

# organize today!

Ideas and tips to help you live  
an organized, simpler life at work and home

## Home Staging and Moving

If you — or someone you know — are planning a move any time in the future, this issue of *Organize Today* will provide some great tips about home staging, stress-free moving, successful garage sales, and painless downsizing.

Even if you're planning to stay put in your current home, keep reading. The tips on page two will teach you how to beautify your home in simple, often inexpensive ways. Keep this handy reference for any moves down the road, or pass this newsletter along to your friends and family planning a move. They'll thank you.

## What is home staging?



Staging — a process of neutralizing, decluttering, organizing, and beautifying — allows potential buyers to picture themselves living in the house by tapping into their emotions. Staging also starts the “letting go” process for the sellers, as they transform their beloved home to a more neutral-looking home.

A staged home looks similar to a model home. For examples of how your home should look to get the best price, visit some local model homes during their open house periods.

Staging will help you sell your home quickly, at the best possible price. Even if you're just thinking about moving, it is never too early to start. You'll have plenty of time to stage your home, and you'll get to enjoy your improvements for a while, too! And remember: many improvements related to moving can be tax deductible, including the fees for staging your home. Check with your accountant for more details.

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A Palo Alto real estate survey found that

- staged houses: sold in an average of 14 days for 6.32% over the asking price
- unstaged houses: sold in an average of 31 days for 1.6% over the asking price

**IT PAYS TO STAGE!**

# Do-it-yourself staging tips

## EXTERIOR & ENTRANCE

- Keep the driveway clear of cars, toys, etc.
- Remove boat, camper, and old cars from property
- Wash windows; power-wash exterior; plant flowers; keep lawn neat
- Repair doorbell
- Paint front door; buy simple, new doormat
- Remove front screen door; add a welcoming bench, helpful for shoe removal during open houses

## BEDROOMS & BATHS

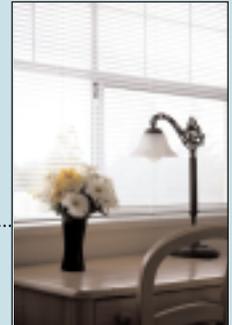
- Clear dresser tops, leaving only one to three decorative items per surface
- Store away children's toys, loose artwork, and posters
- Replace shower curtain; lay out fresh towels
- Remove tub mat and rug in front of toilet

## LIVING & FAMILY ROOMS

- Replace old, worn carpet
- Paint or touch up walls if needed
- Arrange furniture in conversation groupings

## ALL ROOMS

- Declutter entire house
- Organize and tidy up contents of cupboards and closets (buyers will peek inside to check space!)
- Clean all light fixtures (remove any bugs!)
- Check for odors and remove them
- Turn on all lights, using brightest bulbs possible; open all shades
- Repair everything broken (even the little things)
- Rearrange furniture into inviting settings; remove some furniture to create illusion of more space
- Add fresh flowers or bowl of fruit to tables



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## What is a “stager”?

Professional stagers assist homeowners by offering advice on clutter clearing, furniture placement, creating “emotion” settings, and much more. Stagers are able to offer an objective view of a home — a fresh eye and perspective.

Some stagers own and rent out furnishings if a homeowner needs higher-quality or more neutral decor. These professionals are called “full-service stagers.” Other stagers work with what you already own, making recommendations for purchases of only small-priced items when necessary — perhaps a new shower curtain to brighten a dingy bathroom, a beautiful vase full of fresh flowers to welcome visitors in the entryway, or a sparkling new kitchen faucet to add visual interest. Home stagers can tell you:

- what buyers are looking for in a new home
- how to give your home curb appeal
- which inexpensive improvements will add value to your home
- which expensive improvements could be poor investments
- room-by-room staging suggestions

# Let's have a sale

Whether you're planning to move or simply want to cash in on your excess stuff, a garage sale (tag sale, yard sale) can be a profitable way to transfer your goods on to their next destination. However, without proper planning and organization, the day can be a disaster. Here are some tips to hold a spectacular sale:

**Start gathering your goods early.** Keep a large box in the basement or garage year-round to hold household items you no longer want, need, or love. If you're really industrious, keep some pricing stickers and a pen in the box so you can price as you stow.

**Advertise.** Make large, colorful signs. Be sure to list the date, time, and place, as well as the types of items you have for sale (kids' clothing and toys, furniture, tools, collectibles, etc.). Place the signs in high-traffic intersections within a few miles of your home. Consider running an ad in your local paper's classified section. Place flyers at local stores where allowed.

**Set up the sale.** Make sure to give yourself at least two days to get the tables set up and items arranged and priced. Make sure everything is clean and attractive. Group like items together: put stuffed animals in a wagon, arrange household items on tables, place books and tapes/CDs neatly in boxes, display toys at kids' eye level, and hang clothing on racks. Put big-ticket items, like furniture, tools, and larger kids' toys, near the edge of the driveway to attract passersby. Be sure to price everything; people are often too shy to ask. Attract people with balloons and banners. And have a "free" box prominently placed.

**Don't forget the little things.** Make sure you have enough change, especially ones and fives, and a calculator handy. Have bags and newspaper for packing breakables. Play upbeat music on your boombox. Have lemonade and popcorn for sale to prolong browsing. Hand out free candy to kids if okay with parents.

**Count your cash and consider other means.** After the sale, donate the leftover items to charity rather than returning them to your house. Many charities will pick up all unsold items.

## Moving with ease

According to the Employee Relocation Council, moving to a new home is the third most stressful life event (following death and divorce). To ease the transition, follow these tips to make your move smooth.

- Plan your move date at least four to six weeks ahead. May through September and the very beginning and end of each month are the most popular times for moves, so if you're hiring a moving company, contact them soon. Call family and friends for trusted mover recommendations.
- Start packing seldom-used items now! Ask your grocery store to set aside cardboard boxes for you. Pack heavier items in smaller boxes and lighter items in larger boxes.
- Organize your boxes by numbering each box and keeping a separate list indicating the box number and its contents. When you get to your destination, unpack everything right away.
- Fill out change-of-address forms at the post office and update important ID papers (driver's license, checks, etc.). Take your current phone books along to your new home in case you need to contact people in your old town.
- Move valuables yourself. Irreplaceable family photos, heirlooms, and financial and legal documents should ride with you.
- Send out postcards to family and friends with your new address and phone number, along with a photo of your new home!

# Ask the Organizer

**Q** It's time to start downsizing. Our kids are grown and gone, and we just don't need this much room. Where to start?

**A** Sorting through years' worth of accumulated furniture, clothing, tools, and knickknacks can seem daunting. As soon as you begin even thinking about downsizing to a smaller home, start sorting and purging! Begin in the rooms you use the least. For some, that might be the basement, attic, or unused bedroom. The goal is to disrupt your normal life as little as possible. Evaluate items in one room, beginning with the larger furniture items. What can you part with? As you sort, plan to remove items by donating them to charity or passing them along to family and

friends. Remove these items from the home as soon as possible. After pondering the larger items, move on to the smaller ones. And if your children have things stored at your home, now is the time to have them collect!



Downsizing can be an emotional process that should take weeks, months, or even years. Don't try to downsize all in one day! Allow yourself time to enjoy fond memories and even shed a tear or two. It's okay! Try not to focus on the the number of things you must give up to move to a smaller home. Rather, focus on what you need and really love to create your new space. Because it's often hard to be objective about the things we love, it may be helpful to have an outsider help with this process. A trusted friend, relative, or professional organizer will keep you on track.