

Don's Home News

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How to Stage Your Home Simply and Cheaply

To misquote Shakespeare, all your home's a stage. So when it's on the market, you want to guarantee that the audience/buyer enjoys the show.

That means staging your home to maximize its appeal. An increasing number of buyers report being more willing to purchase a home after viewing attractive online photos, and real estate agents report that staging impacts clients' decisions to buy—and may contribute to higher offers.

While professional stagers are available, and some agents offer staging services, you can take simple steps to stage it yourself. Start at the beginning: You don't want to turn off potential buyers before they walk in. Brighten your porch with containers of spring flowers, and make sure the yard is clean.

Once inside, they should feel instantly at home. You want them to picture themselves living here. Remove personal items. If something reflects you—not them—then take it out.

Often, people move because they want more space: Make your house appear spacious and remember that neutral paint colors help rooms look larger. Play up the beautiful features of each room and play down the less attractive elements. Remove clutter and keep closets organized. And focus extra attention on the living room, kitchen, and master suite; your potential buyers will.

Think minimal: Remove as much of your furniture as possible. Professional stagers suggest bedrooms should only contain a large bed, dresser, and nightstand. Finally, don't neglect your visitors' sense of smell. Clean your home thoroughly, board out the pets, and open windows to bring spring indoors.

Are you Searching for a New Home online?

Now you can search Metro Atlanta Listings in Real Time using the same Tools I use.

Are you tired of finding the perfect property in Trulia or Zillow only to learn the property has been under contract for a week?

Why waste your time with the aggregator sites when I can set you up with an account that will allow you to search in real time for properties with the same tools that agents use? Imagine, no more stale and out of date data like you are getting now.

[Email](#) me today with the message, "set me up with a Listing Book account."

It is FREE and takes me only minutes to set it up for you.

Your Home Buyers Now Look Beyond Bling to Basic

If you want to recoup your renovation dollars when you sell, be sure to repair that leaky roof before springing for a fabulous new kitchen. While a new kitchen may sound seductive, simply upgrading it is likely all you'll need to do to attract prospective buyers. Today's buyers are purchasing the basics, and they want them in good shape.

According to Barbara Pronin in a recent RIS Media's Housecall blog, there are eight home remodeling projects that will pay you back. Mind you, Pronin doesn't claim you'll recover your total investment, but she does suggest you'll recoup 80 percent or better, quite simply because "they increase the value of the property." Pronin lists the following as the key payback projects:

- New garage doors
- A wood deck
- Exterior siding
- Attic conversions
- Kitchen updates
- New energy-efficient windows
- Basement remodel
- Backup power generator.

Kathy McCleary agrees. In HGTV's online Remodeling magazine, McCleary writes, "Basic maintenance, such as the roof and exterior painting, are frequently more important than an awesome kitchen." She quotes Sal Alfano, Remodeling's editorial director. "Buyers want to take the basic systems for granted ... Maintenance can chew up a lot of cash quickly, and people are afraid of that."

Hot urban markets may be the exception. Says McCleary, "In the hottest housing markets, springing for a kitchen or bath remodel is a surefire investment, often returning more than 100 percent of the cost."

Plumbing Problems Do Happen: So Prepare Ahead of Time

You never really think about a plumber—until you need one. And then you may be forced to pay more than you should. Avoid costly plumbing emergencies. Following are steps you can take to deal with your plumbing problems quickly and with confidence:

Understand your plumbing:

Understand what's going on behind your walls. At the very least, knowing the location of your home's main water shutoff valve will help you stop leaks and floods until your plumber gets there—possibly saving you thousands of dollars in water damage.

Connect with your plumber before an emergency:

Most experts advise establishing a connection with a plumber ahead of time so that you're prepared. Choose one who is well-rated and preferably recommended by a trusted source.

Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at donzahnle@gmail.com for the answer.

What cult classic flick was first introduced in 1975?

Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you've enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbor, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don't forget to give me a call or send me an email!

If a price seems too good to be true ...

it probably is: Homeowners who've been through it warn against accepting unusually low bids and partial quotes. Plumbers who won't give you an estimate of the full cost of the job are likely to ask for more to complete it. And then you're stuck.

Contractors may inflate prices later if you don't get a quote in writing. And be wary of deposits. True, most plumbers need to buy supplies before starting the job, but don't kick in more than you have to. You probably should only put down 10 percent of the total cost, unless there's a compelling reason for increasing the deposit.

Certainly you can hope your plumbing emergency doesn't happen; but be prepared if it does.

Are You Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

Do you want to know how the price of your home has changed in today's market? Do you want to know for how much other homes in your neighborhood are selling?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I can help.

Either call 404-939-1309 or [email](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) me for a no-obligation, professional evaluation.

I won't pressure you into listing with me or waste your time. [Read about how I feel about pressure!](#) I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at donzahnle@gmail.com and we will arrange a time to get together.

Worth Reading

Yes, Uber Drivers Are Ranking You...

By Bill Trancer
LinkedIn

Read this before "Yelp"ing about the lousy service at last night's restaurant: Its staff could be reviewing you. Reviews now go both ways, says Bill Trancer in his book, *Everyone's a Critic: Winning Customers in a Review-Driven World*. Not only can Uber users rank their drivers, but drivers are ranking riders. And one Los Angeles restaurant embarrassed customers who skipped out on their reservations by tweeting their names. More:

<https://tinyurl.com/May-good-read-1>

40 Brilliant Idioms That Can't Be Translated Literally

By Helene Batt and Kate Torgovnick
TED Blog

Many languages contain idioms that are nonsense when translated literally, for example your Polish friend may ask you if you fell from a Christmas tree. Translators of TED Talks compiled a list of some of their favorite idioms from around the world ... and provided literal translations. More:

<https://tinyurl.com/May-good-read-2>

DIY Projects for Every Room

By Samantha Zabell
Real Simple

Is home decorating on your summer to-do list? This slideshow features simple tricks to transform any room in hours. Brighten children's furniture by accenting the bottoms of chairs and tables in the kids' favorite colors; turn white walls into galleries of photos, artwork, or posters; jazz your laundry room up by painting vinyl floors—the wilder the better; and add a hip factor to your bathroom counters with bath salts in mason jars.

More: <https://tinyurl.com/May-good-read-3>

Easy and Affordable: “Going Green” at Home

Green living isn’t limited to big projects like installing solar panels. There are simple and affordable ways to go green. The best part: Green living may also save money and make your home more comfortable. Here are three suggestions:

Use green products: All that seems “green” isn’t necessarily so; “green labels” aren’t regulated. So always check ingredients of cleaning products, paint, sealers, and even windows before buying. Many well-known manufacturers now offer green products (particularly house paint) with low or no volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Some VOCs can be damaging to human health.

Reduce reuse recycle: It’s not just a slogan; there are lots of ways to make easy, everyday changes that can have an

impact:

Wherever possible, purchase products and materials made from recycled materials.

Use reusables, such as washable cups and plates, instead of paper or foam, and washable rags instead of paper towels. Also reuse—don’t toss—plastic containers, glass jars, and paper or plastic bags.

Add compostable leftovers from meals to a compost pile for richer soil and a reduction in food waste. But check what’s compostable and what isn’t. Try: <https://tinyurl.com/Compost-wise> Find home products, like flooring, porch posts, countertops, cabinets, doors, and light fixtures at salvage yards and Habitat for Humanity ReStores.

Insulate and energize: Green homes are energy-efficient, and there are many energy savvy products available now to make your home green—many of which can be installed with tools you already have. Consider:

- Having boilers/furnaces professionally cleaned.
- Insulating water heaters and hot water pipes.
- Looking for Energy Star labels on appliances and electronics, such as TVs.
- Installing energy-efficient lighting and programmable thermostats.
- Checking attics and home exteriors for leaks and torn insulation.

Spend Sunday Online ... and Save

So you have a yen for travel and you’re thinking of getting away from it all. Great! Now that you’ve got the “what” and the “where” (and likely the “who”), what about the “how?” As in, how will you get to your dream destination as cheaply as possible? In other words, do you know when you should buy the tickets for your getaway?

Think Sunday. That’s right: Sunday, not Tuesday, as we’ve been led to believe in the past. According to Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC), if you purchase your tickets on Sunday, you get the best deal.

To save on domestic flights, it’s also a good idea to buy your tickets eight weeks ahead of your preferred departure date; ARC found that the average single fare on a domestic flight was \$409 eight weeks before departure, compared to the regular average fare of \$496. And for international flights, the ideal purchase time is twenty-four weeks before departure; you can save more than \$300.

This method isn’t foolproof—other factors enter in—but if you want to save on your dream escape, it’s probably worth spending a Sunday online.

This Month’s Smile: DIY Jokes

We all love to laugh at—or with—the Do-it-Yourselfer in our homes. But there’s just a bit of admiration accompanying the laughter. Here are some great jokes about DIYers whose projects don’t always turn out right.

Last week I replaced every window in my house. Then I discovered I had a crack in my glasses.

I got a self-assembly wardrobe. It didn’t work. I got it out of the box, but it just

didn’t do a thing.

I put six locks on my door. When I go out, I lock every other one. I thought that no matter how long somebody stands there picking locks, they’re also locking three of them.

And, especially for the DIY overachiever: *My husband just built a set of shelves for our house and now he’s writing some books to put on them.*

Ask the Agent: This Month’s Question

What is the benefit of using a real estate agent?

According to recent research, more than 80 per cent of home buyers opt to purchase their properties through a real estate agent.

Yes, prospective buyers will screen homes and research neighborhoods online, but when it comes to viewings and negotiating, they’ll turn to an agent. And for sellers, your agent is an expert on your neighborhood “solds” and will give you accurate 411 to price your home appropriately.

Real estate agents have extensive, ongoing training, belong to associations and boards, have a responsibility to adhere to strict standards, and provide strong negotiating skills. An agent has networks to tap for anything you may need as part of the buying or selling process.

But most important, real estate pros are there for you, helping you through one of the biggest financial investments you’ll make.

To search for listings online click [here](#)

www.DonZahnle.com

			6				9	5
	3	6				4		7
5			2		9			6
		9		3				1
	6						7	
4				9		6		
6			9		5			3
1		4				2	5	
3	7				4			

Sudoku instructions: Complete the 9×9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3×3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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Thanks for reading! If you would like to tell me what you think about this newsletter, or if you're thinking of buying or selling real estate, please get in touch.

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Recipe: Grilled Asian-Inspired Tacos

Serves 6

1 tablespoon sriracha sauce (optional)
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 1-pound beef sirloin steaks
12 corn tortillas, warmed before serving
1/2 cup cilantro, roughly chopped
1 cup shredded Asian pear
Lime wedges

Directions

In a medium bowl, whisk together the sriracha, ginger, brown sugar, vinegar, soy sauce, and oil. Pour into a large plastic zip bag with steaks. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least an hour and up to a day, turning occasionally. Heat grill to medium-high. Brush grates with oil. Remove steaks from marinade and place on grill. Cook for 4-5 minutes on each side or until internal temperature reads 130-140 degrees for medium rare. Remove from grill and rest for 10 minutes. Slice thinly. Divide among warmed tortillas and top with cilantro, shredded pear, and a squeeze of lime.

