

Staging a Bathroom without Breaking the Bank

BY ELIZABETH WEINTRAUB



Many home buyers feel slightly uncomfortable looking at bathrooms while touring homes. Buyers will spend more time in the kitchen, living room and bedrooms than they will in a bathroom. I suspect they don't want to think about what usually goes on in the bathroom. Bathrooms are not generally a place where strangers share communal experiences. So, they poke their heads in the door -- often without stepping foot in the room, like if they don't actually step into the bathroom, they're not really in the bathroom -- glance left to right, and leave.

That takes all of three seconds. So, that's what you've got to impress a buyer -- three seconds. Sellers can spend hours staging a bathroom for that three-second reaction.

Getting the Bathroom Ready for Staging

Get out the bleach and start scrubbing. If you prefer not to use bleach, find an organic substitute, but bleach works best. Your goal is to clean the bathroom from top to bottom. It should sparkle and radiate cleanliness.

- Get rid of mould. Almost every bathroom contains some form of mold, especially in corners.
- Remove the covers from light fixtures and exhaust fan, wash, dry and replace.
- If your light fixtures are rated for 100-watt, replace the bulbs with 100-watt.
- Remove prescriptions from the medicine cabinet, and any other personal items you don't want a buyer to find, and store this stuff in a safe place.
- Throw out worn, frayed, or outdated rugs and towels.
- If wallpaper is peeling, steam it off the walls and paint the walls with a light-colored semi-gloss.
- Use Lime-A-Way or a similar product to remove soap grime and calcium residue from shower doors.
- Fix leaky or dripping faucets.
- If cabinet hardware is weathered, replace knobs and pulls.
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Shop for Bathroom Staging Supplies

The effect you're going for is to create a spa-like experience. Spa accessories are related to water and nature. Think Asian influence and choose items in tranquil, soft colours. Don't be afraid to incorporate contrasting textures by combining smooth surfaces with rough material such as polished pebbles nestled at the base of an aloe vera plant. You don't have to spend a fortune to create the illusion of a spa. Check out discount stores such as Target, Wal-Mart, Costco or Tuesday Morning for inexpensive supplies. Here are types of spa accessories for you to pick and choose among:

- Towels, rugs, wash cloths
- Bamboo or wooden trays
- Candles in various sizes
- Green plants
- Small water fountains
- Scented soaps
- Ribbon and rough twine
- Twigs and berries

- Sea shells
- Glass containers filled with cotton balls or Q-tips
- Fluffy white robe
- Padded satin hanger
- Creams, lotions, shampoos or bath salts with unusual or antique packaging
- Sea sponges and bath brushes.

Staging the Bathroom

Now that you've bought all this stuff, what do you do with it? You don't want to clutter the vanity or make the room feel overcrowded. Less is better. Think simplicity.

- Start by layering a few towels on the rack by artfully folding in thirds a larger towel for the bottom and place a smaller towel on top. Tie the center loosely with ribbon or twine. You can also glue twigs and berries to the ribbon.
- Create displays by grouping items together in odd numbers such as 1, 3 or 5. Vary the height of candles and jars.
- Slip a white robe on a padded hanger and hang it on the door or from the shower door.
- Put a stack of folded towels on a bamboo tray and arrange a few unwrapped bars of scented soap next to the towels.
- Consider a placing a new rug next to the bathtub or shower.
- Use greenery sparingly to add life and color.
- Arrange bath products, drop a few flower petals around them. Be creative.
- If you have space and so desire, fire up the water fountain.

At the time of writing, Elizabeth Weintraub, CalBRE #00697006, is a Broker-Associate at Lyon Real Estate in Sacramento, California.