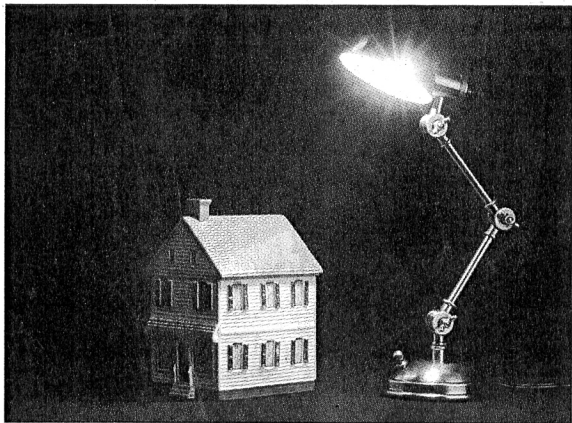


# Stagers can work wonders readying homes for quick sale



To attract buyers, home-staging pros dress up your house in its theatrical best.

KRT Illustration  
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The red and yellow walls in the bedroom felt too strong. The modern kitchen didn't fit with the home's bungalow style. Because the owners no longer lived there, all the furniture was gone, giving the place a desolate feel.

So when the owners of the North Carolina home couldn't sell their house after two months, they called Cheryl Cox, a professional home stager.

Using her background in graphic design and interest in interior design, Cox decorated the kitchen with traditional decorations. She rented furniture to warm the house up. And although the homeowners couldn't repaint those yellow and red walls, she found furniture to mute their effect.

A day after the staging, the home went under contract.

Home stagers such as Cox give aggressive advice to help people sell their homes. They may suggest new paint colors, how to rearrange furniture, and what to take off the walls and bookshelves. If needed, they'll even loan furniture and accessories to dress up a place.

Unlike real estate agents, who often offer basic advice on how to prepare a home for the market, home stagers are specially accredited — giving their advice more credence. Some real estate agents with accreditation offer the service for free to clients, while full-time home stagers, such as Cox, can charge from a couple of hundred dollars to several thousand.

"It's about editing your house," said Kristina Kegley, an Allen Tate agent who leads the local chapter of Staged Homes. "You're trying to compete with the model home, making it as nice and clean and uncluttered as possible."

## Tips for staging

- Use soft lighting. Lamps are kinder than overhead lights. Keep blinds open.

- Place furniture so there are clear pathways through the house.

- Thin your furniture collection to make the room appear larger.

- Avoid placing sofas or big chairs so that you see their backs.

- Declutter. Pack up framed pictures, odd artwork, and

crafts. Clear stuff off tables.

- Clear magnets, notes, artwork, etc. from front of refrigerator.

- Make sure toilet seats are down and personal bathroom items stowed. Put out fresh towels. Limit your colors to one or two.

- Clean out your closets. Buyers want to believe they'll have plenty of storage space.

- Right before a showing, light a scented candle and turn on quiet music (easy listening or jazz).

- Hide pet boxes.

- Keep indoor plants and flowers looking fresh.

- Buy new doormats.

- The front of the house is a potential buyer's first impression. Keep shrubs and trees trimmed, grass mowed, walkways cleared; lay fresh mulch. If you can afford a landscaper, hire one.

- Put all outdoor toys away.

- Place flowers on the porch or front stoop.

- Wash the house.

- Keep the front door freshly painted. Replace any fixtures on the door, such as brass plates at the bottom.

- Make sure light bulbs outside work.