

# Chapter 1

## Definition of Home Staging

*“All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts.”  
~ William Shakespeare*

### **In this Chapter:**

- What is home staging?
- Why is home staging so important?
- How to satisfy the most critical buyer.
- The Seven-Step System.
- The benefits of staging your home.
- The secrets of home staging.

Exciting things happen when you properly showcase your home. If you think a vase of flowers and a good cleaning are going to do it, think again. Getting your home ready for the public is different from just tidying up for a visit from the in-laws.

In this competitive real estate market, the bar has been raised to new levels. The popularity of the internet has revolutionized the approach in which people buy property. Buyers can view and compare hundreds of available homes online before they even step outside.

You need a different line of attack to make your home appeal to the largest possible audience. To compete in this market, you need more subtle – yet powerful – techniques to make your home stand out from the competition. As the saying goes, “You only get one chance to make a first impression.” To sell quickly and for the most money, your home has to appeal to every viewer who steps through your door.

Furthermore, if you want to sell your home for the maximum money – and let's face it, who doesn't? – you need to get more than one person interested. Nothing drives up a price faster than the perception that your home is in high demand.

Ultimately, the secret of selling your home quickly, for more money, lies in buyer perception. I will show you specific techniques for increasing the value perceived by the buyer. With a little care and attention, anyone can make their home more appealing. With home staging, you will make your home irresistible.

**What is Home Staging?** Home staging means preparing a house for resale; to appeal to the largest possible audience, for the highest possible price.

As soon as you know or have made the decision to move house you must start looking at your house through the buyer's eyes. You might not be moving for five years or it could be as soon as next month, either way it is important to start preparing your home to its best possible potential; particularly before the pictures are taken, before the home is put on the market and before your first viewers visit the house. You want potential buyers to see your castle at its very best from the get go.

Home staging is often confused with interior decorating, but in fact they are polar opposites. Staging involves a creating an effect – a tasteful combination of colours, textures and placement of furniture and accessories– both inside and outside the home. It means ensuring all problems in the home are fixed and that the house is cleaned and polished from top to bottom with no surface left untouched. It involves removing wallpaper, decals and stenciled borders – painting walls and other surfaces, selecting and arranging furniture layout and replacing outdated fixtures.

Interior decorating, meanwhile, focuses attention on decorating and renovating, specifically to the homeowners personal style and individuality.

When you're selling your home, you need to remove enough of *your* personality from the home to give the buyer enough space that they can imagine *themselves* living there. You do not want potential buyers to be distracted by the highly personal or controversial items you might have added to suit your interior decorating style.

As a seller the first thing you must do is to start thinking of your home as a house. A commodity. A product. This is the most difficult thing you will have to do, but doing this will allow you to pull away from the emotional ties that frequently hold you hostage. This is a very important part of the selling process as it will make it easier to understand and see your home through a buyer's eyes – but not any old buyer. Your goal is to impress the most critical buyer. The critical buyer will look for any occasion to lower the price, so we must remove that possibility.

The secret is knowing how much to take out and how much to leave in. Going overboard and making the home so empty and sterile that medical surgery could be performed on the kitchen table, is a put off for many buyers. It's important to find the right balance.

The key is: *neutralizing, but not sterilizing* your home's décor so your potential buyers can visualize themselves living happily there.

**Why is Home Staging So Important?** We don't always know why we like or dislike something. Often, we just know that it feels right or it doesn't. If we can't articulate why something does or doesn't feel right we call it a gut feeling. If it doesn't feel right, we move on.

Exactly the same thing happens when prospective buyers view your home. It's an important purchase, requiring one of the biggest financial investments most people will ever make. And yet, ultimately, the deciding factor that makes people pick one house over another is a gut feeling.

With its theatrical roots in creating crowd-pleasing performances, home staging goes further than design or decorating or neat-and-tidy. It reaches for those elusive qualities of charm and attraction that make people want it, without even knowing why.

Studies show that staged homes sell faster – within 32 to 42 days – and sell for 3% to 20% more money. A \$300,000 home where the owners have taken the time to do home staging to make it feel fresh and alluring can increase its appeal in a way that shows up in the sales price – bringing \$9,000 to \$60,000 more than a comparable house without staging.

**How to Satisfy the Most Critical Buyer.** Your primary goal is to stir an emotion in even the most critical buyers. Ask yourself: When critical buyers view your home, what will they see? What will they say?

The thought of having strangers wandering through your home, peering into cupboards and closets and making comments can be unsettling. Nothing could be more natural than for you to believe that everyone will like your home as is. It's decorated to your style, filled with your cherished possessions, your personality and, most importantly, your memories. Your friends and relatives will tell you your home is beautiful and nothing needs to be done to make it better. They mean well and, frankly, it feels nice to receive all those compliments, but let's face it, when they visit, it is you they come to see. They have never come to analyze, evaluate and critique your home. They are usually not potential buyers. And, to be perfectly honest, unless they are a home staging professional, they are not trained to see the home through the eyes of a critical buyer.

In the old days, before the internet, your home would be listed in a catalog as thick as a New York telephone book. There was no way for buyers to effectively compare properties without

actually going from house-to-house. Buying a house was quite a chore. Some buyers preferred to end the process as quickly as possible. If they saw any house they liked in a suitable neighbourhood, they snapped it up without delay. The task of finding out what else was out there was so overwhelming that most people just took what they could get.

Those days are gone. With the internet at people's fingertips, buyers can stay up all night researching neighbourhoods and looking at photographs. It is recommended the changes you decide upon in your home should be completed *before* photographs are taken and posted on list sheets or web sites. Allow the pictures to be true. Your photographs will be loaded with subliminal messages. The way the room is furnished, the layout, the lighting, etc. Unfortunately, not all those messages come across in a positive light. Buyers who are looking for wide open spaces are put off when they see that the rooms are actually quite small and cramped. To deceive with super-wide angle photographs give the false impression the home is larger than it really is and wastes everybody's time. Raising the bar on reality will not impress buyers; to the contrary it will drive them away.

A friend of mine once received a debilitating subliminal message that made her a flying-phobic. The very first time she ever sat down in her seat on an airplane, she saw a coffee stain in the middle of the pull-down tray. Being a careful, meticulous housekeeper herself, she deduced that if the staff were too busy to clean up a simple coffee ring, then what guarantee did she have that the plane's engine was maintained? She exited the plane before it took off and couldn't be persuaded to get on another one for years! A neglected coffee stain was a showstopper for her.

The same can hold true for house buyers. The subliminal thought that goes through a person's mind is this: If the owners haven't the time to maintain the parts you *can* see, they surely haven't taken care of the parts you *can't* see. They may exit your house without another word and you will have missed the opportunity to sell them your home.

As an analogy, people will happily buy brand new furniture or – at the other end of the spectrum – antique furniture. But nobody wants to buy old, shabby, worn-out furniture – unless it is at a garage sale for a rock bottom price. Translate this reality to your biggest investment: your house. Buyers will either spend money on a newly built home with brand new features or a beautiful old home full of character and charm, but they will not spend their money on an old, shabby and worn out house – unless they are getting it at a rock-bottom price.

If a viewer is not interested in the home they have just visited, the realtors will ask what it was specifically that they did not like about the property. Most often, the viewers will respond that they don't exactly know, they cannot put their finger on it. This means it's time to attend to the fine detail in your home.

**How to Stage Your Home: A Seven-Step System.** In this book, you will learn a powerful, seven-step-system to help you view the home as a highly critical buyer would see it. Each of these steps will help you refine your vision until you create a home that is truly irresistible to the most buyers possible.

The Seven-Step System has been designed to evaluate each individual area and room in your home. Using each of the seven elements in every room will bring your home to its maximum potential. The combination of all seven steps creates a powerful force. It will create the image of a whole lifestyle of wellbeing with a welcoming feel from people living there, enhancing your home's charm and personality. Sellers need to understand that the way we live in our home is not the way we sell our home

So you are wondering how I can recommend you dress up your home without ever having seen it. Breaking the tasks of staging your home into manageable chunks allows you to focus on one detail at a time. It does not matter how big, small, complex or simple your rooms might be. The principles of this methodical approach are the same for every home.

Use this system to focus on your target market and attract interested buyers within days of putting your home on the market.

The biggest secret is that it should never be obvious that the home is staged. An obvious staging will leave the buyer feeling deceived. Nobody likes to be hoodwinked and doing this could result in a missed sale. Following each of the seven elements precisely allows your home to maintain a modicum of personality while allowing enough scope for the buyer to develop an emotional connection, which is the key to a successful sale.

Just as in the theater, illusions are designed to create a seductive mood that will appeal to a wide audience. Staging a home is about using as many effects as possible to make the home look more interesting and attractive all while drawing the eye to the architectural jewels of the home.

You will also learn specific techniques that will help you create the right environment quickly – at the lowest cost. You will find out what is important to the buyer, what is the optimal way to arrange existing furniture and accessories, what colours to choose, what to take out and what to leave in to make your home more appealing.

**The Benefits of Staging Your Home.** Two unexpected additional benefits have been reported after staging a home. One is that homeowners have found that short notice preparation for their showing was faster, and they were confident when the call came that they knew the drill and could quickly leave the property secure in the knowledge that the home showed to its best potential. The other benefit has shown that because of prior preparation, sellers are less stressed, and better mentally and physically organized for the move to their new location.

**The Secrets of Home Staging.** Staging is theatre. It is all about creating illusions. It is not about covering up serious problems that the new homeowner will need to know about, but about showing the home you love in its best possible light.

After so many years creating persuasive illusions on stage, I have learned ways to use clever lighting, remarkable colours, airy spaces and bold accessories to make rooms appear larger or taller, more spacious or cozier. I have written this book to share with you some of my most treasured theatrical secrets.

If you enjoyed this free sample chapter from *The Seductive Power of Home Staging*, visit [www.seductivpowerofhomestaging.com](http://www.seductivpowerofhomestaging.com) to order the whole book. Available in paperback format.