

# ...AND HOW TO MAKE IT APPEALING – TIPS FROM THE HOUSE DOCTOR

ANN MAURICE ISN'T SHY WHEN IT COMES TO SAYING WHAT SHE THINKS – SHE'S GOT PLENTY OF ADVICE FOR LANDLORDS AS WELL AS VENDORS

No landlord wants their property to be left on the shelf – having their pick of tenants is a dream situation for most. But in order to get the offers of tenancy flooding in, your property must appeal to as many viewers as possible.

As Channel Five's House Doctor, Ann Maurice first introduced the UK to the concept of 'staging' properties 11 years ago. Since then she has helped hundreds of people to make their homes appealing to prospective buyers and get the best sale price.

Ann's tips for staging a property for sale can easily be applied to the rental sector. "The rules for decorating a property are the same, whether it's for rental or sale," says Ann. "You want to make sure it's relatively neutral so it appeals to everybody. This doesn't mean you have to use bland colours, just nothing that will blind you."

According to Ann, the choice of furniture can make or break a letting. "When renting a property

## ANN'S TOP TIPS

- Be realistic – write a plan that can easily be achieved within your time frame and budget
- Use neutral colours – don't choose white (which is too stark) or magnolia (which is too bland)
- Buy an extra set of cushions when buying sofas so that you can replace them at a later date
- It's impossible to have too much storage space
- Choose items that can be easily cleaned - avoid light carpets or soft furnishings

“Tenants will be harder on fixtures and fittings than you are in your own home, so it's worth spending a bit more.”

as furnished you have to remember that prospective tenants are going to be looking at the furniture and asking themselves whether it is sufficient for their personal needs. Furniture doesn't need to be new, but it should look new.

"Tenants will be a lot harder on fixtures and fittings than you are in your own home, so it's often worth paying a little more for higher-quality items. A cheap blind isn't that cheap if it has to be replaced every six months."

Being realistic about the

time frame and budget for making a property presentable is key to its success, whether you're renovating a new purchase for letting or maintaining a home between tenancies.

"One of the biggest mistakes people make when staging a property is being overly ambitious in terms of budget and time," says Ann.

"They might have installed a kitchen that looks great but, when it's finished, they discover they haven't any budget left for the other rooms or for plants and accessories."

No matter how presentable you make a property look, if you're showing it to prospective tenants before current tenants have moved out, a certain amount of its appearance is out of your control.

"You cannot force a tenant to pack up their clothes or make their bed but you can incentivise them. You might give them 10-15% off their last month's rent if they keep it in good order while it's being shown," she adds.

 Ann Maurice has personally trained a network of professional Home Staging Consultants. Certified House Doctor Consultants can transform your property quickly to get you the best price possible. To find a consultant in your area, visit [www.housedoctor.co.uk](http://www.housedoctor.co.uk) or phone 020 8408 0122

# LET'S AND THE CITY...

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL FEMALES SEEK LARGE, ATTRACTIVE PROPERTY WITH NICE FEATURES FOR GOOD TIMES AND SHORT-TERM COMMITMENT. LAURA FOUNTAIN ON THE SEARCH FOR A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Young professionals are a landlord's dream tenants – with plenty of disposable income, they're willing to pay a premium for the right property in the right location.

Amie, an advertising account manager; Helen, a journalist; Trisha, an accountant; and myself are four such tenants. We're looking for a property that ticks all our boxes and has plenty of space for shoes and other essentials.

There's a lot of pressure for young people today to get on the property ladder but for my three housemates and me, renting is perfect for our lifestyle at the moment. We may choose to change jobs, live in a different country or go travelling over the next couple of years and renting means we're not tied down to a particular place.

For those of us who are more comfortable with a pair of Prada pumps than a pair of pliers, renting also provides the safety net of having a landlord to call when things go wrong.

We wanted to live in a lively area close to bars and restaurants and, with friends living in South London, we focused on Clapham and Battersea.

### Property 1

Rudloe Road, SW12, £600 per week  
One bedroom was downstairs next to the lounge, which screamed 'student digs'. None of us were prepared to sleep next to the lounge and have to put up with the noise from the TV. On the plus side, it was close to the tube and on a quiet residential street. Although it was decorated nicely, it was a bit rough around the edges and overall we thought it was overpriced.

### Property 2

Briarwood Road, SW4, £550 per week  
This was a nice large property, but there was little storage space. Although the property was marketed at £550 per week, we were advised by the agent that it was likely to go for higher,

taking it above our budget. We decided not to put in an offer and were a bit annoyed that the agent had wasted our time.

### Property 3

Battersea Park Road, SW8, £420 per week  
This two-storey maisonette had three large bedrooms and one smaller bedroom with a balcony. The property was above a Turkish restaurant, which turned us off as we thought it would be noisy at night and would possibly smell.

### Property 4

Victoria Rise, SW4, £508 per week  
With four double bedrooms all upstairs, a bathroom, separate shower room and a garden, this maisonette in the heart of Clapham was our dream home. The current tenants were a little untidy but the neutral décor helped us look past their mess and see the property's potential. We'll be moving in in time for Christmas!

