

Columns

Decluttering tips for homes on the market

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THPSTOCK/DREAMSTIME.COM While you may be tempted to move items from your living spaces into your basement or garage when showing your home, prospective buyers will probably want to see those places, too.

If you're planning to sell your home, a piece of advice you'll receive time and again is to declutter.

You'll hear about how a clutter-free home gives buyers an easier time imagining their own things in your space. While that sounds reasonable, life doesn't get put on 'pause' until you sell, and much of that clutter is there because you need it.

However, there are a lot of tricks for removing clutter in the main areas of your home that allow for life's daily routines to go on unhindered:

1. Kitchen countertops are the No. 1 clutter culprit — the coffee maker, blender, kettle, toaster and canisters are all items you may not use daily but which you may not be ready to pack away. A great trick is to select any countertop items that are less-frequently used and pop them inside a cupboard (you may have to pack up the Christmas roasting pan or the crystal wine glasses to make some space). This way, you can use them when needed, but you can scoot them out of sight any time buyers come through.
2. Living rooms are where a lot of everyday activity happens, so they can be a bit tricky to keep clear. If your room is a dedicated play area for tots, a stylish tote can be used to clean up toys in a flash and can even add charm to the room if it's tucked neatly amongst your furniture. Similarly, you can stash remotes, gaming controllers and DVD cases inside a decorative paper storage box, which will look more like an accent piece than an easily accessible hiding place for electronics.
3. If you have a small bathroom that lacks storage space, you've probably already tried everything to cut down on clutter; yet somehow your toiletries always wind up back in sight. Installing a set of wall-mounted or free-standing shelves can do the trick or you can place a few woven storage baskets under the sink. Even if your items are still visible, this simple organization will show buyers that a small bathroom can be chic.
4. Many people use basements and garages for storage, jamming these spaces with boxes and summer gear will make the whole house seem like it lacks storage. Better to clear out these rooms to highlight their spaciousness. If you've already started packing and need a place to put boxes, consider asking a family member or friend if you could send the stack their way, or look into renting a storage locker. If these areas of your home were full before you started packing, maybe it's time to reconsider holding onto all of it — why not have an autumn yard sale or donate the items to charity?

Your back will thank you on moving day!

Life doesn't stop when you're selling your home, and if you've got kids, it can be particularly challenging to keep your household "show ready." However, it's better to plan your organizational strategy and go the extra mile, rather than simply cramming closets and cupboards in the hopes that no one peeks inside (they will).

Who knows — after putting your savvy space-saving plans into action, you might even carry your new habits into your next home.

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