mind (keep your shirts on ladies), here's a quick room-specific list for you (the living room doesn't need much).

- Fireplace glass cleaned
- Fireplace dusted/cleaned out

Read more...

[How to Update your Fireplace – 5 Easy Ideas](#)

[3 Home Staging Ideas – How to Decorate for Mass Appeal](#)

Chapter 6

The Kitchen

The kitchen is one of the deal breakers, if not THE deal breaker, when buying a home. If the kitchen isn't in good functional (and hopefully aesthetic) condition, you can REALLY sacrifice the chance of a sale, or at the very least, GREATLY affect the perceived value of the home.

Declutter

This is often one of the larger projects because many people's kitchens are completely overwhelmed with products. Get some boxes and get packin'!



The first step to decluttering the kitchen is to sit down and make a list of the things that are ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL to your daily survival in the kitchen (other than the obvious fixtures such as stove/sink/wine/etc...).

In an ideal world, this would be:

- some pretty canisters
- a bowl of fruit
- a plant or small floral display, much like the previous image
- a nice-looking coffee maker or toaster...maybe

However, in the real world, which is chock-full of blenders, toasters, and all manner of gadgets, it can be hard to get things down to the minimum and **STILL** have a functional kitchen. The average home often has a combination of the following on its countertops:

- Toaster or toaster oven
- Blender and/or mixer
- Cutting board(s)
- Knife block
- Canisters
- Coffee maker
- Another coffee maker
- Miscellaneous bowls holding everything from buns n' bread to fruit n' nuts
- Paperwork/recipes
- Random food boxes, bags and bins



Is this a kitchen you'd like to invest in?

Which is why we're going to do this next bit in steps...

STEP 1

Go through your cupboards and take out doubles and triples—for example, strainers, mixing bowls, rice cookers, woks—and get down to the basics of each item again.

Also, box up things that you don't use on AT LEAST a monthly basis.

Don't justify, don't make excuses, just PURGE PURGE PURGE. It's not going away forever; it will be going in a well-labeled box that will be easy to get to IN CASE you need it—which you probably won't.

- Those Christmas platters? Unless it's Christmastime, you don't need them
- Your 60 coffee mugs? Pack 'em or ditch 'em. If you need more than 8 mugs then you are running a coffee shop and that's a whole different e-book
- 3 pots of the same size? If you're Betty Crocker, by all means, keep your pots n' pans. If you're not, get down to 1-2 of each size (as needed for your household)

These 2 kitchens below look clean and ready to be sold!



Even by focusing solely on your main lower cabinets, by the time you are done you will inevitably have freed up some valuable real estate.

Not to mention, by now, your kitchen ‘piles’ should be quite well-developed! At which point, we move onto Step 2...

STEP 2

Pack in a well-labeled box those items you no longer need but want to keep. Put the things you don’t need in the pile for charity/garage sale.

STEP 3

The main goal with steps one and two is to **free up 1 cupboard**—just...one...cupboard (or more if you’re really gung-ho). That 1 cupboard space is where you will house ALLL of the things that are currently on your kitchen countertop that you feel you need on a relatively regular basis. Remember, these are the things that YOU need but DON’T want buyers to see.

Sticking things in random drawers and cupboards here and there will drive you batty if your home doesn’t sell quickly. Putting all of those main items in 1 cupboard makes them easy to find AND easier to put away.

Now it’s time to consolidate. Move things around to try and free up some space for those countertop items to should be hidden.

I try to be a realist when I’m advising clients on home staging - I really do (at least some of the time), however, **there’s a fine line between living your comfortable daily life and selling your home.** You might need to go out of your comfort zone to get your home in top selling condition. I mean, keep your sanity, but when it comes to showings, consider leaving the following on the countertop:

- A bowl of fruit (apples, lemons, limes are usually the best; bananas, not so much)
- Coffee maker (in the least obtrusive corner)



- Pretty canisters (which can hide any number of storage sins)
- Mixer (only because it's so freakin' huge that it can be hard to rehome), but only if you need it on a VERY regular basis
- Toaster—again, only if it's needed daily
- An attractive wood cutting board
- NO dish soap in an original plastic bottle (decorative dispensers are good)
- NO dishcloths
- NO blenders or knife blocks



In the above photo, if the crockpot were put away, it would be a lovely, clean countertop surface for home staging! I mean, I might add a little greenery in the right corner for some life, and jazz up those glass cabinets with coordinated dishware, and...okay, I'm anal and a little over-the-top, I'll admit it. Really though, sometimes it's just about getting things '*a little more than good enough*' when you have a busy life, limited budget and are doing the best you can with what you have.

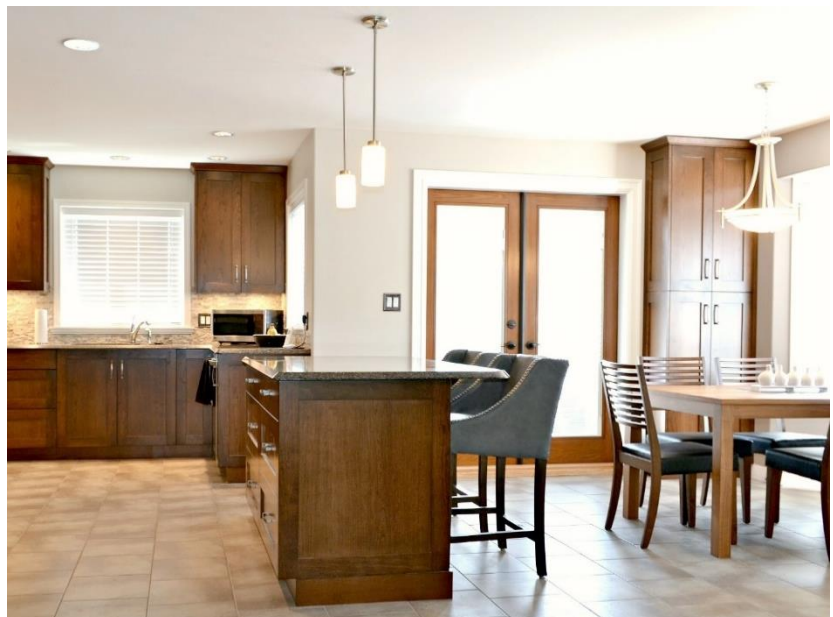


Clarify Use - Basic Staging

When it comes to clarifying use in the kitchen it's pretty straightforward because all of the main features are already set in place, including some of the decorative/functional items named above.

What you want buyers to see is how NICE the kitchen is to work in, which relates directly to its cleanliness and counter space.

- If you have a countertop with an overhang of more than 8" make sure that you have a few stools at it.



- If you have a microwave on the countertop, make sure that it's in the least obtrusive spot, ideally an inside corner rather than an open end.



Fix It

It's important that everything in the kitchen be in top-notch working order. Here's a list of things to check.

- **Hardware.** All cabinet hardware should be firmly attached, no wiggly handles or hinges
- **Appliances.** All appliances should be working—even the stove light!
- **Plumbing.** No leaky faucets (check the faucet itself as well as under the sink).
- **Light fixtures/ceiling fan.** Are all of the light bulbs working? Are they the correct wattage for the fixture?
- **Flooring.** Check vinyl or linoleum for edges that are peeling up (and if so, get the right glue and stick 'em down).
- **Cabinet doors.** If any of the cabinet doors aren't hanging quite level, try adjusting the hinges to straighten them out

KYLIE M'S

RED FLAGS in the KITCHEN



Countertops full of small appliances, food boxes and misc. (shows lack of storage)

Cabinet doors falling off

Old stained appliances. Old clean appliances give a better first impression

Linoleum that is peeling up or tiles that have popped up

 KYLIE M. INTERIORS
DECORATING & DESIGN MADE AFFORDABLE

Clean It – Kitchen Specific

It's a toss-up as to whether the kitchen or the bathroom is the most important room for cleanliness—let's call it a draw. In both of these spaces it is 100% vital that everything be wiped down, polished, and as clean as it can possibly get. **Remember: *It's easier to forgive a clean outdated home than a modern filthy one.***

- Cabinets. Make sure to wipe down the cabinets using a cloth with a small amount of detergent on it. Focus your efforts around the handles and knobs, where most of the buildup from oily fingers lives. The sink cabinet is also one that takes a beating, so pay extra attention to it

- Appliances. Whether you have white, black, or stainless steel, use the appropriate cleaner and give everything a GOOD initial wipe-down—get in all of the nooks n’ crannies. This is something that will need to be done on a somewhat daily basis (or as you have showings). And don’t forget the glass on the oven door!
- Sink and faucet. If you have a stainless-steel sink, it should absolutely sparkle! Find a stainless-steel–friendly abrasive cleaner and get right into it and buff it to a shine. The faucet should be equally as shiny
- Flooring. If you have tile floor, it is ALLL about the grout. Your grout should be 1 consistent color throughout (unfortunately, dirt-brown doesn’t count as a consistent color)

Despite the many grout cleaners out there, SOMETimes things just won’t come clean, in which case I’m a BIG fan of grout paint. This is a product that basically paints/stains grout a fresh new color and seals it at the same time.

Read more...

[*Update Cabinets with Hardware that is Budget Friendly*](#)

[*Top 4 Ideas to Update Your Kitchen on a Budget*](#)

[*The New Era of Laminate Countertops and Why They Rock*](#)

Chapter 7

The Master Bedroom

Even though the master bedroom is a room that guests don't see a lot of (unlike the other key rooms), it is the room that home buyers put a lot of value in—after all, they are spending a LOT of time in there!

Declutter

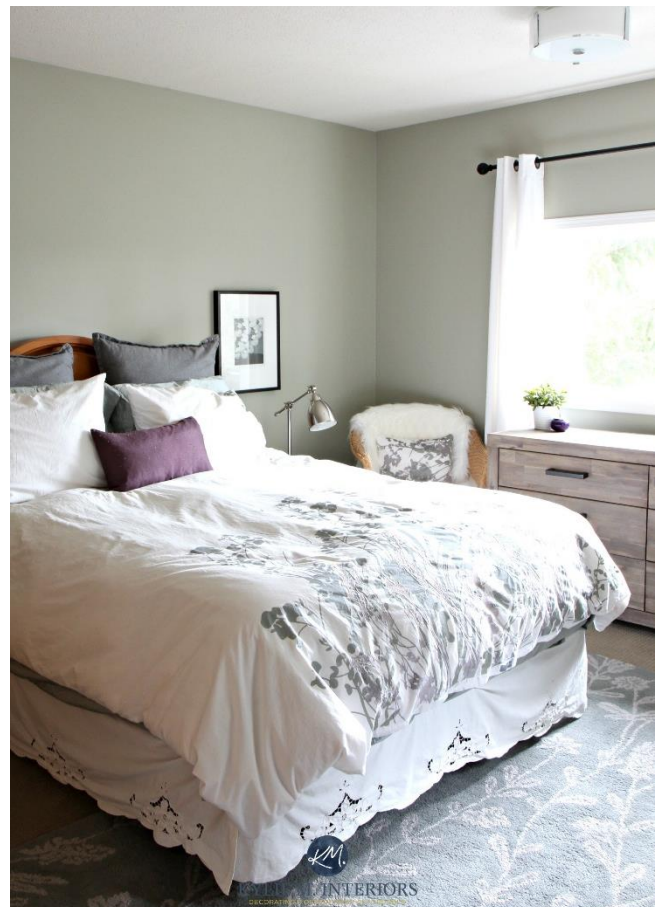
When it comes to the master bedroom it is ALLLL about de-personalizing. There shouldn't be one wink of personal items viewable. **Why?** Because bedrooms are highly personal spaces and are often the room that buyers have the hardest time visualizing themselves in.

You want to give them a blank slate, a hotel-room appeal, in other words, a room that they could pop their suitcase down in and set up shop without feeling like they are intruding on someone else's domain.

Items that are taboo in the bedroom

So, while you may need your ear plugs, white noise machine, hand cream, and glass of water to get a good night's sleep, buyers will be put off by these items and more...

- Family photos
- Medicines
- How-to books
- Exposed jewelry (it's just a bad idea)
- Dressing gowns and slippers
- Clothing on the back of the door
- Laundry basket with clothing in it



- A box of extra-large condoms (true story)

And just like with the other rooms, you'll want to break things down into piles—keep and use, keep and pack, donate, sell, and throw away.



Clarify Use—Basic Staging

It's pretty straight-forward what happens in the bedroom, right? SLEEPING (you dirty bird...). We want the bedroom, regardless of size, to be a beacon of comfort and ease. Simple, clutter-free, and inviting.



Here are some basic guidelines to get you in the right direction:

- Make sure that it LOOKS like it can accommodate the largest bed possible with 2 side tables and a dresser
- The bed should be centered on the wall if possible; off-center usually looks wonky unless it's a really large room that has more than one function (ie, sleeping area/sitting area with 2 chairs)
- The side tables should match or at LEAST be of the same height
- There needs to be 2 table lamps and they should match—end of story
- There should be at least 1 dresser (either a long one or tall one) that fits comfortably on a wall space without impeding the flow to the closet/bathroom/sides of the bed

As for dressing the bed, you'll want to look at these following pieces as the bare minimum:

- A neutral bedcover that is the right size for the bed (no queen-size covers on king-size beds, which I've seen SOO many times!)
- No ugly exposed box springs—at least cover it with a bed skirt/fitted sheet
- No stained bedding or bedding covered in any kind of pet hair
- Pillow shams should match the bed cover
- No mismatched sheet sets—If the pillowcases match the sheets, make sure that the sheet is folded over the bed cover so that the pillows match up to it. The photos below are all GREAT examples of well-staged bedrooms!



The Basics in the Bedroom

These are the acceptable items in a bedroom (vital pieces in italics):

- *The bed* and any headboard/footboard
- *Side tables*
- *Table lamps*
- Generic books (no Kama Sutra or self-help)
- A clock
- *1 to 2 dressers*
- *Artwork/mirror*
- *Small-scale decor*
- Accent chair or bench (if it fits)
- Fake or real flowers/plants if you're committed to keeping them alive and fresh
- Empty, attractive laundry basket

The Closet

And of course, there's the closet. This is always a tough one. At this point in your staging adventure, you're probably getting tired and the thought of decluttering your closet, which is quite likely JAM-packed with clothing and shoeboxes, is enough to have you twitching in the corner, so I'm going to be a bit kind here.

The bare minimum for the physically and mentally exhausted:

- Make sure that the floor area is COMPLETELY clear—no laundry baskets, piles of clothes, shoes, or boxes
- Make sure that clothes are hanging evenly and aren't rammed-jammed in like sardines. A little bit of room to breathe is a good thing
- No dressing gowns or personal items hanging on the closet doors

See? I can be nice (wink wink).

HOWEVER, if you have a bit more time:

- pack away any out-of-season clothing

- take away any boxes on upper shelves (including shoeboxes)
- color-coordinate your clothing (wishful thinking courtesy of my anal self)



KYLIE M'S

RED FLAGS

in the
BEDROOM

A single or double bed - buyers will think that's all that can fit

Ceiling or floor stains

Clothing hanging on doors or anywhere BUT the closet. Maybe the closet isn't BIG enough??

Too much furniture blocking the traffic flow (makes the room look smaller)



KYLIE M. INTERIORS

DESIGNING & STYLING YOUR HOME

Fix It

There shouldn't be a LOT to do in the bedroom and closet with regard to fixing (time for a nap, perhaps? NO WAY!).

- **Light fixtures/ceiling fan.** Are all of the light bulbs working? Are they the correct wattage for the fixture?
- **Closet doors.** Are the knobs tight and does the door open easily without scraping or squealing?

Clean It – Master Bedroom Specific

- Bed linens. I cannot stress this enough. Bedding holds smells, lots n' lots of 'personal' smells that you might not even notice anymore



I know some comforters are so huge that you have to go to a dry cleaner, but unless you are an exceptionally clean person or have done it quite recently, it's probably a good idea. Fresh linens make a room smell fresh and it just feels good!

Chapter 8

The Bathroom

You maybe have noticed that I didn't specify WHICH bathroom. There are a few reasons for this...

1. Many homes don't have an ensuite/master bathroom, so the label wouldn't apply.
2. Some homes have both a main bath and a master bath (among others), and one of those bathrooms might be more important than the other based on layout/size/updates/etc.
3. Ideally...I would like to see you apply these ideas to ALL of your bathrooms (I am a tyrant, I know).



Declutter

If you aren't a collector of lotions, shampoos, and bottles n' such, then decluttering should be pretty straightforward. However, if you have a lot of personal items both in your cupboards and on your countertop, you've got some purging to do!



Items that are taboo in the bathroom

- Toothbrushes
- Makeup, hairbrushes, and other personal items
- Gross toilet brushes
- Full garbage cans
- Miscellaneous assortment of shampoos and soaps in the tub/shower
- Anything hanging on the back of the door or over the shower door
- Any form of carpet on the toilet lid or around the toilet. Please, for the love of all things sacred and sanitary—no carpet!

Get a small box/storage container and put all of your 'necessary' countertop and shower items in it. This way it's easy to pull out, pack up and put away as needed.

tidy



KYLIE M. INTERIORS
DECORATING & DESIGN MADE AFFORDABLE

STEP 1

Just like with the kitchen, go through your cupboards and have a garbage bag and a box handy. Throw away/recycle the items that are no longer good. Box up the things that you want to keep but that you don't need on a regular basis.

STEP 2

Clear a space in the cupboards specifically for the items that are currently living on your countertop. Again, if you put a bit here and a bit there, you'll drive yourself crazy, but if everything you need is in one spot, your life will be much easier.

Clarify Use—Basic Staging

Well, I don't know what *YOU* do in the bathroom, but I know what *I* do in the bathroom...




KYLIE M. INTERIORS
DECORATING & DESIGN MADE AFFORDABLE

I'm a HUGE fan of white towels, particularly for staging a home. However, as shown in the bathroom above, a well-placed accent colour can work just as well!

And we want to make this as simple for buyers as possible.

- The towel rack should have 1 or 2 nicely folded bath towels on it (preferably white).
- There should be a hand towel near the sink, either hung on a ring, folded over a countertop holder, or folded on the countertop.
- The toilet paper roll should be at least ½ full.
- Although a bath mat is necessary when you USE the bathroom, this item is rarely pleasant to look at and I'm inclined to fold it up and tuck it under the sink. If you have a nice, well-coordinated bath mat, then lay it over the edge of the tub. If you only have a shower, put the mat away.
- If there are hooks on the back of the bathroom door, they should be empty.

The Basics in the Bathroom

Regardless of whether you are a glam gal or you prefer the bare-bones approach, there should be no personal items on your countertop.

Now are you ready for the big list of what is allowed?

- A decorative soap dispenser (no slimy soap in a dish)
- A few decorative items such as a floral display (real or fake)
- A hand towel either laid out nicely on the countertop or over a towel ring
- Artwork (minimal)
- Towels hanging
- Decorative body wash in the tub shower or NICE shampoo/conditioner



Yup...that's it.

Fix It

Like the kitchen, this is an important room with regard to function.

- Plumbing. No leaky faucets (check the faucet itself as well as under the sink). Make sure that the tub/shower faucets aren't leaking and are properly attached to the wall.
- Light fixtures. Are all of the light bulbs working? Are they the correct wattage for the fixture?
- Flooring. Check vinyl or linoleum for edges that are peeling up (and if so, get the right glue and stick 'em down).
- Cabinet doors. If any of the cabinet doors aren't hanging quite level, try and adjust the hinges to straighten them out.
- Caulking. You'll want to check EVERYwhere that there's caulking, including:
 - ✓ at the base of the tub where it meets the floor. Make sure there's clean caulking in good shape and not cracked old grout.
 - ✓ where the tub meets the shower wall as well as the corners. There should be no black stains/mildew in this area—a sure sign of moisture OR maintenance issues. If this is just maintenance (ie, caulking that simply needs to be redone because it's old), then you're all good. However, if there are underlying issues, then that's a whole different ball game and you DON'T want to be just covering that up.



- ✓ around the toilet and sink. This caulking can get yellowed and dried out over time. Be sure to apply fresh caulking that coordinates with the color of your fixtures (white or almond usually).



KYLIE M'S

RED FLAGS in the BATHROOM

- Baseboards around the tub/shower that have moisture damage
- Walls with a lot of drips/moisture on them
- Ceiling that is peeling or has mildew/stains on it
- Stains around the toilet (bleach)
- Any mildew/mould around the tub/shower surround and tile

 KYLIE M. INTERIORS
RECONSTRUCTING & DESIGN MADE AFFORDABLE

Clean It – Bathroom Specific

- **Cabinets.** Wipe down the cabinets using a cloth with a small amount of detergent on it. Focus your efforts around the handles and knobs, where most of the buildup from oily fingers lives. The sink cabinet is also one that takes a beating, so pay extra attention to it.

- **Sink and all plumbing fixtures.** Spit-polished (non-toothpaste spit of course)
- **Tile.** The colour of your grout, whether it's on the floor or around the shower, should be consistent throughout (remember, dirt brown doesn't count as a consistent color).
- **Fan.** You'd be amazed at how many people look at the ceiling fan. First, they want to make sure that the bathroom *has* one, and second, if it's clogged up it won't be venting the room well and the walls will likely pay the price.
- **AND OF COURSE...the tub, shower, and toilet.** These should be shiny and in next-to-new shape—no stains or grimy buildup (or hair).



Read more...

[*Bathroom Update Ideas – High End Ideas, Low End Prices*](#)

[*3 Tips – Add Style to a Small Bathroom*](#)

Chapter 9

Smart Money

When it comes time to sell, it's about smart money. What is smart money? It is money that works for you by:

- fixing what is wrong—things that detract from the value of your home
- improving on what is there without going further than is necessary based on the target market/overall condition of your home
- showing a room to it's best potential and downplaying its flaws.

And smart money is definitely one of the harder things to figure out. Let me give you some examples...

EXAMPLE 1: *“Adding quartz/granite countertops to my old kitchen, bathroom or laundry room will add to the value of my home.”*

If you are living in an older home with older cabinets that are okay but not fabulous, you might be thinking of updating them with a nice granite or quartz countertop. And while these countertops can often improve a space, they can also look out of place when paired with cabinets that aren't quite at the same level, and can in fact **HIGHLIGHT** the things that are outdated and in need of replacement. You want everything to more or less to be at the same level.

Main Point: Brand-spanking-new, high-end expenditures can make outdated things look even **MORE** so in comparison. If a room needs to be completely updated, then it needs to be *completely* updated, and one high-end fix will not change that. There **ARE** exceptions to this, but don't just assume that the money you spend on countertops will come back in your pocket at sale time.



EXAMPLE 2: *“I’m going to replace my old carpet with new carpet.”*

This is one I come across a lot. If you have old carpet in the main living areas and want to replace it with NEW carpet, there is a VERY good chance that it will be a waste of money. Why? Because most people are choosing wood surfaces, such as laminate, engineered, and hardwood flooring. Your new carpet won’t necessarily be seen as a selling feature but rather as something that just needs to be pulled up.



In bedrooms and some secondary areas, yes, it can be an improvement to install new carpet if the existing carpet is old, outdated, or stained, but in the main living areas it’s best to leave what is there OR replace it with a product that buyers actually want to see (and remember, just because you like having carpet in your dining room doesn’t mean your buyers will!).

EXAMPLE 3: *“I’m going to put fresh flowers in every room.”*

There’s never a shortage of fresh flowers in magazines and on decorating shows; however, this can be an expensive effort.

Now if you are in a market where things are just FLYING, then fresh flowers are a great choice because they'll probably be alive for longer than your home is on the market!

Otherwise, there's a few reasons why I'm not a believer in fresh flowers...

1. They die. Flowers usually need to be replaced within one week and need to be kept in tip-top condition (because nobody wants to see dead or dying ones!).
2. They are expensive. Unless you have a flower garden, shop, or go on midnight excursions to steal your neighbors' flowers, this can be a costly thing to maintain.
3. Traditional flower arrangements can be TERRIBLE! You need to pick modern flowers, not arrangements that are fresh off the burial plot. Carnations? Roses? Not a chance. You'll want to look at (of course) the more expensive flowers, such as lilies and orchids.
4. Some people have allergies/sensitivities and might not be so thrilled with your floral scent or the pollen.



If you want to add some life—add a plant! What I'm trying to say is that you need to think with your target market in mind. Do your research. What's trending these days? What are they into? This way, if you HAVE to spend money, at least you're spending it on the *right* things.

What *are* some of the right things when it comes to resale? Let's take a look...

Spending Smart Money in Home Staging

Remember, this is not the frilly, fancy, magazine-ready type of staging; this is the “let's keep it real” type of staging that applies to the majority of the population.

Light Fixtures

The only fixtures in your home that should hold one bulb should be table lamps, pendants, and the light over your sink.

If you have a fixture in your entryway, bedroom, closet, random room, or hallway that holds ONLY 1 LIGHT BULB, you should [get a new fixture](#).

Let's look at some minimums...

Hallways: The average hallway needs a fixture that holds two, if not three, 60w bulbs (or the comparable LED).

Bedrooms: The average bedroom needs a fixture that holds a minimum of three 60w bulbs.

Closets: Walk-in closets need fixtures that hold a minimum of two 60w bulbs.

Entryway: Brighter is almost ALWAYS better—I'd be going with three 60w bulbs. Worst case scenario, it's too bright so you take it down to 40w.

Larger rooms such as the family room or living room: Definitely three 60w bulbs minimum.

Really, I can't even BEGIN to tell you how important lighting is—so do a walk-around and see if your fixtures are up to par.

TIP: The best replacement lights are the round, flush-mount bowls (no boobly lights allowed!). They have 3 clips that hold the shallow bowl onto the base and accommodate either two or three 60w bulbs. These can often be found in contractor packs at places like Home Depot for an average of \$10 to \$20 per light.



Read more...

[Budget Friendly Lighting Update Ideas](#)

[How to Brighten a Dark Room – And it Ain't with Paint!](#)

Hardware

Adding fresh hardware to cabinets and doors can be a great way to update a space without going too far. However, it can be tricky to replace some, but not ALL, of the hardware/metal finishes in your home (lights/cabinets/doors/etc), so I'm going to share some good combinations with you.

The most popular finishes these days for mass appeal are black oil-rubbed bronze and polished nickel. And sure, in the magazines you'll see an assortment of blended metal finishes—nickel and brass, chrome and gold, etc. However, there is a METHOD to the madness, so for the sake of mass appeal you'll want to maybe stick with the following combos:

Brass and gold: These look good with black and some oil-rubbed bronze finishes—as long as they aren't too coppery.

Chrome: Chrome can look sharp with polished nickel or any silver type of finish. You can also do black.

Nickel: Just like with chrome, nickel suits other types of silver as well as black.

Black: What DOESN'T go with black?

Antique brass: You're best off with black or a modernized/updated style in the antique brass finish.



Plumbing

While you don't have to go so far as to replace toilets and tubs, adding a new faucet can put a fresh face on almost any kitchen or bathroom—IF the existing faucet is broken or in bad condition.

Read more...

[Top 6 Ideas to Update Your Home on a Budget](#)

Plants

Every room can potentially suit one or two plants (but rarely more). Adding greenery adds life to a room. And while you know how I feel about floral arrangements, I DO believe that plants are a smart investment that take minimal maintenance.

Look online and in magazine photos to figure out which plants are popular. You might think that your African violets are just lovely, but in your modern and updated home they wouldn't make sense; instead you'll want to look at some sort of grass, fiddle leaf fig (super popular) or succulent. That being said, in your Victorian-style home, an African violet could look perfect!



Towels and Bed Linens

Nothing says mass appeal like white towels. There's a reason why hotel towels are always white (besides the fact that it bleaches well). The odd bathroom can pull off a colored bath or accent towel, but generally speaking it's best to keep your towels white or off-white and in a set.

And you don't need to go buck-wild. The average towel bar holds 2 nicely folded bath towels, with additionally layered hand-towels on top if you're so inclined. From there, you'll just need 1 hand towel for the countertop and that should do the trick!



As for bed linens, most rooms are at their best with neutral linens. They don't NEED to be white, but white, off-white, cream, and a light beige/tan are usually the best way to make a room feel welcoming to buyers. Sure, you can do up your bed all fancy with Euro-pillows, toss cushions, coverlets, and whatnot, but you can also keep things simple with a neutral duvet and 2 matching shams—a little can do a LOT!



Paint

Other than decluttering and reorganizing, PAINT is the least expensive way to update a room! If your paint color is more of a personal choice rather than a popular one, you'd be smart to toss a fresh coat of paint on the wall.

I have TONS of blog posts that can help you decide which paint colors would suit your home.



Read more...

[*The 8 Best Paint Colours for Home Staging and Selling*](#)

[*Top 8 Light, Neutral Paint Colours for Home Staging and Selling*](#)

[*Top 6 Ideas to Update Your Home on a Budget*](#)

Related Blog Posts - Master List

Paint

[*The 8 Best Paint Colours for Home Staging and Selling*](#)

[*The Best Off-White Paint Colours*](#)

[*Top 8 Light, Neutral Paint Colours for Home Staging and Selling*](#)

[*The 9 Best Benjamin Moore Gray Paint Colours*](#)

[*The 4 Best Benjamin Moore Warm Neutral Paint Colours*](#)

[*The 4 Best White Paint Colours – Sherwin Williams*](#)

Update Ideas

[*Top 6 Ideas to Update Your Home on a Budget*](#)

[*Update Cabinets with Hardware that is Budget Friendly*](#)

[*Top 4 Ideas to Update Your Kitchen on a Budget*](#)

[*The New Era of Laminate Countertops and Why They Rock*](#)

[*How to Make a Dark Room Look Brighter – And it Ain't with Paint!*](#)

[*3 Bathroom Update Ideas – High End Ideas, Low End Prices*](#)

Decorating

[*5 Home Staging Ideas – Case Study*](#)

[*3 Tips – Add Style to a Small Bathroom*](#)

ABOUT ME

Hi, I'm Kylie, a fiery lil' Ginger who has a **SERIOUS** passion for everything related to decorating, design, paint colours and home staging!

Where did it all start? I'd love to say that I knew from a young age that this was my jam, but really, it all came together when working at Home Depot in the Décor, Window Coverings and Paint Departments (3 yrs). I found that not only did I have a knack for those topics, I also



REALLY liked helping people, it fed something in me that I didn't know was hungry. It was around this time that I ALSO discovered I had an anxiety disorder, with mild obsessive compulsive tendencies and that maybe '*workin' for the man*', wasn't going to work for me (I'm not one for being shy about these things). I don't know if I figured that out before or after I was fired from over half of the 22 jobs I tried to have in the previous and following years.

So, at the ripe old age of 24, I decided to further pursue the design world. Due to my 'personality quirks', University was out of the question. So, I took a basic correspondence course that certainly got me started in the right decorating direction, but it was my hands-on experience and unique business model (affordability) that made my business grow exponentially.

Fast forward 16 years later and not only am I running a successful E-design business, but my hubby was able to leave his soul-sucking bank manager job to help me grow my business even bigger – now it's OUR business!

To give you a summary on my experience, let's do some bullet-points. If you haven't figured it out by yet, I love bullet-points...

- Researched and written close to **300 articles**, with a focus on paint colours and budget-friendly updates.
- Completed over **1300 local consultations/contracts** for the purpose of paint colour consulting, home staging, decorating, design, renovating or from-scratch construction
- Taught hundreds of students in local courses on paint colours and decorating
- Assisted in over **125 extensive** renovations or new builds

- Completed over **2000 E-design consultations** relating to paint colours, countertops, décor, home staging and more!

Not to mention that I really do have a slightly neurotic personality that lives, breathes and dreams this stuff.

And supporting those dreams of course, is my hubby Tim (lucky bugger), my 2 amazing daughters and 1 hairy son (doug the Golden Doodle). My circle also includes my parents, Susan and Brian who have always been my biggest supports. Add on a variety of extended family members and close friends, and I'm one damn lucky girl.

Kylie M.



With thanks to...

Tim and my girls (Timbits) – and their loving patience with my creative process and quirks – I love you beyond belief

My Mom and Brian – for their never-ending support

My Mom – for her careful editing and insights (of my book and my life...)

Kim Parcher – editor extraordinaire

Debra Share - editing assistance

Doug the dog – for reminding me to get up out of my office chair and go for a walk

Cover – Michelle Fairbanks @ [Fresh Design](#)

PRINTABLE CLEANING LISTS ON FOLLOWING PAGES

PRINTABLE CLEANING LIST

GENERAL CLEANING LIST

This is the list that you can print off, so you can check things off as they're done. I'll leave a small 'note' area as well, so if you notice something that needs MORE attention, you can jot it down for later reference – this way NOTHING gets missed or forgotten!

CEILINGS

- Dust for cobwebs
 - Check for stains and paint if needed
-

LIGHTING

- Checked that all bulbs are working and the right wattage for each fixture
-

WALLS

- Walls are wiped from 5' down and higher where needed
 - Magic eraser tough spots and wipe down after
-

TRIM AND MOULDING

- All trim work and ledges are wiped
 - Trim work is touched-up with fresh paint where needed/new caulking
-

DOORS

- Doors are wiped down
 - Doors are painted where needed
-

COVERS

- Faceplates are wiped down

WINDOWS

- Windows are cleaned inside

- Windows are cleaned outside

WINDOW CASINGS

- Window casings are wiped down generally and in the corners for mould and dirt built-up

FLOORING

- All carpet stains have been spot-cleaned
- Large areas have had a proper cleaning if there are dirty paths/sections
- Repairs have been done to seams or broken areas
- Grout has been cleaned or re-done where needed
- All floors have been generally vacuumed washed from corner to corner

PER ROOM FIX AND CLEANING LIST ON NEXT PAGE

PER ROOM ANAL-CHECKLIST for FIXING AND CLEANING

Entryway

- Light fixture bulbs and cleanliness
- Closet doors clean and squeak-free
- Door sweep/transition is cleaned-out
- Grout is scrubbed if there is tile
- Hand railings are clean
- Front door is clean
- No discernible smell

Living Room & Dining Room

- Fireplace glass cleaned
- Fireplace dusted/cleaned out

Kitchen

- All cabinet hardware should be firmly attached, no wiggly handles or hinges
- All appliances should be working—even the stove light!
- No leaky faucets (check the faucet itself as well as under the sink)
- Are all of the light bulbs working? Are they the correct wattage for the fixture?
- Check vinyl or linoleum for edges that are peeling up (and if so, get the right glue and stick 'em down).
- If any of the cabinet doors aren't hanging quite level, adjust hinges
- Cabinets: Make sure to wipe down the cabinets using a cloth with a small amount of detergent on it. Focus your efforts around the handles and knobs, where most of the buildup from oily fingers lives. The sink cabinet is also one that takes a beating, so pay extra attention to it
- Appliances: Whether you have white, black, or stainless steel, use the appropriate cleaner and give everything a GOOD initial wipe-down—get in all of the nooks n' crannies. This is something that will need to be done on a somewhat daily basis (or as you have showings)
- Sink and faucet: If you have a stainless-steel sink, it should absolutely sparkle! Find a stainless-steel-friendly abrasive cleaner and get right into it and buff it to a shine. The faucet should be equally as shiny.

- Flooring: If you have tile floor, it is ALLL about the grout. Your grout should be 1 consistent color throughout (unfortunately, dirt-brown doesn't count as a consistent color)

Bathrooms

- All cabinet hardware should be firmly attached, no wiggly handles or hinges
- No leaky faucets or tub/shower fixtures (check the faucet itself as well as under the sink)
- Are all of the light bulbs working? Are they the correct wattage for the fixture?
- Check vinyl or linoleum for edges that are peeling up (and if so, get the right glue and stick 'em down)
- If any of the cabinet doors aren't hanging quite level, adjust hinges
- Vanity: Make sure to wipe down the vanity using a cloth with a small amount of detergent on it. Focus your efforts around the handles and knobs, where most of the buildup from oily fingers lives
- Sink and faucet (including shower fixtures): These should be toothpaste and spot-free
- Re-do any caulking that is old or missing
- Flooring: If you have tile floor, it is ALLL about the grout. Your grout should be 1 consistent color throughout

CLEANING LIST FOR A SHOWING ON NEXT PAGE

CLEANING/DETAIL LIST FOR A SHOWING

- Vacuum everywhere, wash floors that need it (a lemon fresh scent goes a long way for buyers!)
- Dust
- Open blinds to get the best light in the room
- Turn on lights, including table lamps
- Clear off table tops of unnecessary items

Kitchen

- Wipe down countertops
- Put all unnecessary items away
- Rinse out sink, wipe down faucet, put away soap/cloths
- Put out a fresh bowl of fruit (lemons/limes/apples)
- Check appliances for fingerprints/food messes

Bathrooms

- General wipe-down
- Wipe sink and faucets until they sparkle!
- Check mirror for toothpaste spitties
- TOILET SEAT DOWN
- **All personal items away** including used towels and robes
- Fresh towels on display
- Garbage can is empty
- Tidy bed linens and fluff cushions

Bedrooms

- Beds are made
- Drapes and blinds are opened
- Floors are desktops/dressers are tidy (harder with kid's rooms, I know)
- Beds are made neat n' tidy
- Kids rooms can be tough and pretty personal. Try to get the beds made, the floor and pathways clear of toys and the walls not overly-cluttered