

February 2015

HOMEFIT

Exercise the Best Ins and Outs of Home Ownership

Modern Window
Treatments for
Updating Your
Kitchen

Why
Overpriced
Listings
Scare
Buyers

What You Wished
You Knew About
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Will a Home
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Sink You?

6 LOW COST TIPS TO
SUCCESSFULLY STAGE YOUR HOME

Letter from the Editors



Whether you are buying or selling a home, there could be obstacles. Consider this issue to be your official guide to help you along the process.

Are you worried that your open house has not attracted enough potential buyers? The biggest reason for this is because the seller may have overpriced the value of the house. We offer tips for checking if your value was overpriced and the possible repercussions.

When updating your home, it is important to consider modernizing your kitchen window treatments. We got you covered with 7 must-see tips that will make your kitchen more aesthetically pleasing and make you look like a pro.

There are many advantages and disadvantages to buying a home with a swimming pool. In many cases, a swimming pool can help increase the property value for a home. On the other hand, it can be costly. We weigh the pros and the cons of the issue to help you decide.

Selling a home can be very competitive. That is why sellers need as much help as possible to stand out and make your home more attractive by staging. We offer 6 low cost tips to stage your home successfully for selling.

Have you ever considered joining a homeowner association? Do you know what these organizations are all about? To help you understand, we provide insights to the rules, regulations and guidelines for homeowner associations.

A home theater is the perfect family room in a house. Some families avoid making a home theater because of the cost. We discuss how easy and cost effective it is to build a home theatre on a budget.

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did. Please send us requests for specific topics you would like to see in the future!

Feel free to contact us if you have questions or would like your friends and family added to our distribution list.



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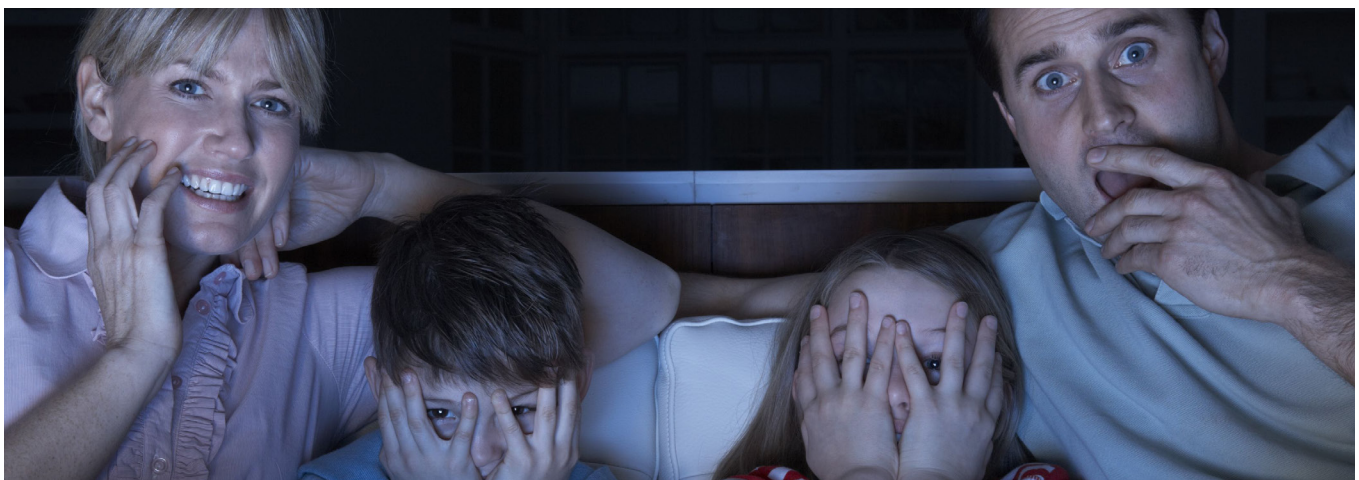
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Why Overpriced Listings Scare Buyers

Your house has been for sale and there has been hardly any interest. You think you have followed all the rules.

Your property has great curb appeal. You have made some fantastic upgrades and your home is immaculate looking. Yet open houses have not attracted many potential buyers and offers are scarce.

You ask yourself, "What's the problem?"

There are a number of possible answers involving psychological and practical reasoning.

First, you need to examine if your house is priced competitively in your market.

An overpriced listing raises a number of questions for the buyer.

- Does the seller actually want to sell the property?
- Is the seller working with a real estate professional?
- If the seller has not done due diligence in coming up with a listing price, what other aspects of the property have been ignored?

According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), a seller should receive offers within the first 10 showings of a property.

NAR also says if two weeks pass and there have not been any showings, then your property is overpriced.

Buying and selling a home involves making emotional decisions, as well as, financial decisions.

Sellers have emotional attachments and place value on the amount of money and work they have put into their home.

The buyer doesn't place a value on the seller's history in the house or upgrade the seller has made. Buyers often don't like the upgrades and would have done them differently and more suited to their tastes.

Educated Buyers

There are numerous tools available for any buyer to make



educated and well-thought out decisions when realizing the "American Dream."

In the Internet age, buyers are savvy. They still rely on real estate professionals to help navigate the process, but the Internet has created a new breed of home buyers. There are numerous websites to help buyers research and understand the market's value.

Because they are better informed, buyers are unlikely to walk through a house that is overpriced. At the same time, real estate agents don't want to show their clients a house that is overpriced. If they did, they would risk their reputation as well as their client's business and friendship.

Most real estate professionals agree that a property is most marketable and likely to sell when it's fresh on the market. But sellers often place an unrealistic value on their home. They believe if someone really falls in love with their property the buyer will overpay.

The fact is that a home's value falls within a certain price range no matter how much a potential buyer likes the property.

Sending a Bad Message

A house that is overpriced might tell a buyer that the owner is not serious about selling, that the owner is in no hurry to sell or the owner is ignoring the advice of their real estate agent.

A buyer might forgo making an offer on an overpriced house simply because he doesn't want to waste time.

More likely than not, there will be other properties that are competitively priced in or near the same neighborhood.

Negotiating is an essential element to buying and selling a house, and even though a seller is more than willing to reduce the price during negotiations, many buyers don't like or are unwilling to "play the game" with a seller, who is asking an exorbitant price.

A seller who has listed a property aggressively high might also be seen as someone the buyer will not want to negotiate with and who is unreasonable.

The buyer will look elsewhere or simply wait for the price to be reduced before making an offer.

Overpricing Repercussions

Trying to sell your overpriced house has more consequences.



When a potential buyer sees a house has been listed for a long period of time, red flags are raised as to why the property has not sold.

- Is there something wrong with the house?
- Is it in a less desirable neighborhood?

Buyers might not even look for reasons; they just move on to the next property.

Buyers usually narrow their choices of homes to walk through. That number varies, but what doesn't change is that any property that is out of their price range likely will not make the final list of homes to visit.

Serious buyers are not going to waste their time and often are in a situation themselves where they must secure a new home as quickly as possible.

In the end, owners who overprice their home eventually reduce the price and end up selling, but not before a lengthy bout of anxiety, anger and frustration.

Real estate agents advise sellers to picture themselves as buyers and ask how motivated would they be to view and make an offer on a home that was overpriced. The answer is clear: they wouldn't.



Modern Window Treatments for Updating Your Kitchen

When it comes to upgrading your home, some people tend to think too large. Whether it a complete remodel of a bedroom or bathroom, an addition to a garage or even a complete overhaul of the front or backyard, homeowners can run the risk of biting off more than they can chew.

In reality, some of the best and most noticeable improvements start off much smaller than you realize.

The kitchen, for most families, has long served as the hub for all the home activity so it would

only make sense to start there when thinking about updating your home.

Luckily, we've got you covered with a few tips to help modernize window treatments and give your kitchen a more up-to-date look.

1. Mind Your Materials

Because most kitchen windows tend to be found near sinks and stove tops, a little bit of discretion must be practiced when selecting blinds, shutters or drapes.

Any sort of spatters or spills

that occur can be soaked up by certain materials, like fabrics and wood, more than others.

This translates into more time spent cleaning or conditioning, in the case of wood, your window coverings.

Plastics, vinyl, metals and other easy-to-clean surfaces work better overall and cut down on the time spent to clean them.

2. Maximize Natural Light

Natural light is essential to creating a more inviting and larger look kitchen space.

Sticking to monochromatic colors for your drapes or curtains not only reduces the risk of making your kitchen look too “busy”, it also establishes uniformity.

3. Embellish A Little

Many of today’s modern-day kitchens are crammed full of stainless steel appliances, dark and brooding counter tops, cabinetry and post-contemporary accouterments.

It only makes sense to utilize window space to give your kitchen a sense of color and personality.

Patterned Roman and roller shades have the best effect and come in a virtually limitless array of colors and designs.

Tailor specific patterns and color palettes to your liking, maximizing the modern look in your kitchen.

4. Keep it Zen, Man

Bamboo blinds and rice paper shades are just two examples of a handful of ways you can enhance the modern look of your kitchen windows while creating a calming, Zen-like atmosphere in the kitchen area.

Accompanying decor such as a lucky bamboo plant, oriental tea set or even an elongated sand garden can be placed in the window’s sill to accentuate the look and feel.

5. Go Green!

For people who like the eco-friendly look, natural fabrics and materials like hemp, jute or 100% recycled paper are all alternatives to more synthetic choices.

Remember, though, to keep your colors as natural as possible. Prices for these kinds of material tend to go up when you do more to customize and alter them.

6. Always Use Protection

As much as you may rely on your kitchen windows to bring the light in, some emphasis should be placed on keeping harmful UVA and UVB rays out as well.

When selecting curtains or blinds for your windows, look for brands that advertise any kind of protection qualities against any harmful rays.

Products, such as blackout shades and solar shades, usually have an indicator number on the packaging that displays what percentage of protection they provide.

7. Beat the Heat, Too!

Speaking of solar shades, they are doubly useful by protecting your kitchen, and invariably your home, against direct sunlight.

This can raise temperatures within the home and directly affect cooling costs, especially as you move into the warmer spring and summer months. And much like if you leave your car in direct sunlight for too long, over time that light can fade wooden cabinets and floors, crack and age any leather accents and completely wash out fabric curtains.

Tackling home improvement projects with a more focused approach can open the doors to a whole new realm of possibilities.

Although modernizing kitchen window treatments may seem like a drop in the bucket of all the things you may want to accomplish with your home, it’s both an aesthetically and financially sound decision that can put you on the path to home improvement success.





Will a Home with a Pool Sink You?

Finally, you have found what seems to be the home of your dreams!

The property has beautiful curb appeal. You love the location and you're ready to make an offer, but the house has a swimming pool.

Is it a good idea to purchase?

There are plenty of advantages and disadvantages to buying a home with a swimming pool.

At first blush, owning a home with a swimming pool sounds like a fantastic idea.

Many homebuyers are quick to fall in love with the idea of having one. They view it as a focal point

for kicking back and relaxing.

During the heat of the day, cooling off in your own backyard pool is enticing.

Night swims under the stars never gets old and entertaining possibilities can be endless.

But there certainly a number of considerations to weigh before going off the deep end and buying a property that you might regret.

Property Value

In the Southwest portion of the United States, a home's value will increase more than 10 percent if there is a swimming pool, according to the National

Association of Realtors.

The remainder of the nation will witness a 7.7 percent spike in property value of homes with a swimming pool.

In recent years, swimming pools also have become part of a trend that involves being blended into part of the landscaping and can increase property value.

Costs and Maintenance

Homeowners fall in love with the idea of taking a nighttime dip. The sound of a waterfall is soothing. The added beauty of a pool can be euphoric, but when homeowners find out about the maintenance and cost to keep a

swimming pool clean from debris and algae, that love quickly turns to disdain.

If you are going to have a swimming pool, understand that its upkeep is a lot of work and is never ending, even in the winter.

If you are considering buying a home with a swimming pool, be sure to examine the pump and heater.

If they are not working properly, your pool could be rendered useless until you have the pump and/or heater replaced.

Consider purchasing a home warranty that covers repair and replacement costs of the pump and heater.

Safety

The dangers of owning a home with a swimming pool become evident every summer. Drownings are not common, but when they do occur and are on the nightly news, safety issues come to the forefront.

There are options to diminish the risk of a child falling into the pool. Consider erecting a fence with a locking door. Keep proper life-saving equipment handy and know how to use the equipment.

Even if your children are capable swimmers, there is always the fear that a child in the neighborhood might wander into your yard and fall into the pool.

Drownings are not the only safety hazard. Most pools are equipped with lights for swimming at night.

If the electric connections are not grounded, a swimmer could be electrocuted.

One danger seldom considered comes from faulty or loose pool drain covers. The force of a pool's suction is so powerful, it's nearly impossible for a swimmer to break free.

A swimmer with long hair might not be able to escape the

powerful grip of the suction and likely will end up drowning.

Another unseen danger results if the water is not balanced properly. In this case, the swimming pool could become a breeding ground for any number of disease-carrying bacteria.

Health and Fitness

Homebuyers might not be aware of the advantages a swimming pool presents for a healthy lifestyle.

Swimming is considered an aerobic exercise and just walking back and forth in the pool offers great health benefits.

Along with the physical benefits there is a distinct mental benefit to owning a pool. Maintenance of the pool takes time and many homeowners use the time when they are skimming the pool of debris or when they are brushing and cleaning the deck as an opportunity to reflect on life and take it slow and easy.

Whatever you decide, be aware that owning a pool can be rewarding, but a pool won't take care of itself. It can be a costly endeavor and will require some of your time.





6 Low Cost Tips to Stage Your Home Successfully

Many people all across America are in the process of making the decision to sell their home. It may be time to retire and move to a warmer climate, start a family and move on to a bigger home or you may simply be ready for a change.

Whatever your reason for selling your home, it is very important you understand the need for a little staging to increase the potential for it to be purchased more quickly and at a good price.

Staging simply refers to making your home more attractive to potential buyers, and there are several ways you can stage your home while staying within a limited budget.

1. Accentuate the Positive

Look around to determine what is best about your home.

If you have a swimming pool, then make sure it is thoroughly cleaned and greets any prospective buyer with inviting crystal clear water. Let a brightly-colored over-sized beach ball float in it, and be sure to have some nice pool furniture surrounding the pool area.

A garage is often a great selling point. You need to make sure your garage is organized with tools and other items hung neatly on the walls.

If your yard provides nice shade

then make sure the lawn is neatly mowed and add a small bench beneath the trees.

Whatever you find special about your home should just be made better before it goes on the market.

2. Inviting Entryway

It's likely your buyer won't get past your front door if the entryway looks horrible. After your front lawn, the front door is the next thing a buyer will see.

Whatever walkway or porch you may have needs to be well-swept, free of weeds and any cracks or loose boards must be fixed.

Keep your porch clutter free, but if it is large enough add a porch swing or a couple of porch chairs.

The front door itself is important, so wash it, paint it or even replace it if necessary. Consider adding a new decorative door handle and an attractive door mat. A decorative front porch light and a hanging plant or two can also be excellent touches.

3. Clear out the Clutter

It's important that your potential buyer be able to envision their own belongings in your home, and this can often be difficult if your house is overrun with stuff.



Box up as many things as you can, and consider placing them in a storage unit until your home is sold. This is not only a wonderful way to make your home look larger, but you will also have a head start on packing for your own move.

4. Paint Interior Rooms

A fresh coat of paint inside your home can drastically increase your chances of attracting a buyer.

Stick with white or neutral colors rather than attempting to find creative color patterns. This will bring a new sense of brightness and cleanliness to each room, and you will be surprised at how much fresh paint contributes to the overall beauty of your home.

5. Clean Everything

This is the time to go into maximum overdrive when it comes to having a clean home.

Steam clean carpets and furniture if possible, scrub the windows, make sure your closets are well-organized, thoroughly clean each ceiling fan and don't let a speck of dust show itself.

Organize your furniture so a free walking path is available throughout each room. You want your home to not only look clean but to also smell wonderful.

If possible, let a friend or family member keep your pets while

your house is on the market. Be sure not to use overpowering air fresheners or so much bleach that potential buyers can't look at your home without their eyes watering.

6. Good Working Order

You want to make sure everything in your home is in good working order. The last thing you need is a toilet overflowing or a constant drip from a faucet when potential buyers are looking at your home.

This is a good time to also make sure your central heat and air unit is working properly. If you are getting a lot of dust from your air ducts then have them cleaned thoroughly.

Even a small thing like your garage door sticking a little can make a potential buyer turn away so you should be sure to fix the smallest problems if possible.

Home sellers everywhere are turning to professional home staging experts to prepare their homes for going on the market, but that can often be quite expensive.

These tips will help you stage your home nicely without the necessity of using a portion of your profits to hire a professional.

If you are willing to put a little work into your home, then it will no doubt be purchased quickly and you can enjoy moving on to the next chapter in your life.

What You Wished You Knew About Homeowner Associations



One of the most misunderstood and exhaustively frustrating elements surrounding the purchase of a home is the homeowner association (HOA).

What starts out as a notion of believing newly-purchased property exists to do anything the homeowners wish is quickly exposed for exactly what it is - untrue.

In reality, many of America's communities abide by these homeowner associations. They bring a plethora of rules, regulations, ordinances and guidelines.

Still, once the ins and outs of HOAs are looked at in an objective light, it can be ascertained that there indeed exists numerous benefits of such associations.

Defining a Homeowner Association

In the United States, the homeowner association has been defined as ["a corporation formed by a real estate developer for the purpose of marketing, managing and selling of homes and lots in a residential subdivision."](#)

What's crucial to understand

first is that membership in an HOA by a typical residential buyer is normally a "condition of purchase" – in other words, you, the buyer, are not given an option to reject it.

Some states such as California and Florida boast large bodies of homeowner association law while others, such as Massachusetts, have virtually no homeowner association law.

Annual or monthly dues are part of a homeowner association's collection routine, often to fund upkeep of common areas such

as swimming pools, elevators, tennis courts and parks.

The associations may also flex their muscle to levy “special assessments” on homeowners to fund unexpected repairs.

What They’re Picky About

Unbeknownst to many virgin home buyers, some homeowner associations are rather selective when it comes to what they allow and what they don’t.

For example, some are peculiar about Christmas lights being strewn up in a certain neighborhood, believe it or not, or what kind of window coverings are being used.

Others are more flexible, generally looking to enhance property value in a community by preventing homeowners from painting their homes what they deem “unusual” colors.

Indeed, homeowner associations can also have significant legal power over the property owners in their jurisdiction – they even have the power to place a lien on a property should a homeowner fall behind on dues, for example.

The Questions You Wish You Would Have Asked

Here we get into the sheer meat and potatoes of our focus, concentrating on some of the queries first-time homebuyers may have neglected in the midst of their excitement regarding the purchase. These questions

normally should begin with the basics.

What Are HOAs All About?

Homeowner association fees can range anywhere from \$200 to \$400 per month, depending on how “upscale” the building/ community is and the amenities offered.

In addition to monthly fees, the association may charge an extra assessment for expenses that may pop up such as a new roof or a new elevator in a common area. Of course, this pertains mainly to condominium-oriented living, not private homes.

Further, HOAs lay out certain rules that residents must follow known as covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs).

In a subdivision containing individual homes, regulations often include what color you can paint your home, the type of exterior landscaping permitted, the types of vehicles that can be parked on a street or driveway, permissible type/height of fences and restrictions on window coverings for those facing the street.

What Can I Do to Learn the HOA’s Rules?

You may be able to find an HOA’s CC&Rs online, in addition to information about what consequences you face should you violate a rule. If not then contact the HOA directly.

Rules regarding fines should be another area you take under consideration: Some HOAs foreclose on properties when owners don’t pay dues or fines and if this doesn’t sit well with you, consider purchasing in a different neighborhood.

Is the Home I Want to Buy Out of HOA Compliance?

Here’s a tricky one most homeowners of any status don’t normally consider. Buying into an existing problem/violation is always a headache, so learn the rules and what kind of changes need to be made to the home to comply before buying.

What About My Temperament?

If you are the kind of person who loathes being told what to do, living in a community with an HOA can turn out to be a very frustrating experience. While one of the major benefits of homeownership is the freedom to customize and alter property to suit individual needs, HOA rules unfortunately interfere with this.

While there remain a plethora of other questions that can be asked in this area, the best advice is to ensure you know exactly what you are getting into before purchasing a property subject to HOA rules and fees.



Create a Home Theater on a Budget

There are many reasons to add a theater to your home. With increasing movie prices, coupled with the quick home releases, it is simply more cost effective to create the movie experience in your home.

Home theaters are the perfect environment for scheduled family time. Yes, going to the movies gives you a huge screen and excellent sound, but the truth is that you can get that in your home for a lot less than you imagine — adding value to your home in the process.

A Common Misconception

Building a home theater doesn't have to be expensive. The truth is that the cost of large screen HD televisions have dropped drastically over the last several years and you can find some

great deals on high quality theater seating packages.

With proper planning and a little help you can have an extremely functional and comfortable theater right there in your own home.

Choose Your Preferred Hardware

One of the first steps that you will need to take is choosing your hardware. Will you go with a traditional flat screen high definition TV or choose a projector screen.

There isn't much of a difference in cost either way. The thing that you want to keep in mind while you are planning your project is that you don't want to waltz on quality in the process of finding the best deal.

Paying a little more for higher quality means your theater will last longer and provide a better overall experience.

This is not a product promotion so we will refrain from making suggestions concerning any specific type of TV or projector.

Most of the major brands provide some good options. Take the time to do your homework. It would be wise to spend some time researching products online before you head into the store.

This will allow you to make an educated decision instead of allowing the salesman to talk you into making an emotional purchase, which can create a case of buyer's remorse.

Consider Your Space

A common mistake that home owners make when building their home theater is failing to consider the dimensions of the space they will be using.

You don't want to purchase electronics and furniture that is too large for the specific dimensions in the theater.

Take the time to measure and visualize. Draw up your plans to establish placement. You want to create an optimal view while maximizing sound quality.

Acoustics Placement

There are a number of sites online that will advise you on speaker placement and how to use walls to get the most out of your sound system.

Have you ever noticed how all of the high-end audio stores demonstrate the quality of their sound systems in a special room? This is because the acoustics of the room have just as much to do with the sound quality as the speakers and the system being used.

This is not to suggest going with a subpar system, but that you should perform your due diligence to ensure that you understand how to maximize the acoustic impact of your room.

Acoustic tiles for your ceiling is another inexpensive way that you can improve the overall sound.

Choosing the Right Furniture

An important aspect of creating your home theater is the comfort of the experience that you are creating.

You want to use theater seating that is functional and comfortable. You can choose connected seating or individual chairs for more seating flexibility.

There are theater seats that have electronic adjustments that allow an individual to make multiple adjustments at the touch of a button. There is not much difference in the cost of seats with manual adjustments and those that have electronic adjustment capability.

Once again, your focus should be on maximizing the existing space without creating the need to make major renovations.

Wall Colors

Most theaters use certain colors to control the reflection of light on the walls. The right color will

also make the room look and feel larger.

Darker colors for the ceiling and walls seem to work best while lighter carpet works best for the flooring. This not only provides a better viewing experience, but it will make the room appear larger.

Lighting is Extremely Important

You want lighting that you can dim at numerous variations. You will also want to have directional lighting that is positioned in a manner that allows it to provide lighting indirectly by shining primary on the walls.

There are many different variations that will allow you to individualize your theater without going overboard with the cost.

If you remember to manage your space so that you aren't forced to make structural changes, you will find it easy to stay within your set budget.



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