



4 Things You Should Always Get Rid of to Make Your Space Look Bigger



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Credit: Heather Keeling

When it comes to arranging a room in your house to show to a potential buyer, home stagers rarely *add* new items. For them, it's more about editing and refining than bringing in additional furniture and decor.

As celebrity home stager and interior designer (and 2011 HGTV "Design Star" finalist) Cathy Hobbs, owner of the Manhattan-based company Design Recipes, puts it, when a

potential buyer walks through an apartment or home for sale, they're looking at "the space, not the stuff."

As such, truly effective staging might require getting rid of some of your "stuff" to make your property feel bright, open, and spacious. "One of the things that we always suggest is that we take a sieve, and we shake it, and we get rid of the excess — those things that aren't needed in a space," Hobbs says. Here are four things you should always eliminate to make your space look bigger.

Complete Furniture Sets

"There are a number of things that can automatically close in a space," Hobbs says. "And that tends to be things like overstuffing a space with too much furniture." Buying the whole display from the furniture store — from the sofa to the loveseat to the ottoman — is a no-go, she says. There's no need to have the same upholstery everywhere.

Similarly, Chicago-based stager Autumn Boswell of Interior Drama Home Staging says she'll often take out large sectionals and sofas and replace them with accent chairs or a loveseat, but she never includes both. This allows potential buyers to move through a space better and to see *more* of the space.

Window Dressings

Curtains, valances, and cornices can look clunky and dated — by years and sometimes even decades, says home stager Dianna Scarpa of Opal Home Staging in New Jersey. Plus, those chunkier window treatments tend to collect dust.

"Once you take those down, people are often amazed at how much brighter and bigger the room feels," Scarpa says. "Truly a game changer." If you're still looking for a little privacy, Scarpa, Hobbs, and Boswell say it's OK to leave white sheers up because they still let a lot of bright light in.



Dark Paint

Similarly, to brighten a space, Boswell and Hobbs suggest swapping dark, dramatic paint choices for a basic white. “It makes everything brighter and makes everything look much bigger,” Boswell says.

Darker paint colors are popular right now because they make a space feel cozy and warm when you’re living there, Hobbs says, but they can visually close in a space. “Having white walls automatically sends the message that this property is move-in ready. It’s ready for someone to come in and customize as they choose,” she says. Her go-to white shade is Benjamin Moore’s Decorator’s White.

Entertainment Centers

“When I grew up, televisions were pieces of furniture,” Hobbs says. “They were in cabinets. But that’s not what people are looking to see these days.” A large TV cabinet will take up too much space and thus, make a room feel crowded.

If you do have a television in your space, sleek and thin with hidden cords is the way to go, Hobbs says.

So how do you choose what to pare down? Consider the suggestions above, and then follow this basic recipe for staging: Hobbs says she always starts with an inspiration piece (a sofa, a rug, or a piece of art) and adds neutral pieces in varying textures from there. Having a hierarchy of what's most important in the space can help you realize what needs to go.