

## Staging has become a home marketing necessity

“Staging” a home for being presented to prospective buyers is increasingly important in today’s market.

Many buyers are still holding off with their home-seeking quest, waiting for prices to really bottom out. Competition is tight for those remaining buyers who are actively looking for a home.

Staging a home simply means making changes and improvements that will maximize its appeal to prospects who inspect the property, thus giving it an edge on other competitive on-market homes. Here are a few tips suggested by professional designer Elaine Williamson, principal of Elaine Williamson Designs:

Vintage accents can add appeal. What’s old is new again. French burlap is no longer just for sack racing. This Earth-friendly fiber is being utilized for chic pillows imprinted with a vintage-stamped design or even a family initial. Accent chairs can also be seen covered in gray linen and imprinted with vintage “document” script writing.

### Consider updating the wallpaper

With a decreasing demand for faux finishes and walls painted in solid primary colors, wallpaper is making a comeback in a big and decidedly fashionable way. From bright and bold to subdued and elegant, today’s wallpapers are easy to apply and even easier to remove, making updating and improving the look of a room easier than ever before.

### Add timeless art pieces

When considering items to occupy wall space, ditch the quick fix of matching pictures. Mix mediums and styles. To add depth and character to your pieces, forgo the glass frame cover that can be distracting — it casts a glare that actually detracts from your interior design.

### Change or add appropriate colors

While neutrals have made a strong showing in home-staging design this year

for primary design elements like walls and baseline furnishings, boldly colored accent pieces provide a space with visual interest and appeal. Brightly colored and/or patterned pillows, rugs and other accessories will bring an otherwise bland space to life.

Simplify the positioning of furnishings and accessories. With a strong desire to ease and reprioritize homes and lifestyles, paring down furnishings and accessories is the best way to exemplify a sense of control over one’s surroundings.

It is very important to streamline not only the lines of staged furniture, but the bulkiness as well. Often, stagers place too many items in a room by way of accessories, pillows, throw rugs and family photos. Pick and choose the most important items and then pare down from there. There is brilliance in restraint.

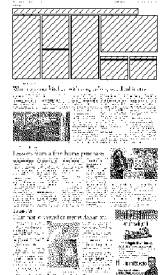
**Q:** Is obtaining an interest-only mortgage a good idea?  
**A:** First, let’s clarify that there is really no such thing as an interest-only mortgage loan. Ultimately, the lender will receive the full principle and interest in repayments.

The loan may be structured to allow interest-only payments for a specified period. It will then revert to an interest and principal payment loan or require a lump sum repayment. One way or another, the principle must be paid.

The advantage of such a loan is to keep the payments as low as possible. It effectively achieves that objective, at least for the specified period.

The disadvantage is that the principle is not lowered with each payment. You do not build equity as you would with a conventional mortgage. Also, you would be particularly vulnerable if home values should take a downward direction in your area.

On the plus side, some homebuyers can barely afford to purchase a home or qualify for mortgage financing. With an interest-only loan, that buyer may be able to acquire a home. And with the low monthly



payments, the buyer might squeeze by the loan qualification process. This particularly applies to first-time homebuyers.

Also, since the payments are all for interest, they are totally tax deductible in most cases.

**Q:** What is the HomeSteps program all about?

**A:** It's an initiative program offered by Freddie Mac, which gives homebuyers 15 days to buy HomeSteps homes without investor competition.

On Sept. 17, the program was expanded so that any home shopper can buy a HomeSteps home as a primary residence during the first 15 days of the property's listing without competition from investors. HomeSteps is the real estate sales unit of Freddie Mac and markets a nationwide selection of Freddie Mac-owned residences.

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