

Making a perfect impression

Eine Wohnung zu verkaufen ist kein Zuckerschlecken: Alles muss so hergerichtet werden, als würde man die Räume für ein Magazin ablichten wollen. **medium**

I'm sitting in a coffee shop near my apartment writing this because I've been asked to leave my home. Don't worry. This situation is not the result of anything drastic like a foreclosure. I simply had to leave for a few hours while Steve, my realtor, holds an "open house."

This is how real-estate sales work here in the U.S. While individuals can make appointments with Steve to tour my home at any time, it is the open houses that get the greatest number of people through the door. They are held for a period of about two hours on a weekend. The selling realtor is the host, and anyone can look round without an appointment.

The most interesting part of my education about selling a home has

been learning how to "stage." Staging means changing a property from the place in which you live into something from the pages of a magazine. As the first step, Steve asked Cindy, a professional stager, to advise me how to reduce the clutter. After looking around, she said that my place was in great shape compared to many she's seen. No need to paint the walls or replace the curtains. But I would need to get rid of a few pieces of furniture — oh, yes, and pack up the family photos, kids' drawings, and anything else that personalizes the property. "People want to come into a place and be able to see themselves living there," Cindy said.

So I started organizing my "clutter" into four categories: toss it, give it to charity, sell it, or pack it up for the move. In the 12 years I've lived here, I've gathered a lot of stuff, like all those bank statements and bills dating from the 1990s. Into the shredder they went, creating ideal packing material for the dishes I was boxing up. Books I gave to a local literacy program. Clothes I haven't worn for three years went to the church. Furniture was sold online through Craigslist. Two weeks later, I was ready for Cindy to return for the final staging.

“ My place looks perfect. The problem is that I have to keep it looking great while still living in it ”

She immediately began creating a new look in the living room, moving the sofa, lamps, and plants into a different configuration. We set the dining-room table as though we were expecting guests. I won't be entertaining those guests, of course, since the kitchen counters must remain cleared of everything but the coffeemaker. In the shower, the shampoo and all toiletries were put away. Even the bath mat on the floor had to go. A chair and lamp from the living room went into a corner of the bedroom, creating a cozy reading space.

Every surface in the house was emptied of everything but one or two decorative or functional pieces: a vase here, a book there. As a finishing touch, we strategically placed small vases of flowers in the dining room and bathroom. The place looked better than ever — as though it were right out of the pages of a magazine.

The problem is that I now have to keep it looking great while still living in it. Before leaving for work, I check that I haven't left socks on the floor or dishes in the sink. Is the bed made? Are all the surfaces cleared? After all, I never know when I'll get a call at work saying that someone wants to see the place that day. I just hope it sells quickly so I can get back to my normal life, clutter included. •



bank statement ['bæŋk ,steɪtmənt]	Kontoauszug
bill [bɪl]	Rechnung
charity ['tʃærəti]	wohltätige Organisation
clutter ['klʌtər]	herumliegende Sachen; Durcheinander
cozy ['kəʊzi] US	gemütlich
finishing touch [ˌfɪnɪʃɪŋ 'tʌtʃ]	letzte Verschönerung
foreclosure [ˌfɔːr'klɒʒər]	Verfall einer Immobilie an den Gläubiger
host [hoʊst]	Gastgeber(in) (→ p.57)
kitchen counter [ˌkɪtʃən 'kaʊntər] N. Am.	Arbeitsfläche in der Küche
literacy ['lɪtərəsi]	Alphabetisierung
real estate ['riːəl ɪ'steɪt] N. Am.	Immobilien
realtor ['riːlətər] N. Am.	Immobilienmakler(in)
sink [sɪŋk]	Spülbecken, Waschbecken
stage [steɪdʒ]	in Szene setzen
surface ['sɜːfəs]	(Ober)fläche
toss [tɔːs] N. Am. ifml.	rausschmeißen

