

STYLING FOR PROFIT

Styling your home for sale can add some serious dollars and help your property stand out from the crowd. Here's everything you need to know.

What is styling or staging?

Property styling or home staging for sale is a specialist area of design, aimed at ensuring your property attracts appropriate buyers and sells for the highest price possible. It can be as simple or extensive as the property requires (and budget allows). Most real estate agents believe a styled or staged home will gain a higher sale price (**some surveys have found styling your home could boost the final sale price by between 7.5% and 12.5%**).

Go Pro or DIY?

A professional property stylist will work with your real estate agent to understand the demographics the property is being marketed to and style your property accordingly. Their goal is to help potential buyers see the property's full potential. A stylist will generally start by organising any repairs or maintenance required on the property as well as managing cleaning, decluttering and removing highly personal items such as family photos. Stylists will usually work with a combination of the homeowners' furnishings as well as furnishings they lease or loan for the purpose of the staging. As a general guide, styling costs can range from \$1,500 for a simple staging of a one-bedroom apartment and up to \$10,000 or more for complete high-end staging of a larger home.

Self-styling

If your budget doesn't allow for a professional, follow these DIY styling tips to give your home the professional touch.

Understand your market

Have your real estate agent explain the type of people who are likely to buy your home and the type of people you will be marketing to. This will help you understand the type of styling that will appeal to them.

Be a nosy neighbour

Just because you aren't paying for a stylist, doesn't mean you can't learn from one. Check out comparable homes marketed to a similar target group to yours that have obviously been well-styled – then borrow their ideas.

Take the 'you' out of your home

This is a hard one for many sellers to understand, but the psychology of a buyer means they need to be able to see your home as their new home, and that's hard to do if it's full of your personal items and photographs. Within reason, pack these items away and allow the home to be a blank canvas.

Make an entrance

First impressions really do matter, and the street appeal and entry of your home will leave a lasting impression on potential buyers. Ensure your lawn is well maintained, remove any rubbish or junk from the lawn or garden and add some colour and style to your entry with interesting pots or a piece of outdoor furniture.

Kitchens and bathrooms

These are the rooms that make or break a deal. Your real estate agent will tell you if you need to update the kitchen or bathroom. Stores such as Ikea and Bunnings have renovation kits for kitchens and bathrooms that don't break the bank. If it's just a tidy up that is required, remove all clutter and ensure they are spotlessly clean. Nothing will put a buyer off faster than a grotty kitchen or an unkempt bathroom.

Keep it simple

You may love bright purple furnishings or think your children's Minecraft posters are a hoot, but if you want to appeal to a broad audience and ensure as many buyers as possible come through your doors, you need to tone everything down. Think soft, neutral colours and an easy design aesthetic. Any purchased furnishings can be sold afterwards on online platforms like eBay, Gumtree and Facebook marketplace.

Sometimes, bigger IS better

Nobody wants a cramped home, so maximise the space in every room. In the bedroom, use a double bed instead of a queen or king, replace wardrobe doors with mirrored doors and use soft window furnishings as opposed to dark heavy curtains.

Nowhere to hide

Remember, people inspecting your home will open cupboard doors and check out the garage, so avoid the urge to hide everything in the linen cupboard. And make sure the garage is not full of clutter – you want to show its full capacity.

When not to style

There are certain selling situations where even the best styling can add little or no value to a property. Low cost properties are not likely to see a return on the cost of styling. If the home is run down and potential buyers are generally only interested in a knock-down, styling will have no impact. If you are selling in an area undergoing a severe downturn, styling is also likely to make little impact on the property's value or ability to sell. Your real estate agent should be able to advise you if styling your home could increase your sale price.