

FENG SHUI 101

It's a topic discussed in most major lifestyle magazines and on your favorite home decorating shows—feng shui. While enjoying newfound popularity on this half of the globe, feng shui is an ancient art that has been practiced for centuries in China. Meaning "wind" (feng) and "water" (shui), this ancient discipline is used by many to create a harmonious home environment, and its principles can be applied to almost any decorating style. In addition, using feng shui techniques can attract potential buyers by increasing the perceived value of your home. Below are a few tips on how to harness the energy and vitality of feng shui within your own home.

- 1 **Reflecting disharmony.** Remove or cover large mirrors in the bedroom if you don't sleep well.
- 2 **Room with a view.** Place your bed to give you the widest view of the room. Your bed shouldn't be in direct line with the door. Paint the bedroom walls in a color scheme that is both pleasant and inviting.
- 3 **Calming sounds.** Hang wind chimes outside your front door to create a soothing environment for occupants and guests.
- 4 **Writing on the wall.** Try to avoid having completely bare walls. Group together non-personal pictures or hang up interesting art pieces in a diagonal or staggered pattern.
- 5 **Go with the flow.** Place a blue or black doormat at your front door to encourage good things to flow in like water.



- 6 **The color of love.** Include the romance colors—white, pink and red—in your room. But don't overdose with a red wall because too much red can trigger anger.
- 7 **Plants for energy.** Healthy plants generate positive energy. Avoid dried flowers because they have no energy left.
- 8 **Look overhead.** Move beds, couches and desks from under any overhead beams to keep energy flowing.
- 9 **Less is more.** When arranging furniture, less is better. Too much clutter can restrict the potential of a great room.
- 10 **Create positive impressions.** Keep counters clean, closets organized and clutter concealed in order to project an organized and stress-free environment for you and your guests.



SETTING THE STAGE

How staging your home
can make it more livable
(and sell faster, too)



Staging a home. The idea of staging a home is to make it more attractive to buyers; however, it's an applicable concept even when you're not looking to sell. It's really about making your home livable, attractive and a healthier "nest" for you and your family. Whether staging your home for yourself or for a potential buyer, the act of creating that powerful first impression can be done inexpensively. For a minimal investment, you can increase the perceived value of your home dramatically, which may result in a shorter selling time and a higher sales price. There are a few distinct differences between staging your home for life versus staging your home for a sale. Read on for a few tips, no matter what your situation is.

Your stuff.

Staging for life—Staging your home is about decorating with your tastes, reflecting your individual style.

Staging for sale—When putting your house on the market, it's important to consider the buyer. What does the average buyer need to see in order to fall in love with your home? Try to avoid leaving personal items—such as toothbrushes on the bathroom counter—in plain sight. Keep it clean and simple, and focus on highlighting the best features your home has to offer.

First impressions.

Whether you're staging for your own life or staging for a sale, you only have one chance to make a first impression on visitors. Potential buyers may only be in your home for three or four minutes, so you want those first moments to be positive. Don't forget simple yet significant improvements to your home's exterior like mowing the lawn and trimming dead branches (especially near windows and doors). Place some pots with colorful flowers on the porch. Give the front door a fresh coat of paint. Your home will now give visitors a warm welcome, whether they're over for a personal visit or as a potential buyer.

Less is more.

Staging for life—Ask your real estate agent or a professional stager the single greatest improvement you can do to make your home more livable and they'll tell you to get rid

of the clutter. Having a bit of organization and eliminating unnecessary "stuff" in your home, including piles of junk mail and old magazines, will help to create a more open environment.

Staging for sale—When putting your home on the market, you want it to look lived in, but you don't want home buyers focusing on your collection of ceramic cows instead of noticing the custom cabinets you had installed. Most professionals also advise putting personal pictures away. This helps home buyers imagine your home as their home, rather than getting distracted by your photos. Remember to clean out closets so they appear more spacious, and don't forget to organize or clear out medicine cabinets, as potential buyers are likely to open those too.

A room with a use.

Staging for life—You may have specific uses for various rooms in your home (using a spare bedroom as a craft room, or setting up a treadmill and weight-lifting equipment in the garage), and this is exactly how it should be if you're staging your home for your own life. Don't feel bound by the limitations of a room's label.

Staging for sale—On the flip side, it's pivotal to let home buyers see rooms as they were originally intended. You may have decided to nix your formal living room to create an impromptu yoga studio, but for the sake of home shoppers, consider turning rooms back to their original state.

Perform an inexpensive and quick makeover for these rooms by hanging sheer curtains to let in daylight and replacing aging light fixtures and switches.

Freshen up.

Staging for life—We all have our routine cleaning schedules, but consider doing little extras for yourself. Touch up the paint in your lived-in rooms, and treat yourself to a few houseplants to liven up your living areas. Remember, a little can go a long way.

Staging for sale—Channel your inner cleaning lady and decorator. Steam-clean the carpets, touch up the paint and add emotional warmth with throw pillows, dramatic plants and candles. For that "Architectural Digest" look, clear off the counters in the kitchen and bathroom. An inexpensive way to add color is with a vase of vibrant flowers, neatly folded towels or a bowl of fruit.

