

Should I Place Furniture in Storage?

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Q. Should I put some of my furniture in storage to make my apartment look bigger?

A. Doing whatever you can to make your apartment look as spacious as possible is a good idea, said Lee Williams, a real estate agent at Rutenberg Realty in Manhattan. If there is a lot of breathing room, he said, it “can help potential buyers visualize themselves living there.”

Besides reducing clutter and unnecessary furnishings, Mr. Williams recommended thinking about the size of your furniture. “I’ve run into cocktail tables that are way too large for the space,” he said, “and you have to do a kind of two-step slide past them.” Awkward arrangements like that can make a space feel cramped. Similarly, he said, “if you have a dining alcove and a suburban-sized table, I’d suggest putting in a cafe-sized table instead.”

Mr. Williams suggested storing any oversize furniture and renting or buying affordable replacements in a smaller scale. “I’ve had clients go to Ikea to get apartment-sized pieces,” he said, and when you move, you can take them with you, donate them or put them on Craigslist.

Cheryl Eisen, president of the New York home-staging company Interior Marketing Group, said she often tells sellers to store some of their furniture before showing their homes. “The way you live and the way you sell are very different,” she said. “When you’re trying to sell, the space should feel uncluttered, serene and very spacious. For the way most people live, that’s not reality.”

Generally, Ms. Eisen said, she recommends putting about half a home’s contents in storage. That includes not just furniture, but all those items you have stuffed in closets. “The more open space you create,” she said, “the more space the buyer will feel like they’re getting.”

Extra chairs and end tables are a good place to start, but make sure to keep a few key pieces of furniture to show how the rooms function. “I always like an L-shaped sofa, because it provides a lot of seating,” she said. “And then a decent-sized coffee table. And always leave a couple of side chairs, so it feels like a conversation could happen.”

In other words, she said, “Don’t get rid of so much stuff that the rooms cease to work.”

If you have trouble deciding what to keep and what to store, Mr. Williams advised recruiting an acquaintance who isn’t afraid to be candid. “Bring in someone who you know is going to be honest about your situation, like your real estate agent,” he said. “Or your mother-in-law.”