

# Market Ready

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## Q. What can I do to make my low ceilings look higher?

A. Ceiling height is important to many home buyers, said Kristen Magnani, a senior vice president at Rutenberg Realty in Manhattan. That's because "high ceilings give you that illusion of more openness and airiness," she said, and "people tend to gravitate to that."

So it's worthwhile to do whatever you can to raise your ceilings, or at least make them look taller, because homes with higher ceilings often fetch higher prices.

If your ceilings were dropped by a previous owner to cover beams or create space for recessed lighting, that intervention could be undone. But if there isn't any hidden space overhead, or you don't want to undertake such a major construction project, there are a number of techniques to make the ceilings look higher.

First, said Michael Booth, a founding principal of the San Francisco interior design firm BAMO, "Paint the ceilings a glossy finish." Glossy ceilings are popular right now, he said, and a reflective surface bounces light around, which will make the room feel bigger.

Make sure you choose a light color, like white or sky blue. That will help "to visually lift the ceiling of the room," he said, so "it will feel like a greater volume than you really have."

Next, consider the drapery. "Put the drapery rod as high as it can go, right to the underside of the ceiling," Mr. Booth said, even if the windows are relatively small. Then hang curtains that run all the way from the floor to the ceiling. "That will exaggerate the height of the window," he said, "which exaggerates the height of the wall."

If you are staging the home or buying new furniture, Mr. Booth suggested choosing sofas and lounge chairs that are low to the ground. You might want to consider modern furniture, he said, because it "tends to be low and sleek." A large, chunky sofa with a high seat is "the first thing that will make a ceiling look too low."

And take a close look at any moldings on the walls. "A lot of wainscots are carelessly made too high," Mr. Booth said, and that can make ceilings appear lower. "I like to keep them down at table height. It's a friendlier scale."

Do what you can, but don't assume that low ceilings are the end of the world. "I've always said that high ceilings are overrated," he said. "I don't mind low ceilings. I think they feel cozier. And I'm 6-foot-1."