

How To Sell Your Home Fast And For Top Dollar: 25 Proven Tips For Maximum ROI

Proven Improvements That Maximize Your Sale Price

268% Top ROI Project (Garage Door)	\$9,195 Avg Offer Increase from Curb Appeal	73% Faster Sale when Staged	550%+ Staging ROI
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How to use this guide: Each tip includes estimated cost, ROI data, a step-by-step action checklist, and a professional tip from experienced listing agents. Focus first on HIGH ROI items — they deliver the greatest return relative to investment.

The ROI estimates and cost ranges presented in this guide are based on national averages and industry data. Actual results will vary based on local market conditions, property location, condition of the home, quality of workmanship, and buyer preferences. This guide is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute financial, legal, or real estate advice. Consult a licensed real estate professional for guidance specific to your market and property.



John DiCristo, Broker, SRES
IJ | Christie's International Real Estate
704-576-6234
jdicristo@ivesterjackson.com
www.DiCristoTeam.com

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This booklet is not a list of things that sellers have to do; it is a menu of ideas other sellers have used to get a better return. Sellers pick only what makes sense for their budget. If budget is tight focus on the highest impact, lowest-cost items first, and skip the rest

What's Inside

#	Category	Tips Covered	Key Highlights
1	Curb Appeal	Tips 1–6	268% ROI garage door, landscaping, power washing
2	Staging & Interior Prep	Tips 7–12	Deep clean, declutter, neutral paint, light
3	Kitchen & Bathrooms	Tips 13–17	113% minor kitchen remodel, bathroom refresh
4	Flooring & Structure	Tips 18–21	147% hardwood refinish, attic insulation
5	Smart Upgrades & Final Polish	Tips 22–25	Deck, fixtures, photography, smart home

ROI Tier Legend

HIGH ROI: 100%+ return -- prioritize these first	MEDIUM ROI: 70–99% return -- solid investments	LOWER ROI: <70% -- situational based on condition
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ROI Quick Reference — All 25 Tips

Use this table to quickly prioritize which improvements to tackle first based on your budget and timeline.

#	Improvement	Avg Cost	ROI	Tier	Category
1	Replace the Garage Door	\$4,672	268%	HIGH	Curb Appeal
2	Install a Steel Entry Door	\$2,435	216%	HIGH	Curb Appeal
3	Add Manufactured Stone Veneer	\$11,702	208%	HIGH	Curb Appeal
4	Power Wash All Exterior Surfaces	\$150–\$400	200%+	HIGH	Curb Appeal
5	Freshen Landscaping & Add Mulch	\$1,000–\$3,000	150%	HIGH	Curb Appeal
6	Update House Numbers & Mailbox	\$50–\$300	~100%	MED	Curb Appeal
7	Deep Clean Every Surface	\$200–\$500	3,650%	HIGH	Staging & Interior Prep
8	Declutter & Depersonalize	\$0–\$200 (storage)	Priceless	HIGH	Staging & Interior Prep
9	Paint Interior in Neutral Tones	\$1,500–\$4,000	107%	HIGH	Staging & Interior Prep
10	Stage the Living Room	\$500–\$2,000	550%+	HIGH	Staging & Interior Prep
11	Stage the Primary Bedroom	\$300–\$1,000	High	HIGH	Staging & Interior Prep
12	Maximize Natural Light	\$0–\$300	High	HIGH	Staging & Interior Prep
13	Minor Kitchen Remodel	\$28,458	113%	HIGH	Kitchen & Bathrooms
14	Paint or Reface Kitchen Cabinets	\$1,200–\$4,000	85%	MED	Kitchen & Bathrooms
15	Refresh Bathrooms	\$9,000–\$12,000	74%	MED	Kitchen & Bathrooms
16	Fix Any Visible Water Damage or Leaks	\$500–\$3,000	Essential	HIGH	Kitchen & Bathrooms
17	Update Kitchen Lighting	\$300–\$800	85%	MED	Kitchen & Bathrooms
18	Refinish Hardwood Floors	\$1,500–\$3,500	147%	HIGH	Flooring & Structure
19	Replace Worn or Stained Carpet	\$1,500–\$4,000	~100%	HIGH	Flooring & Structure
20	Add Attic Insulation	\$2,500–\$4,500	100–120%	MED	Flooring & Structure
21	Replace or Repair the Roof (If Needed)	\$8,000–\$20,000	Essential	MED	Flooring & Structure
22	Add a Deck or Outdoor Living Space	\$18,263	94.9%	MED	Smart Upgrades & Final Polish



#	Improvement	Avg Cost	ROI	Tier	Category
23	Update Fixtures & Hardware Throughout	\$500–\$1,500	~75%	MED	Smart Upgrades & Final Polish
24	Hire a Professional Photographer	\$150–\$400	Very High	HIGH	Smart Upgrades & Final Polish
25	Smart Home Devices & Garage Opener	\$300–\$800	~80%	MED	Smart Upgrades & Final Polish



SECTION 1

CURB APPEAL

First impressions drive offers. Buyers form opinions in the first 8 seconds. All 8 of the top 10 ROI projects are exterior improvements. Invest here first — the payback is unmatched.

#1 Replace the Garage Door

ROI: 268%

Avg Cost:
\$4,672

Value Added:
\$12,507 value added

The #1 ROI project for 3+ consecutive years. A new insulated steel or wood-look garage door transforms curb appeal overnight and is typically completed in one day.

Action Checklist:

- > Get 3 contractor quotes
- > Choose insulated steel or faux-wood finish
- > Match color to home exterior
- > Request same-week installation before listing

PRO TIP: Opt for a carriage-house style with windows for maximum visual impact.

#2 Install a Steel Entry Door

ROI: 216%

Avg Cost:
\$2,435

Value Added:
\$5,270 value added

A new 20-gauge steel entry door boosts security perception and creates a powerful first impression. Paint it a bold, on-trend color to make the home pop in listing photos.

Action Checklist:

- > Select bold but timeless color (navy, forest green, black)
- > Add brushed-nickel or matte-black hardware
- > Install new deadbolt and smart lock
- > Replace worn weatherstripping

PRO TIP: A freshly painted door in a bold accent color costs as little as \$50–\$100 in paint and adds \$5,000+ in perceived value.



#3 Add Manufactured Stone Veneer**ROI: 208%**Avg Cost:
\$11,702Value Added:
\$24,328 value added

Replacing wood or vinyl on the lower portion of the front facade with manufactured stone veneer creates a premium, custom-home look that photographs beautifully.

Action Checklist:

- > Select stone that complements roof and trim color
- > Focus on the front facade and entry column bases
- > Hire a licensed masonry contractor
- > Ensure proper moisture barrier installation

PRO TIP: Even partial stone accent on columns or the front gable can yield dramatic results at lower cost.

#4 Power Wash All Exterior Surfaces**ROI: 200%+**Avg Cost:
\$150–\$400Value Added:
Significant perceived value

A dirty exterior is a dealbreaker for 57% of homebuyers. Professional power washing of driveways, siding, walkways, and decks makes the home look like it's been meticulously maintained.

Action Checklist:

- > Hire professional for siding, driveway, walkways
- > Clean gutters and downspouts
- > Wash all windows inside and out
- > Pressure-clean fences and decks

PRO TIP: Schedule power washing 2–3 weeks before listing photos to allow surfaces to dry fully.

#5 Freshen Landscaping & Add Mulch**ROI: 150%**Avg Cost:
\$1,000–\$3,000Value Added:
Adds \$9,195 avg offer increase

Buyers are willing to increase offers by an average of \$9,195 for homes with great curb appeal. Fresh mulch, trimmed hedges, and colorful annuals signal pride of ownership.

Action Checklist:

- > Add 2–3 inches of fresh dark mulch to all beds
- > Plant seasonal color flowers near entryway
- > Trim all shrubs and hedges to clean lines



- > Mow, edge, and fertilize lawn before photos
- > Remove any dead plants or trees

PRO TIP: Well-maintained lawns rank #1 (61%) for curb appeal impact among buyers.

#6 Update House Numbers & Mailbox

ROI: ~100%

Avg Cost:
\$50–\$300

Value Added:
Enhances overall first impression

Modern, oversized house numbers and a fresh mailbox are low-cost details that signal attention to detail. Buyers notice small neglected items — and so do appraisers.

Action Checklist:

- > Install modern brushed-metal or bold house numbers
- > Replace or repaint mailbox to match home palette
- > Add a solar-powered post light at driveway
- > Install pathway lighting along walkway

PRO TIP: Exterior lighting at night increases online listing engagement significantly — buyers browse at night.



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SECTION 2

STAGING & INTERIOR PREP

Staged homes sell 73% faster and for 1–10% more. 83% of buyers' agents say staging helps buyers visualize the property as their future home. These tips are the lowest cost, highest emotional impact improvements you can make.

#7 Deep Clean Every Surface

ROI: 3,650%

Avg Cost:
\$200–\$500

Value Added:
Top agent recommendation

The #1 recommendation from 88% of real estate agents — cleaning the entire home. A spotless home communicates maintenance, increases perceived value, and photographs brilliantly.

Action Checklist:

- > Hire professional cleaners for initial deep clean
- > Clean inside all cabinets, drawers, and closets
- > Steam-clean all carpets
- > Degrease kitchen appliances inside and out
- > Sanitize all bathrooms — grout lines included
- > Clean light fixtures, fans, and baseboards

PRO TIP: Fresh scent matters: avoid artificial sprays. Use natural citrus cleaners and open windows before showings.

#8 Declutter & Depersonalize

ROI: Priceless

Avg Cost:
\$0–\$200 (storage)

Value Added:
Faster sale, higher offers

The #1 agent recommendation (91%). Removing personal photos, excess furniture, and clutter helps buyers visualize themselves in the home. Less is always more.

Action Checklist:

- > Remove all personal photos and family memorabilia
- > Clear kitchen countertops to 20% capacity
- > Remove at least 1/3 of items from every closet
- > Rent a storage unit for excess furniture
- > Clear garage to show actual square footage
- > Remove political, religious, and sports items

PRO TIP: Buyers need to picture their life there — not yours. Empty closets suggest abundant storage.



#9 Paint Interior in Neutral Tones

ROI: 107%

Avg Cost:
\$1,500–\$4,000

Value Added:
Top visual upgrade

Fresh neutral paint (warm whites, soft greiges, light taupes) is the single highest-impact cosmetic update. It makes spaces feel larger, brighter, and move-in ready.

Action Checklist:

- > Choose warm neutral: Sherwin-Williams Accessible Beige or Agreeable Gray
- > Paint all walls, ceilings, and trim consistently
- > Patch all nail holes and touch up scuffs first
- > Consider accent wall in main living area
- > Paint interior doors and trim crisp white

PRO TIP: Avoid stark white or trendy bold colors — neutrals appeal to the widest pool of buyers.

#10 Stage the Living Room

ROI: 550%+

Avg Cost:
\$500–\$2,000

Value Added:
1–10% sale price increase

The living room is the #1 most important room to stage (37% of buyers). Staged homes sell 73% faster and receive up to 10% more in offers. This room sets the emotional tone for the entire showing.

Action Checklist:

- > Arrange furniture to create conversation areas
- > Add a neutral area rug to anchor seating group
- > Place fresh flowers or greenery as a focal point
- > Use throw pillows in 2–3 complementary neutral tones
- > Ensure all lighting works — replace all burned bulbs
- > Style bookshelves with curated objects, not books

PRO TIP: 83% of buyers' agents say staging helps buyers visualize the property as their future home.



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#11 Stage the Primary Bedroom

ROI: High

Avg Cost:
\$300–\$1,000

Value Added:
34% of buyers prioritize it

The primary bedroom is the #2 room buyers focus on (34%). It should feel like a luxury hotel retreat — calm, spacious, and aspirational.

Action Checklist:

- > Use crisp white or light linen bedding with layered pillows
- > Remove all dressers that crowd the room
- > Add matching nightstands with lamps on both sides
- > Clear all closet floors — hang only current-season clothes
- > Hang one piece of tasteful neutral artwork above headboard

PRO TIP: Symmetry is everything in bedroom staging — matching elements on both sides of the bed feel luxurious.

#12 Maximize Natural Light

ROI: High

Avg Cost:
\$0–\$300

Value Added:
Major buyer preference driver

Light sells homes. Remove heavy drapes, clean all windows, and trim exterior shrubs blocking light. For showings, turn on every light in the house — even during the day.

Action Checklist:

- > Remove all heavy drapes; replace with sheer panels or nothing
- > Wash all windows inside and out
- > Trim exterior bushes/trees blocking windows
- > Replace all bulbs with warm LED (2700K–3000K)
- > Add mirrors opposite windows to amplify light
- > Turn on all lights 30 minutes before every showing

PRO TIP: Swap 60W bulbs for 100W equivalent LEDs — the brightest home on the block shows better and photographs better.



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SECTION 3

KITCHEN & BATHROOMS

The kitchen is the only interior project in the top 5 ROI list. Buyers make or break decisions based on these rooms. You don't need a full remodel — strategic updates deliver outsized perception gains.

#13 Minor Kitchen Remodel

ROI: 113%

Avg Cost:
\$28,458

Value Added:
\$32,141 value added

The only interior project in the Top 5. Update cabinet fronts with Shaker-style panels, replace hardware, swap out the range/cooktop, and refresh countertops. Buyers pay premium for move-in-ready kitchens.

Action Checklist:

- > Reface or paint cabinets — Shaker doors add immediate value
- > Replace hardware with matte black or brushed nickel
- > Install quartz or granite countertops if outdated
- > Add subway tile backsplash (timeless, buyer-friendly)
- > Replace faucet with pull-down sprayer style
- > Upgrade to stainless steel appliances if dated

PRO TIP: Cabinet refacing (not replacement) delivers 85% ROI at a fraction of the cost of full replacement.

#14 Paint or Reface Kitchen Cabinets

ROI: 85%

Avg Cost:
\$1,200–\$4,000

Value Added:
High perceived value

If a full minor remodel isn't in the budget, professionally painting existing cabinets in a neutral (white, greige, navy) instantly modernizes the kitchen at a fraction of the cost.

Action Checklist:

- > Sand and prime all cabinet surfaces thoroughly
- > Use cabinet-specific paint (Benjamin Moore Advance recommended)
- > Paint inside edges and hinges meticulously
- > Replace all pulls and knobs with modern hardware
- > Add under-cabinet lighting for premium look

PRO TIP: White or off-white cabinets are the most universally appealing to buyers and photograph the brightest.



#15 Refresh Bathrooms

ROI: 74%

Avg Cost:
\$9,000–\$12,000

Value Added:
High priority for buyers

Buyers scrutinize bathrooms carefully. A full gut renovation isn't needed — updated fixtures, fresh grout, new mirror, and modern lighting can dramatically refresh the space.

Action Checklist:

- > Re-caulk and regrout tub, shower, and tile
- > Replace toilet seat and handle
- > Install new vanity light fixture (horizontal bar preferred)
- > Replace mirror with frameless or framed modern style
- > Update faucets and towel bars to match finish
- > Add plush white towels as staging props

PRO TIP: White towels and a simple plant signal a clean, spa-like space — buyers connect emotionally with this.

#16 Fix Any Visible Water Damage or Leaks

ROI: Essential

Avg Cost:
\$500–\$3,000

Value Added:
Prevents 10–20% price reductions

Water stains on ceilings, walls, or under sinks are immediate red flags for buyers and inspectors. Addressing them before listing prevents renegotiations and price reductions that far exceed repair costs.

Action Checklist:

- > Repair any leaking faucets, pipes, or supply lines
- > Paint over water stains with stain-blocking primer
- > Repair any warped or stained flooring near water sources
- > Check under all sinks for active leaks
- > Service water heater if older than 10 years

PRO TIP: A pre-listing home inspection reveals hidden issues. Fixing them early costs far less than negotiating concessions during contract.



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#17 Update Kitchen Lighting

ROI: 85%

Avg Cost:
\$300–\$800

Value Added:
Dramatically improves perceived value

Outdated fluorescent or brass fixtures age a kitchen by 20 years. Modern pendant lights over islands and recessed lighting make kitchens feel fresh and designed.

Action Checklist:

- > Replace fluorescent overhead with LED recessed lights
- > Add pendant lights over island or peninsula
- > Install under-cabinet LED strip lighting
- > Replace any brass fixtures with black or nickel
- > Add dimmer switches for ambiance control

PRO TIP: Under-cabinet lighting adds perceived luxury at \$50–\$100 in materials — one of the highest-ROI micro-upgrades.



SECTION 4

FLOORING & STRUCTURE

Foundational elements signal maintenance quality to buyers and inspectors alike. Gleaming floors, solid structure, and energy efficiency address buyer concerns head-on and prevent renegotiations after inspection.

#18 Refinish Hardwood Floors

ROI: 147%

Avg Cost:
\$1,500–\$3,500

Value Added:
Major buyer draw

Gleaming hardwood floors are one of the top features buyers seek. Refinishing existing hardwood delivers 147% ROI and transforms the feel of the entire home.

Action Checklist:

- > Hire a certified hardwood floor professional
- > Choose classic satin or matte finish (not glossy)
- > Sand, stain (if needed), and apply 2–3 coats poly
- > Allow 48–72 hours of cure time before showings
- > Replace any heavily damaged boards before finishing

PRO TIP: Schedule floor refinishing 2 weeks before listing — floors need time to cure and off-gas before photos.

#19 Replace Worn or Stained Carpet

ROI: ~100%

Avg Cost:
\$1,500–\$4,000

Value Added:
Eliminates buyer objections

Stained or worn carpet is one of the top buyer objections. Fresh carpet or luxury vinyl plank (LVP) flooring removes this objection and signals a well-maintained home.

Action Checklist:

- > Choose neutral, mid-grade carpet (Shaw Caress or similar)
- > Consider LVP as a durable, modern alternative
- > Install new padding under any new carpet
- > Replace in bedrooms, stairs, and main hallways
- > Steam-clean lightly worn carpet that doesn't need replacing

PRO TIP: Budget tip: offer a flooring allowance rather than replacing — buyers often prefer to choose their own, and it costs less.



#20 Add Attic Insulation

ROI: 100–120%

Avg Cost:
\$2,500–\$4,500

Value Added:
\$2,500–\$5,400 value added

Energy efficiency is a growing buyer priority. Proper attic insulation reduces utility bills, which buyers factor into their offers. It also qualifies for federal tax credits of up to \$1,200.

Action Checklist:

- > Have energy audit done to assess current insulation
- > Bring insulation to R-38 or higher (per DOE guidelines)
- > Air-seal all penetrations before adding insulation
- > Request energy savings documentation for listing
- > Mention potential tax credits in listing remarks

PRO TIP: Highlight low utility bills in the listing — this is a concrete, verifiable value that justifies higher offers.

#21 Replace or Repair the Roof (If Needed)

ROI: Essential

Avg Cost:
\$8,000–\$20,000

Value Added:
Prevents deal collapse

A roof with fewer than 3–5 years of life will be flagged by every inspector and can kill financing. Proactively addressing roof issues prevents last-minute negotiation crises.

Action Checklist:

- > Hire licensed roofer for pre-listing inspection
- > Repair missing shingles, flashing, and gutters
- > Get written documentation of remaining roof life
- > Consider replacement if fewer than 3 years remain
- > Transfer any existing roof warranty to buyer

PRO TIP: A new roof can be used as a marketing advantage — ‘brand new roof’ is a compelling listing feature.



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SECTION 5

SMART UPGRADES & FINAL POLISH

The final details separate good listings from great ones. Professional photography, smart home upgrades, and finished outdoor spaces command premium offers and shorter days on market.

#22 Add a Deck or Outdoor Living Space

ROI: 94.9%

Avg Cost:
\$18,263

Value Added:
\$17,323 value added

A wood deck addition ranks #8 in the ROI rankings. Outdoor living is a top buyer priority post-pandemic. Even simple deck refreshes — new stain, furniture — yield strong returns.

Action Checklist:

- > Power wash and re-stain existing deck
- > Replace any rotted boards or unsafe railings
- > Stage with outdoor furniture and potted plants
- > Add string lights for evening showings
- > Ensure deck is up to code (permits, railing height)

PRO TIP: A well-staged outdoor space adds perceived square footage. Buyers dream of entertaining here.

#23 Update Fixtures & Hardware Throughout

ROI: ~75%

Avg Cost:
\$500–\$1,500

Value Added:
Modernizes entire home feel

Outdated brass or builder-grade hardware screams 1995. Swapping all doorknobs, light switches, outlet covers, and fixtures to a consistent finish (matte black or brushed nickel) modernizes the home for minimal cost.

Action Checklist:

- > Replace all door hardware to matching finish
- > Swap light switch plates and outlet covers
- > Update ceiling fan blades if outdated
- > Replace bathroom towel bars and toilet paper holders
- > Install new door hinges if rusty or mismatched

PRO TIP: Matte black hardware is the current buyer favorite — it photographs beautifully and looks premium against any wall color.



#24 Hire a Professional Photographer

ROI: Very High

Avg Cost:
\$150–\$400

Value Added:
Online listing views +10–40%

73% of buyers' agents report that professional photos (including video/virtual tours) are critically important. 40% of buyers are more willing to visit a staged home found online — photos must be exceptional.

Action Checklist:

- > Hire professional real estate photographer (not agent photos)
- > Request HDR photography and twilight exterior shot
- > Ask for drone photography for lot/neighborhood context
- > Include walkthrough video for social media marketing
- > Use virtual staging for any empty rooms

PRO TIP: Listings with professional photos sell 32% faster and for up to \$11,000 more.

#25 Smart Home Devices & Garage Opener

ROI: ~80%

Avg Cost:
\$300–\$800

Value Added:
Modern buyer expectation

Smart home features are increasingly expected by buyers. A new Wi-Fi-enabled garage door opener, smart thermostat (Nest/Ecobee), and smart door lock signal a tech-forward, well-maintained home.

Action Checklist:

- > Install Wi-Fi garage door opener (Chamberlain myQ)
- > Add Nest or Ecobee smart thermostat
- > Install video doorbell (Ring or Nest)
- > Consider leaving smart devices for buyer as incentive
- > Document all smart home device instructions

PRO TIP: Including smart home devices as a buyer incentive costs \$500–\$1,000 but can be worth thousands in offer premium or faster close.



Master Pre-Listing Checklist

Use this master checklist to track your progress across all 25 improvements. Check off each item as you complete it. Share with your listing agent to coordinate timing.

☐ #1 Replace the Garage Door	☐ #2 Install a Steel Entry Door
☐ #3 Add Manufactured Stone Veneer	☐ #4 Power Wash All Exterior Surfaces
☐ #5 Freshen Landscaping & Add Mulch	☐ #6 Update House Numbers & Mailbox
☐ #7 Deep Clean Every Surface	☐ #8 Declutter & Depersonalize
☐ #9 Paint Interior in Neutral Tones	☐ #10 Stage the Living Room
☐ #11 Stage the Primary Bedroom	☐ #12 Maximize Natural Light
☐ #13 Minor Kitchen Remodel	☐ #14 Paint or Reface Kitchen Cabinets
☐ #15 Refresh Bathrooms	☐ #16 Fix Any Visible Water Damage or Leaks
☐ #17 Update Kitchen Lighting	☐ #18 Refinish Hardwood Floors
☐ #19 Replace Worn or Stained Carpet	☐ #20 Add Attic Insulation
☐ #21 Replace or Repair the Roof (If Needed)	☐ #22 Add a Deck or Outdoor Living Space
☐ #23 Update Fixtures & Hardware Throughout	☐ #24 Hire a Professional Photographer
☐ #25 Smart Home Devices & Garage Opener	

Recommended Pre-Listing Timeline

Timeframe	Priority Actions	Tips to Complete
8–12 Weeks Out	Major structural & exterior work	1, 3, 4, 21 (roof), 18, 19, 20
6–8 Weeks Out	Kitchen & bathroom updates, painting	9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
4–6 Weeks Out	Staging, fixtures, landscaping	5, 8, 10, 11, 23, 25
2–4 Weeks Out	Deep clean, power wash, final touches	2, 6, 7, 12, 22
1 Week Out	Professional photography, final staging	24



Day of Listing	All lights on, fresh flowers, scent neutral	All staging items
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