



## **Tips & Tricks For Preparing Your Home For Sale**

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**Getting your home ready to sell can be overwhelming. So where do you begin? In this booklet, we've listed tips to help you get your home ready to sell by providing you with ideas to enhance your home's atmosphere which are inexpensive and easy. In fact, some of these ideas are so fabulous and so versatile, you can also use them to enhance your *new* home, making your surroundings beautiful, creating a pleasant and functional living environment. So grab a pen and go down this list of tips, crossing out the items as you complete them. Keep in mind that you don't have to do everything on this list -some of these items may be already finished and in good shape in your home, and some of these quick and easy decorative improvements may not be something you wish to do...but they're here when you're ready to try something new and different. This tips booklet also contains three bonus sets of tips: 18 Tips for Open House Day, 17 Repair Tips and 42 Decorating Tips!**

## Getting Ready to Sell

1. 1. Remember...everything you see walking up to the front door should look great. Many persons buy houses without ever seeing the sides or back of the house... or even the garage. 90% of the time buyers want to drive by before they agree to see the interior. If the front doesn't look good they'll never set foot inside. Make those buyers want to come inside! Items to look at outside can include: house numbers, door-knockers, doorbell buttons, mailboxes, flower bed edgers, stepping stones, and welcome mats.
2. 2. Inside you'll want to lighten up the darker corners, perhaps add some fresh paint and put the clutter away to give the rooms an open feeling.
3. 3. Make sure there are no "stale" odors in the home. This can be especially important for remote areas such as a basement or attic. On the day of your open house, you may want to consider baking some cookies or bring in some fragrant fresh flowers. This will add a cheery and pleasant scent to your home. These little things just may help you sell your home a bit more quickly.
4. 4. A fresh coat of paint for your home, garage, or even fences, may be the one improvement that creates the most positive first impression. Give your home's exterior a fresh coat of paint, or if the entire home doesn't need painting, just paint the shutters, window frames or any other area that could use a touch-up.
5. 5. Improve the landscaping by weeding flowerbeds, trimming shrubbery and mowing the lawn. During hot summer months, keep the yard watered or add fertilizer to keep the grass green.
6. 6. Keep the exterior clean and in good condition. Seal gutters and clean downspouts. Replace rotting wood or rusted iron.
7. 7. Clean windows inside and out. Clean storm doors and screens on windows.
8. 8. Make sure your windows are in good working order and open and close properly. If you have an automatic garage door

opener, make sure it works properly. And clean out the garage as much as possible. Clean up messy grease or oil spots.

9. 9. If you have a swimming pool or Jacuzzi, remove leaves and adjust the chemicals. Store chemicals and tools away. Dust off filtration equipment.

10. 10. Repaint interior walls in white, off-white, cream, beige or pastels (those are the safest colors because they coordinate well with most furniture and light colors make the room look larger). Make sure wallpaper is clean and adhered smoothly to the walls.

11. 11. Make sure rooms don't look cluttered. That means removing excess furniture or knickknacks.

12. 12. Dress up windows with blinds or shutters. If the view from a window isn't attractive, hang a plant from the ceiling in front of the window.

13. 13. Take care of the "little things." Oil squeaking doors, tighten loose cabinet knobs, remove carpet stains, and replace damaged floor tiles. Tighten leaky faucets, repair or replace faulty wall switches, outlets, light fixtures and any appliance that will "go with the home." Make sure all windows, doors and drawers open and close easily. Make certain all appliances, light bulbs and water faucets work.

14. 14. The kitchen is usually the place in the home that buyers look at the closest. Clean the oven and replace reflector pans on electric range tops. Paint, refinish, reline or reorganize kitchen cabinets. Remove appliances from kitchen counters so that they look larger.

□.15. 15. The bathroom gets close scrutiny, too. Keep it spotless. Scrub tiles, polish faucets and keep toiletries and medicines in their chest. Put dirty laundry items away in closed hamper. ♦.16.

Storage space is important, too. Buyers want lots of it these days. Clear out accumulated items from closets, cabinets and

♦.underneath counters. And don't forget the basement, attic or garage! Display your storage and utility space by removing all

unnecessary items from the attic, stairways, basement and garage. This will make those areas appear much larger than they actually are. Also, closets should be only two-thirds full. Overcrowded closets suggest that your house does not have adequate storage  
□.space.

15. 16. 17. People will want to look in closets so make sure that doors are working properly.

16. 17. 18. If you have a fence, make sure it is in good repair. Replace any broken stakes, make sure the gate works freely and paint any areas that are weathered.

17. 18. 19. Look for any pieces of siding or brickwork that need repair.

18. 19. 20. Make sure all exterior lighting is in good working order; replace any bulbs that are burned out.

19. 20. 21. Make sure the roof is clear of debris such as branches and leaves. If necessary repair portions of the roof that are worn or damaged.

20. 21. 22. Make sure the drapes are tidy and pulled back from the windows. Consider having your drapes professionally cleaned.

21. 22. 23. Repair or replace any worn flooring areas.

22. 23. 24. Make sure baseboards are securely attached and any blemishes repaired.

23. 24. 25. Inspect and repair any caulking or grouting in ceramic tile areas.

24. 25. 26. If you have a fireplace make sure it is in good working order.

25. 26. 27. If possible, don't park cars in front of the house or in the driveway, and try to have very few parked cars on the street near the house. Recreational vehicles or boats should be in the garage or carport or behind a fence in the back. Derelict cars or ones being overhauled, should not be visible from the street and preferably should not even be present. ♦.28. A nice spread of outdoor furniture on the patio or deck looks very appealing. Make

sure this furniture is clean and in good ♦.condition. If you don't

have outdoor furniture, consider borrowing from a friend to enhance showability.

□.27. 29. Repair or replace doors with holes. One method of repair short of replacement is to cover a hole with a mirror or piece of □.paneling.

26. 28. 30. Loose handrails on stairway should be secured to walls.

27. 29. 31. Clean or paint air-vent covers.

28. 30. 32. A simple \$0.69 light bulb can make a major difference to a purchaser looking at your home. Not only will it light up parts of your home, but it will demonstrate basic maintenance to a purchaser. Every light socket in and around the house should have a good bulb of adequate wattage. Don't overlook those outside; in the garage; utility room, halls, closets, or over the kitchen sink; and in the oven and exhaust hood.

29. 31. 33. Repair or replace wall switches, outlets, and light fixtures that don't work, replace any broken switch plates. Note: If you are not fully competent to handle these repairs, call in a professional.

30. 32. 34. Badly chipped or irreversibly stained sinks and tubs should be re-enameled, patched, or replaced. Leaky or excessively noisy toilets should be fixed, as well as any dripping faucets.

31. 33. 35. Sprinkler systems should be working properly with no defective heads.

32. 34. 36. If your garage has become a two-car attic, move the excess "stuff" to a mini warehouse for the duration of your home selling adventure.

33. 35. 37. Paint or stain worn areas in wood decks.

34. 36. 38. Remove grass growing in concrete cracks; sweep off debris from shrubs and trees.

35. 37. 39. Make sure the refrigerator and freezer are defrosted and free of odors.

36. 38. 40. Install a new shower curtain.

37. 39. 41. Store all supplies like toilet paper, shampoo bottles and cleansers.

38. 40. 42. Hide or get rid of worn-out throw pillows.
39. 41. 43. At night, turn on porch light and outdoor lighting. Buyers often drive by homes they are considering at various times of day.
40. 42. 44. Remove and/or replace any items that will not transfer with sale: i.e., decorative switch covers, chandeliers, etc.
- .43. 45. If the exterior of the house is dirty or moldy, power wash .it.
41. 44. 46. If possible, reseed any bare areas of the lawn.
42. 45. 47. Trim all shrubbery and plantings. Trim trees if necessary, especially dead limbs.
43. 46. 48. If the driveway is stone and looking lean, add a coat of gravel. If it is asphalt, consider resealing.
44. 47. 49. If the season is right, plant colorful flowers where appropriate.
45. 48. 50. Add mulch to planting beds and around trees. An inexpensive but very effective way of freshening the look of the yard.
46. 49. 51. If possible, keep furniture at a bare minimum so that traffic flow is easier and the room does not appear smaller than it actually is.
47. 50. 52. If bookshelves, curio cabinets, and the like are overflowing with books and knick-knacks, remove some of them.
48. 51. 53. Clean or replace the stove hood filter. This is often overlooked, usually dirty and greasy, and looked at by a lot of buyers.
49. 52. 54. Clean (or repaint) cabinet faces. Make them shine!
50. 53. 55. If the basement is damp or musty, consider a dehumidifier.
51. 54. 56. Replace the furnace filter(s).
52. 55. 57. At the very least, all carpeting needs to be steam cleaned. Any worn, stained or foul smelling carpet should be replaced. You may be tempted to give a "carpet allowance" and that may work. Just remember, most buyers do not have vision.
53. 56. 58. If an item is not necessary for your day-to-day life,

box it up and store it or throw it out!

54. 57. 59. Gather your records of any capital improvements that you made to the house since you've owned it.

55. 58. 60. Add a home warranty offer to sweeten the deal. Home Warranty packages are available through most Real Estate Agents  
□.59. 61. Fact Sheets are one of the strongest marketing tools that you or your Agent can use when selling your house. Be sure to use □.one! An effective fact sheet includes all of the most salable features of your home. In addition, it should give the total heated/cooled square footage, sizes of individual rooms, as well as any additional information about your house that you believe important.

56. 60. 62. Have plants in your home? Make sure all the dead leaves are pulled off and trim them up if necessary. Also, take a wet cloth and wipe off leaves and petals of silk plants.

57. 61. 63. Dust the picture frames and clean the glass, adding more sparkle to your home.

58. 62. 64. Stand a brass plate on a dark bookcase to lighten and brighten.

59. 63. 65. Mirror a wall to create a feeling of spaciousness.

60. 64. 66. Potpourri is an easy, inexpensive touch, it comes in so many colors some will be sure to match your decorating scheme. Place it in decorative bowls around the house to look good while keeping your home smelling great!

61. 65. 67. Remove out-of-season coats, sports equipment and other items from your front entry closet so buyers can see how roomy it is.

62. 66. 68. Clear window ledges of all objects to give unobstructed views of the yards.

63. 67. 69. Discard old food and leftovers in the refrigerator.

64. 68. 70. Remove all messages, pictures, and magnet from the refrigerator.

65. 69. 71. Make sure your screens are in good repair (windows and doors).

66. 70. 72. Straighten medicine cabinets -people can't resist

taking a peek.

67. 71. 73. Make sure your locks work properly and easily.

68. 72. 74. Clean your blinds and make sure all blind hardware is in good working order.

□.73. 75. Establish a focal point in your entryway (the first thing buyers see!) with a plant, print or decorative lamp. You might add attractive storage with a wall shelf or table artfully arranged with □.collectibles and flowers. Or just hang a picture or mirror on the wall, and put out a decorative throw rug.

69. 74. 76. Locate each ventilation fan, usually in the bathroom and kitchen -make sure they operate properly.

70. 75. 77. Selling your house in the winter? Give your landscape a welcome shot of color in midwinter by planting witch hazel (hamamelis). This group of large shrubs produces spider-like blossoms of narrow, delicate petals that open along the bare branches of the plant. Colors range from yellow to red with the leaves turning shades of yellow, orange and red in autumn.

71. 76. 78. The kitchen is one of the most inspected rooms by buyers. Take a look at your cabinets. Need to dress them up? If you have older kitchen cabinets with panel doors, consider removing the panel inset and replacing it with leaded glass, chicken wire, latticework, or beadboard. Another option is to simply add decorative moldings or wood trims to the existing panels.

72. 77. 79. Don't have a coat closet? Buyers like coat closets in the entryway -however, some houses don't have this feature. Draw their attention instead to an attractive coat rack you can make yourself. Attach pretty glass doorknobs in a row to a painted board. Then hang it near your entry door.

### **Open House Day -Tips for Showing Your Home**

How your home 'shows' or looks to buyers and agents is of vital importance. You can do a number of things that will enhance your

home's appeal in time for your open house. When a showing has been arranged, try the following:

1. 1. 1. Give all family members assigned jobs in advance that will go into action when a short-notice showing is scheduled. Everyone must know their duties and carry them out, so that you don't end up banging into one another trying to get everything done quickly.
2. 2. 2. Turn on all exterior and interior lights, even in the middle of the day. This gives your home a bright and airy feel.
3. 3. 3. Turn your fireplace on or burn a log.
4. 4. 4. Play soft music on the radio or stereo system. Perhaps play some soothing classical music on low volume.
5. 5. 5. Have an area where the buyer and their agent might sit and discuss the home.
6. 6. 6. Consider serving coffee and cookies.
7. 7. 7. Baking cookies before the showing can add a pleasant and inviting aroma to the home.
8. 8. 8. Air out the house just before the scheduled showing, but close the windows (unless it is a perfect day) before they arrive.
9. 9. 9. Be prepared to answer any questions that the buyer and agent may have. Usually questions are asked about neighborhood features and amenities. It might be a good idea to rehearse a talk on the positive features of living where you do.
10. 10. 10. Buyers may have technical questions about the home such as size of furnace and air conditioner, age of the roof, type and amount of insulation. Make sure you've researched the answers to these questions.
11. 11. 11. Put carpet scraps at the top of basement steps, at the bottom of the attic steps, and by all the outside doors. Visitors can then wipe their shoes off when coming back into the house from these areas. It is believed that if you don't do this, people get so worried about tracking dirt on to the carpets, they stop looking at the house and watch where they've been walking.
12. 12. 12. Remove pets. Take them with you or keep them

penned in the yard or garage.

13. 13. 13. Grind up part of a lemon in the disposal to add a fresh smell to the kitchen.

14. 14. 14. Keep money and other valuables, as well as prescription drugs, out of sight.

15. 15. Remove most of the "imprint" that you have made on the house. Having a few family pictures around is fine, but if your house is a "shrine" to your family--walls full of personal pictures--

you should take some steps to depersonalize it. Buyers must be able to envision themselves in the house, which is nearly impossible if everywhere they turn they stare at you!

15. 16. 16. Have kitchen sparkling clean and all dishes put away.

16. 17. 17. Have all bathrooms sparkling with clean and matching towels hung neatly.

17. 18. 18. Open all interior doors except those for closets and other storage areas.

### **Repair Tips**

1. 1. 1. Downspouts often become plugged up with leaves, twigs, seed pods and pine needles. You can try dislodging the clog with a blast of water from a garden hose, but if that doesn't work, take a cable auger, or plumber's snake, and feed it into the bottom end of the downspout. Turn the crank on the auger as you push the cable up the downspout. When you feel resistance, rewind the cable to extract the clog. Repeat the process as many times as necessary until the downspout is clear of all debris. Remove the cable auger and rinse out the downspout with the hose.

□.2. 2. When a double-hung window is stuck shut, resist the temptation to force it open. You could crack the sash frame or shatter the glass. Instead, try this safer approach. Wearing safety goggles, push a 4-or 6-in.-wide, stiff-blade putty knife into the joint between the sash and interior stop (the thin, vertical wood

strip nailed to each side jamb). Also insert the putty knife into the joint at the top and bottom of the sash. Forcing the knife blade into the joints will sever any spots that are adhered with dried paint. To raise the sash, use the handles, if any, along the bottom sash rail or place one gloved hand on each upper corner of the sash frame and push up. Never lift a sash with one hand placed in the center of the upper rail—it might crack. When all else fails, use a thin pry bar to carefully remove the interior stops to free the sash. They might not □.come out in one piece, but you can easily replace them with new stops.

2. 3. 3. If your roof leaked 3 years ago, and you never got around to sealing and repainting the ceiling--now is a good time to get it done. It may look like a fresh leak to the untrained eye. Any damages that have been properly repaired but have left 'scars' should be addressed. ◆.4. Has your toilet lost some of its flushing power? Using a small mirror, you can check the series of holes that sit under the rim ◆.of the bowl. These tiny holes, known as flush passages, shoot water into the bowl each time the toilet is flushed, but sometimes they become plugged up with mineral deposits or grime. To enhance flushing power, poke each hole clean with a length of wire clothes hanger. After cleaning all the passages, flush the toilet to remove loosened deposits. If necessary, repeat the process.

□.4. 5. Check your steps. Concrete steps are durable, but the corners of the steps are vulnerable to chipping and breakage. The first step in mending a damaged corner is to scrub the area clean of all loose bits of gravel, sand and cement with a wire brush. Next, create an L-shaped mold, or form, by screwing together two short pieces of wood (1 X 6). Hold the form against the chipped corner and flush with the top of the step; secure it with long strips of duct tape. Coat the inside of the form with cooking-oil spray so it won't stick to the new cement patch. Then brush a liberal coat of latex bonding liquid onto the chipped surface. In a plastic bucket, mix a small batch of quick-setting cement, such as Quikrete's FastSet

Cement. Scoop up some of the cement with a pointed trowel and tightly press it into the form. Slightly overfill the corner, then smooth the cement flush with the top of the step. If the edge of the step is eased (rounded), use an edger on the new concrete. Allow the repair to dry overnight before carefully peeling off the tape and removing the form. ♦.6. Check your sinks -you can bet home

buyers will run the water and perhaps even try the drains in the house when they are inspecting plumbing. Does your bathroom sink hold its water? The

□.pop-up plugs on bathroom sinks tend to loosen up over time and lose their watertight seal. As a result, water trickles down the drain making it impossible to keep the basin filled up. You can fix this annoyance in less than a minute. Look beneath the sink and locate the large retaining nut that secures the horizontal pivot rod to the back of the vertical drainpipe. Grab ♦.the nut with pliers and carefully tighten it. Pull up on the plug handle and turn on the water to see if the plug seals tightly against the drain. If it doesn't, tighten the nut some more. If you can't raise the handle, then the nut is too tight. Loosen it a little and test the plug one more time.

3. 5. 7. What if your roof's in good condition -except for one spot? To quickly fix a puncture hole in an asphalt-shingle roof, cut a rectangular piece of aluminum, copper or galvanized-metal flashing to fit under the shingle. Coat the bottom of the flashing with roofing cement and slip it beneath the shingle. Spread more cement over the top of the flashing, then firmly press down on the shingle to create a watertight seal. Inspect the patch annually to be sure its stuck down fast. If needed, apply more roofing cement.

4. 6. 8. Check your wood siding. Are there any cracks? Boards sometimes crack and split as wood siding expands and contracts with changing temperatures. If the crack is more than 2 ft. long, replace the entire board. Boards with shorter cracks, however, are easy to fix. Start by gently prying open the crack with a slotted screwdriver and filling it with exterior-grade, water-resistant glue. Remove the screwdriver, bore at least two pilot holes through the

siding and insert ring-shanked siding nails into the holes. Push up hard on the bottom edge of the board to close the crack. Then tap the nails in with a hammer. Finish by cleaning off any glue drips with a damp cloth.

□.7. 9. Most washable wall coverings can be scrubbed clean with a sponge and nonabrasive cleanser. Try that with a non-washable wall covering, and you'll ruin the surface. A little-known secret:

Most greasy, grimy stains and spots can be drawn out of non

□.washable wall coverings with a standard electric clothes iron.

Place both layers of a regular brown grocery bag right over the stain. Press the paper with a warm iron -no steam -for a minute or two. The paper will absorb the heated grease. If necessary, repeat the process with clean paper until the stain lifts out.

5. 8. 10. Check the caulk around your tubs. A continuous, watertight seal along the top edge of a bathtub or shower base is crucial. If the caulk is cracked or missing in spots, water will seep in and ruin the wall -and you can bet potential buyers will notice this. Repairing a caulked joint is easy and takes less than 30 minutes. Start by scraping out all the old, dried-out caulk using an awl or narrow-bladed screwdriver. Then dip a cloth in rubbing alcohol and clean the surface of all soap scum and greasy grime. Allow the cleaned surface to dry a few minutes, and apply a thick bead of tub-and-tile caulk along the joint. Smooth the bead with a wet finger.

6. 9. 11. Have a chain-link fence? How's it look? Is it dirty, rusting and weather-beaten? Then it's quite an eyesore to potential buyers. A little elbow grease and a fresh coat of aluminum paint are all it takes to restore the chain link to its inoffensive glory. First, remove any flaking paint, rust or caked-on grime with a wire brush. (Or rent a sandblaster for the day.) Spot-treat any remaining corrosion with a spray-on rust inhibitor. Then use a long-nap roller to apply the aluminum paint to both sides of the fence. Slowly work the roller over the chain link, reaching into tight bends and deep recesses. To prevent excessive drips and runs, don't overload the roller with paint.

□.10. 12. Are your cabinet hinges in good condition? Or are they “hanging by a thread”? The small screws used to secure kitchen cabinet door hinges to the face frames of cabinets often work their way loose over time. Unless they're tightened immediately, the screws will enlarge and strip the holes until it's impossible to tighten them. A quick, convenient cure can be found just inside one of the cabinets: toothpicks. Remove one loose hinge screw. Dip four or five wooden toothpicks into woodworking glue and □.then stuff them into the hole. Break the toothpicks off at the surface and replace the screw. If the holes are larger than about ¼ in., pack them with wooden matchsticks dipped in glue.

7. 11. 13. How's your carpet? In pretty good shape except for one unsightly spot? A deep cigarette burn or indelible-ink stain in your carpeting doesn't have to be permanent -a carpet-patch repair tool can quickly remove and replace the damage. The tool looks like a cookie cutter designed by Stephen King: It's about 3 inches in diameter, with two sharp razor blades protruding from its rim. You'll find the tool at a carpet shop that caters to pro installers. Also buy a peel-and-stick adhesive disk as well as a tube of carpet glue. To begin the repair, place the cutting tool over the damaged area, press down and twist until you have cut through the carpet but not the padding. Remove and discard the plug of damaged carpet. Then cut a replacement patch from a leftover carpet swatch or from an inconspicuous place, such as inside a closet. Next, remove the protective backing from the adhesive disk and slip it into the hole with the adhesive side facing up. Apply a bead of carpet glue around the hole or edge and firmly press the patch into place. Let the adhesive cure overnight, then vacuum the area to help blend the carpet fibers over the repair.

8. 12. 14. Be sure to clean that smoke-stained glass door on your wood-burning stove or fireplace. Here's how: On a cool door, spray the inside glass surface with oven cleaner. Wait about 30 minutes for the black soot to dissolve, then wipe off the glass with a damp paper towel. Repeat, if necessary, to remove any remaining stains. Caution: The glass must be completely cool before you

clean it. Spraying a hot door could crack it. ♦.15. Make sure your mini-blinds are clean as a whistle.

How? Use ordinary soft, clean dust cloths, chemically treated dust cloths, vacuum cleaner brush attachments, or other available ordinary household aids. The paint surface of the slats is quite smooth and dust is easily brushed off if done at regular intervals. To vacuum, use the brush dust head attachment and tilt slats first up, then down (but not entirely exposed) to reach the entire top and bottom surfaces. To dust, use a soft clean cloth or ♦.chemically treated dust cloth and tilt the slats as above. To wash, use a damp cloth or sponge and mild detergent. Use warm or cold water -NOT hot water. Tilt the slats as above. Protect the floor or sill from excess water. The blind can also be taken down, placed in a bathtub of mild soapy water, then rinsed clean, wiped dry, or allowed to dry completely in the open air.

1. 13. 16. Make sure there are no cracks in your ceiling. If there is, here's how to repair it: Widen the crack by using a pointed beer can opener. Draw the point along the crack with firm even pressure. Use a paintbrush dipped in water or a spray dispenser to dampen the new opening. Force prepared spackle into the crack with a putty knife or a trowel. Smooth the surface. When it is completely dry, sand, then paint.

2. 14. 17. Check your magnetic door latches. Most magnetic catches eventually fail to hold cabinet doors closed. It isn't because the magnets lose power; instead, they get pushed back, away from the metal contact plate mounted on the inside surface of the door. First, loosen the mounting screws on the magnet, slide it forward to its original position and retighten the screws. Then keep the magnet properly aligned by gluing and screwing a small wood block to the inside of the cabinet directly behind the magnet. Even if the screws loosen or the door is slammed, the wood block will hold the magnet in place.

## Decorating Tips

1. 1. Bring the summer sunshine indoors by setting small floral bouquets everywhere throughout the house. Use unexpected items to hold flowers, such as old coffee pots, egg cups, tea cups, and teapots in the kitchen. A candlestick or soup tureen can be used as a flower container in the dining room. In a laundry room, fill a washtub with a huge bouquet of wildflowers. In the bathroom, float heads of flowers in the tub or set one or two flowers in an unused soap dish with a little water and some decorative rocks.
2. 2. Summer's lush greenery can decorate your home all year long. Collect large tree leaves and ferns, and use fabric paint to transfer the images onto plain white pillow fronts. Roll the paint onto the leaf's surface with a brayer, or just brush it on. Press the painted leaf evenly onto the fabric surface. Let dry, and set paint according to manufacturer's instructions. This technique can be used on other items, like placemats, napkins and curtains. Or you can print the leaves on plain fabric and use it to create your own accessories.
3. 3. Dress an exterior wall with a dramatic display of flowers. Drill a small hole in the center of the lip area of several small terra cotta pots. Fill the pots with bright, colorful flowers and vining plants. Then simply hang the pots from a nail on the wall at every spot you'd like a plant. This idea can also be used on a porch post, or you can place several pots under a window for a clever change from a window box.
4. 4. Organize your closets -Gather several boxes labeled: To Keep, To Trash, To Sell, Un-decided. Begin sorting. Don't try to find a place for everything until your items are sorted. Group your items by category: shirts, pants, shorts, tee shirts, jeans, sweats. Decide what will be folded, what will be placed on hangers, what will go into drawers.
5. 5. Use multilevel rods for hanging items. Bins and shelf dividers keep folded items stacked. They are inexpensive to buy

and can usually be found in discount stores or home stores. This eliminates sorting through things on the floor or in drawers for purses and accessories and is worth the small investment. This will not only free up valuable drawer space, but can eliminate the need for chest of drawers altogether, therefore giving you more space in your rooms, making them more appealing to home buyers.

6. 6. 6. Hanging organizers with clear plastic divided pouches organize and display at the same time. These come with small pockets for jewelry or larger sizes for shoes, pantyhose, scarves, etc. I've used them in lieu of junk drawers for office supplies.

7. 7. 7. Think about hidden storage solutions. A chest can be used as a coffee table in a natural, casual setting. It also serves a useful purpose as a storage bin for magazines, books or an afghan. You might find an old chest or trunk at a garage sale or flea market. If you do, sand it down, then rub it with a mixture consisting of equal parts of turpentine and linseed oil mix to give it a natural look and a smooth finish.

8. 8. 8. Consider adding edging around your trees and flowerbeds. Edging adds a nice decorative touch. It neatens things up and provides a clean, crisp definition to garden plots. On the practical side, edgings also help keep soil and mulch in and grass out of well-tended beds.

9. 9. 9. Look around your garden. Is it flat? Does it need a little something? Well, stones are an inexpensive, effective, beautiful way to add life to any garden. With their graceful lines, soft hues and quiet presence, stones give structure and add character in an understated way. ♦

10. 10. 10. Connect the different areas in your yard or garden with a series of paths. Well-designed paths are irresistible--they invite, even pull, guests into the garden. Put a curve in a path that disappears around a corner and your guests will follow it to see ♦.what's around the bend. Then, let the path lead to another garden and yet another, always varying the nature of the paths and their adjacent gardens, and you will create a place of intrigue, surprise, movement, and variety.

10. 10. 11. You can add curb appeal to your home by building a brick mailbox. As a bonus, you'll be protecting your mailbox against vandalism.

11. 11. 12. Rev things up in your bathroom by adding some new towels and accessories.

12. 12. 13. Consider minor kitchen remodeling such as replacing or updating (via painting or staining) cabinets. Don't have the money or time? Consider something as simple as changing your cabinet handles or knobs to something brass or shiny can dress up otherwise dull cabinets.

13. 13. 14. Furniture look worn out? Try a slipcover!

14. 14. 15. Bathroom looking sad, but can't afford a total overhaul? Over-haul the fixtures instead by changing, say, the toilet seat, the toilet paper holder, the towel bar, the shower curtain rod. You can find attractive alternatives at hardware stores or even large department stores.

15. 15. 16. Fresh flowers and floating candles in the bathroom are beautiful touches, especially in the summer time.

16. 16. 17. Make smart use of your kitchen cabinets and pantry. If you don't use something at least once a week, pack it up and store it someplace else so your cabinet looks more spacious. Dividers and cutlery trays make efficient use of drawer space in both the kitchen and bathroom. Even if you will be taking your storage items with you, it is important to show buyers that your home offers sensible storage for bathing, cleaning and laundry items.

17. 17. 18. In the garage, take advantage of wall space. Use a board-and-peg system to hang tools and gardening equipment. Wall hooks are useful for hanging bikes or large toys. Overhead racks also keep large items off the floor and out of the way.

18. 18. 19. An under-the-bed box turns once wasted space into storage for out-of-season clothing.

19. 19. 20. Sofas or other large pieces of furniture need space away from the wall. Just pull the entire piece away from the wall - either evenly or at an angle. Once the piece has some distance from

the wall, there's room to place a permanent plant or area lamp behind it. This will draw the eye and generate interest.

20. 20. 21. Use angles when placing furniture. Off-square angles make the room warmer, and give it a casual, lived-in elegance.

21. 21. 22. Small lamps work well on kitchen counters. They make the room look more relaxed.

22. 22. 23. There is unused decorative space in the kitchen. Just look up. Cabinets and refrigerators often have dead space above them. Plants, decorative tins, things from the pantry, cookbooks, and other items work well. Don't overcrowd this area. When used properly, it can add so much to your kitchen.

23. 23. 24. Area rugs are nice additions throughout the kitchen. Consider a runner in front of the sink, a nice mat by the refrigerator, and a small rug at the back door. Have fun, use your imagination.

24. 24. 25. Discard worn furniture and move extra furniture to a storage area. Too much furniture makes the room look small.

25. 25. 26. Toys all over the place? Try some colorful new garbage cans with lids on them for storage for all those toys and their corresponding pieces. It's easy to toss the toys inside at a moment's notice for a showing. Then put the can in a closet or in a corner of a room -out of the way of your visitors.

26. 26. 27. Tassels and cording! Another fun thing to do. Dress up an old picture frame by tying a pretty corded tassel to it. Drape a corded tassel around a lampshade. Hang a tassel from your curtain rod. There are so many things you can do with these

wonderful finds! ♦.28. Plastic grocery bags accumulate fast and before you know it, you have an unsightly pile of these somewhere, taking up space. These versatile bags are strong and certainly worth saving and ♦.reusing. Store them neatly and keep them accessible by taking a clean, empty two-liter plastic soda bottle and snipping off the neck and bottom with a utility knife or tin snips. Attach the bottle to the back of a cabinet door or closet door with a single screw; be sure the enlarged neck opening faces

down. Stuff the grocery bags into the inverted bottle. To retrieve one, simply reach into the neck opening and yank it out. The bottle will hold about 15 bags.

27. 27. 29. If you want your room to appear more spacious, add a tall green plant. Healthy floor plants are attractive and fill bare spaces by adding height to a room.

28. 28. 30. Lighting is an inexpensive and effective way to enhance your home and decorating. If you have a particularly nice feature or area --perhaps a plant or artwork --spotlighting the subject can be a nice touch. And for a special mood in one of your rooms, such as the dining room, install a dimmer switch.

□.29. 31. To increase your bath's storage capacity, add a few wire □.baskets or rolling storage carts if they don't clutter the room.

29. 30. 32. Try using your pieces of furniture in unconventional ways. For example, use your baker's rack in the bathroom and fill it with towels, baskets filled with soaps, a few books, etc. Or try using it as a bookshelf in a hallway or entryway. How about using a mirrored dresser as a buffet in your dining room?

30. 31. 33. To create the illusion of more space in your bathroom, install a fashionable pedestal sink. They add charm and elegance that can't be duplicated with other types of in-cabinet sinks. And today's new models feature etched designs and decals that will complement your decor. ♦.34. To make a small room

**LARGER:** The walls, ceiling, and floor should be finished in light colors to make a room look larger. Use no more than two main colors and limit your accent pieces. Wallpaper patterns should consist of small, subtle designs, as bold or busy patterns will overpower a small room. These rules apply to window coverings and upholstery as well. A mirror, ♦.strategically placed, will make the room look larger as it reflects the rest of the area. Try placing your mirror so it reflects a window view or another larger room for a greater effect. Use scaled-down furniture and accessories to create an uncluttered look and remove anything that isn't necessary.

31. 32. 35. To diminish the look of the long, narrow room, use two tones of color on the walls. A darker color on the farthest walls will bring them in closer while a lighter color on the closest walls will make them recede. A mirror placed on the closest wall will create a wider, more open look. Furniture and accessories should be kept to a minimum near long walls. By placing furniture along these walls, the room will appear narrower. Floor coverings can create the illusion of a wider room. A tile pattern with accent tiles draws the eye across the narrow span of the room to make it appear wider. Avoid patterns that enhance the length of the room – the room will seem narrower.

□.33. 36. It's easy to brighten a room that receives little or no natural light. Natural light in north-facing rooms can seem cold □.and dismal. By using warm colors (yellows, golds, reds, and earth tones) in light shades, the room will seem brighter. Paint the ceiling white or lightly tinted. If your room has dark wood paneling and you can't part with it or don't want to paint it, you can still brighten the room. Paint the ceiling and any un-paneled walls a light, complimentary tint. Don't use pure white however, as white tends to deaden the look of natural wood.

32. 34. 37. To give the impression of a high ceiling, paint it white or lightly tinted. Dark colors will make your ceiling look lower. Avoid wallpaper on the ceiling, as this also tends to lower it.

33. 35. 38. Have wooden closet rods? How do they look? Metal clothes hangers often leave black, dirty streaks on a wooden closet rod. To avoid the streaks, snap a plastic shower-rod cover over the rod. The covers cost about \$1 each, come in several colors and can be cut with a utility knife. What's more, hangers glide easily on the plastic.

34. 36. 39. Natural-color willow baskets are a beautiful solution for organizing storage space in unusual places. They camouflage clutter while adding clean European style. Take advantage of unused space under beds, sinks, and benches or on top of cabinets. Whether stacked or set side by side, the baskets will always look tidy. Update the look of older cabinets by removing the doors and

filling the space with square baskets with handles that can be used like drawers.

35. 37. 40. Want to change the color of your mini blinds? Or simply “spruce them up”? You can with enamel spray paint. Start at the top or bottom to carefully remove cording that travels through the slats. Clean slats with a degreaser and let dry. Lay the slats out on newspaper and spray following manufacturer's instructions. Let dry overnight. Spray the other side and let dry. Replace slats into mini blind, rethread cording, and secure. You could also decoupage the surface of the mini blinds with decorative tissue paper. Seal the surface with a polyacrylic finish so the blinds can be wiped clean.

□.38. 41. Organize bathroom closet clutter. Sort larger items □.(curling irons, hair dryer, etc.) into colorfully painted woven picnic baskets with hinged lids. For smaller items like bottles, combs, and toothpaste, use similar woven baskets with dividers that are typically used for silverware. Though open on top for quick access, they easily conceal and organize things you need every day.

36. 39. 42. Have a window that doesn't provide a very good view? Consider covering up the view by adding several glass shelves in front of the window. Use the shelves to display colored glass collectibles. The light shining through the pieces will mimic the look of a stained glass window.