5 affordable home staging tips to get your home sold, fast.

Professional home stagers get paid well to turn ordinary homes into hot properties. But if you can't afford a professional, don't worry. There are plenty of affordable ways to make your home more appealing to buyers.

1. **Get rid of stuff.** Clutter not only makes your house look smaller, it makes it less relaxing to be in. So start packing now and get a head start on moving day. Store your extra stuff at a friend or relative's house or invest $50 or so in a small storage unit. Say a temporary goodbye to:
    - Family photos and keepsakes – It's harder for people to imagine living in the house when your family is staring at them from every shelf and end table.
    - Closet stuff – Staging experts recommend you leave at least 20-30% of closet space unused, to give the impression of ample storage.
    - Toys – A riot of primary-colored plastic spewing from every shelf and basket is not a design feature. Tuck your kids' most loved toys away somewhere inconspicuous, then pack the rest away.
    - Countertop clutter – You may love your collection of kitchen canisters that look like cows, but clear countertops look larger. Moooove them.

2. **Clean, clean, clean.** Your house should be clean – and we mean perform-surgery-on-your-kitchen-floor clean. Start with the outside. Power-wash your siding, sidewalks, porch and patio/deck. Make the windows sparkle. Get a cheery new welcome mat to use only when someone's touring your house (so it's always nice and clean).Your house shouldn't just look clean, it should smell clean, too. So if you have pets, shampoo your carpets and deodorize any furniture they're especially fond of. And make sure to take Fido and Mittens with you when you're vacating the house for prospective buyers.

3. **Go neutral.** When you're decorating your house, you want it to say, "This is so me!" When you're *selling* your house, you want it to say, "This could be you!" Neutral colors on the walls make it easy for buyers to picture their furniture in your rooms. Painting the walls also makes rooms look cleaner (just in case you couldn't get rid of all the grime in tip #2). Remember: Even though neutral is good, boring is not. Add pops of color with pillows and a few accessories.
4. **Rearrange and repurpose.** Though our first instinct may be to shove the couch against the wall, experts say that moving it further into the room to create conversation areas makes the room seem bigger. And just because that green chair has always been in the family room doesn't mean it wouldn't look great in the bedroom. If one room has lots of space and another is too cluttered, switch things up.
5. **Give every room a purpose.** And let us clarify: "Storing all the leftover junk from the other rooms" is not a purpose. Don't make buyers puzzle over what a room is supposed to be. Put a desk in it and make it an office, or add a daybed and make it a guest room.

Once you're ready to move, don't forget that a new home means a new homeowners policy. This is a good time to talk with your insurance agent and make sure you have adequate coverage for your home and everything in it. You may have more valuables now (furniture, electronics, jewelry, etc.) than when you first insured your current home.

Ready to get staging? With a little creativity, you'll have buyers fighting over your home in no time.