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In the bedroom, pick textures and neutral tones that will appeal to a range of buyers. "Bedrooms should be staged with rest and relaxation in mind," advises Brown.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Check out the photos of your space in online real estate galleries and ensure they highlight the best features of your space, such as the fireplace, view or high ceilings.

to showcase and put the others away. Keep items you need in stackable storage boxes that will fit in your closet. But don't overstuff your storage space—if your closets look too full, people will assume your house doesn't have enough space.

Next, fix any flow problems. Make sure it's easy to move around your home without bumping into chairs and coffee tables. If not, decide on a layout that will allow groups of people to pass through your house easily and comfortably.

It's also critical to make sure that your décor and other cosmetic details are attractive and up-to-date. "People place value on what they see," says Arsenaault. "If people see an old flowered couch, they perceive that the house is dated and isn't worth the asking price. But if you put a cover on it and add a few up-to-date pillows, those same buyers will have a whole new impression of your home."

Smallwood suggests giving bathrooms a fresh look by leaving a couple of flowers in a vase on the vanity. Adding some new white towels, bathmats and an unused bar of soap will go a long way.

Finally, she stresses the importance of appealing to your buyers' senses. "Bake homemade cookies," she says. "Have fresh flowers around. These are little things that make people happy and get them thinking, 'This is what my house could be like.'" ❄



Staging on a budget

Making your home look desirable doesn't have to be expensive. Save money with these easy tips:

- **Borrow from a friend or relative:** Need some nice generic artwork or an eye-catching vase? Find a friend who has what you need and see if they'll lend it to you.
- **Freshen the paint:** Paint doesn't have to be neutral, but it should appeal to the masses. Update your paint with a hue that's current and conservative.
- **Update your look:** Remove outdated wallpaper and update light fixtures and door handles to make your house look move-in ready.
- **Keep it impersonal:** Put anything personal out of sight, including family portraits, trophies and other memorabilia. Help potential buyers feel like the home could be theirs.
- **Rent it:** Don't leave your vacant house empty. Furniture rental companies offer surprisingly reasonable rates.

Photos: Farm Gate Imaging/www.farmgateimaging.ca



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