

What you really need to know to

Sell Your Home Using Feng Shui

energise your house

discover what attracts and repels buyers

create a feel-good factor inside and out

Jane Purr

essentials

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Jane Purr

ESSENTIALS

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Preface

Do you *really* want to move? This may seem a silly question, but are you sure? While some people *need* to relocate, they don't actually *want* to sell their home in order to do so. Perhaps this is true of you.

Most of us are attached to our home, it is our haven. We have created it and don't much like the idea of somebody else moving in and making it *their* home. Intellectually we might understand the need for such movement but emotionally, spiritually, it's a different matter. This is why **making a real decision to sell** is so hard. Our head says yes, while our heart is using every delaying tactic available.

'Yes' we reply when asked if someone can view at 6pm and yet we leave ourselves no time to tidy up beforehand. Result: less-than-immaculate house, unimpressed viewers, no sale. We voice disappointment but inwardly gloat that the house is still ours, until the inevitable realisation that we have got to go sooner or later. And so the agony is prolonged.

This book is for all those people who know they've got to go but need a gentle push to get there. It does some of the painful thinking for you. It shows you how to turn your lovingly created home into a depersonalised (though highly marketable) commodity.

Sad in some respects, but you might just sell to people who feel the same way as you. Not only that but you've got a whole new challenge ahead of you in the form of a new house. You'll be able to start again, putting your heart and soul into this new place – your new home.

Jane Purr

About this book

This book is a quick and general resource for implementing basic Form School feng shui in a home intended for sale. In carrying out the suggestions your home should become more attractive to both prospective buyers, and you and your family. The effects should be felt by anyone who enters the home, which is one of the joys of feng shui.

The style and length of the book preclude explanation of underlying feng shui theory. The aim has been to produce an enjoyable and effective tool which takes into account some of the **wisdom and sheer common sense** available to us through the **ancient study of feng shui**.

DEDICATION

To Bill and Mum and Dad

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1 Using Feng Shui

Feng shui is the study of nature and its effects on the health and wealth of mankind at any given time and place.

3

things that
really matter

- 1 UNDERSTANDING WHAT FENG SHUI IS
- 2 UNDERSTANDING WHAT FENG SHUI IS NOT
- 3 KNOWING HOW TO USE FENG SHUI

Reams have been written about feng shui, but much of it is both complex and confusing. Feng shui is simply one branch of an ancient Eastern study based on the understanding of the existence of a **single vibrational energy** throughout the universe. Today, vibrational energy is recognised not only by Eastern practitioners of the energetic arts and sciences but also by many contemporary Western physicists.

This single vibrational energy is common to all things, both organic and inorganic. In the East it is known as *chi* – ‘life’s breath’. The Chinese were not the only ancient people to have had an understanding of chi; the Mayans, the American Indians and the Ancients of Europe were aware of this energy too.

There is no logical way to the discovery of these elemental laws. There is only the way of intuition, which is helped by a feeling for the order lying behind appearance. Albert Einstein.

According to feng shui thought, chi can be divided into **two opposed – although complementary and interlinked – energies**: *yin* and *yang*. From here it separates further into the five **energetic essences**: fire, earth, metal, water, wood. All practices linked to the study of vibrational energy aim to **create and maintain a balance** of these elements. In acupuncture, for instance, the intention is to ensure a balance of energy throughout the body.

Feng shui is used to identify and correct areas of energy inappropriate to human habitation, and to enhance areas construed as more auspicious. In addition it is used to calculate compatibility between man and place. But the principle is always the same: **to protect and then to enhance**. Only then may we prosper.

① UNDERSTANDING WHAT FENG SHUI IS

Feng shui is an established Chinese scientific study of the cause and effect of cosmic and terrestrial vibrational energy.

It is:

- an **art form** – in its creation of balance and harmony
- a **skill** – in its identification and implementation
- an **enabling tool**
- essentially **common sense** – the obvious
- also part of a much **wider understanding** of vibrational energy.

② UNDERSTANDING WHAT FENG SHUI IS NOT

Feng shui is not magic – it will not create overnight miracles. Nor is it a religion – it is simply a system which recommends living with the forces in nature.

Feng shui is not:

- a belief system – it is a fact not a faith

- a cure-all or crutch – it will benefit most those who want to help themselves in the first instance
- another New Age bandwagon – it has been in use for thousands of years
- a con – simply because something is out of one's sphere of knowledge and experience does not mean to say it does not exist and is not effective. Keep an open mind.

③ KNOWING HOW TO USE FENG SHUI

Feng shui should be used sparingly and with respect. Approach it defensively in the first instance – ensure health *then* aim for wealth. Use it with intent – *know* what you want from it – and with integrity, avoiding greed and maliciousness.



MAKING WHAT MATTERS WORK FOR YOU

- ② For the purpose of the sale of your home, you will be using basic principles of feng shui. There is no need for you to have an understanding of the whole system in order for you to benefit from it.
- ② Simple feng shui pointers and references are included throughout the book. The elements and principles are woven into the text. For now concentrate on the job in hand – selling your house.

2 Doing the Groundwork

You wouldn't sell your car without making it look great from all angles. So do the same with your house. Take the time, it's worth it.

6

things that
really matter

- 1 PREPARING THE HOUSEHOLD
- 2 CLEARING THE CLUTTER
- 3 REPAIRS AND MENDING
- 4 CLEANING
- 5 CREATING SPACE
- 6 HONING THE SENSES

Groundwork really is the most important part of any project – and selling a house is a sales project. Only you're living in it. Like any project it can be broken down into bite-sized chunks, and like most projects the preparation and planning take the most thought and time. **The more trouble taken at this stage, the greater the pay-off later.** Be prepared to fall in love with your home all over again when this part is finished because you will have **re-energised it**. But remember your objective is not to settle back into your house, but to move it on to people who will enjoy it as much as you have.



PREPARING THE HOUSEHOLD

Selling a house is part project management, part theatre. Both demand strong coordination and teamwork, so involve the family from the start, canvas their support. Avoid a 'you and the viewer' versus 'the rest of the household' scenario when you're showing people around and you'll find the

whole process runs much more smoothly. Do explain why it's necessary to up sticks. Children might be apprehensive about moving, but by involving them in both the sale of your current house and the viewing of possible new homes they will have something to distract them from their fears.

- Make clear the **unusual circumstances** that you will all be living in until the house is sold, and why they will need to be more tidy than normal for a short period.
- Involve them in the **staging** of the house before viewers arrive, plumping cushions, hiding toys and so on. Teenagers can set the scene with music and coffee-making.
- Children can cause both intentional and unintentional **havoc** during viewing. If in doubt as to their likely behaviour, try to farm them out over this brief time.
- Some people are not comfortable around **babies** and/or the **elderly**. Equally babies and elderly people can become disturbed by strangers in the home. Schedule viewing sessions for when baby and granny are elsewhere.
- Many people are afraid of, allergic to, or plain against **pets**. Try to find a sitter/walker for the duration of the visit.

Be aware that you will be living in a showhouse for a short while, and the better it looks the sooner it will sell. Showhouses, however have no charisma, plenty of broad appeal but no individuality. This is what you must strive for. You need to depersonalise your home from top to bottom.

2 CLEARING THE CLUTTER

Having a sort-out is not just about tidying up the house so visitors can make their way through it more easily, it's to

start you packing things away so that the run-up to removal day is less onerous. Many people are so pinned down by their possessions they simply cannot face the thought of moving at all! The idea of going through everything they own to decide what they really want to keep is just too much. But it need not be this way. Relocating is a process like any other and should be tackled as such. The following tips will help:

- Clutter collects dust and pins down energy, creating a stale, unhealthy atmosphere. **Shift the clutter** and the energy will begin to move – it's cleansing, healthy and vital. You will benefit and your viewers will feel and be attracted by it.
- Start **small and realistic**.
- Expect **clearing the whole house** to last a period of weeks, then you will be less likely to give up halfway and sling it all back in a cupboard. Clutter-clearing is draining both physically and emotionally. **Pace yourself**.
- Begin by **tackling a single drawer** – perhaps kitchen or bedroom dresser – each night of the week, something you can finish then and there. Do not leave the job undone overnight.

Encourage by example. Refrain from nagging others and despite themselves they will become interested in what you are doing. Then feign disinterest in the fact that *they're* interested in finally tackling that heap of rubbish you've been going on about for years. Casually indicate the bin liners and let them get on with it. Do not interfere just persevere with your own job.

There is a difference between **clutter** and **storage**, and **clutter** and **ornamentation**.

- *Clutter* is made up of things you put off sorting through.

It nags at the subconscious, is difficult to manage, ties down energy and is ultimately unhealthy.

- *Storage* comprises clean, known, easily accessible items which have been previously sorted through and have a reason for being there.
- *Ornamentation* is the beautification of your home. Do not throw away an object if it truly inspires you or has wonderful memories. Not everything can be categorised in this way however: be honest and selective. But also remember that a home is only a house with soul. Beautiful, personal, uplifting things may not be appropriate for the showhouse you are temporarily creating but they will give your next house the soul it will need to turn it into a home. So keep those things – just get them cleaned up and packed away.

Also save things which coordinate with the look of the room but don't add a personal touch. Put away photos but make greater use of the vase which matches the colour of the walls which matches the carpet and so on. Items that neither uplift you personally nor add something cosmetically to the house should go.

- Divide your clutter into two piles only: **saving** and **going**, no 'I'll think about it later pile', as that inevitably becomes the highest.
- Put all of the **going** pile into a bin liner and get it out of the house immediately. Dump it or put it straight into the car for the charity shop and deposit it there *the next day*.
- Strong, lidded cardboard boxes, the type used in offices, are ideal for **storage and removal**. Once filled, label neatly and secure.
- Just before moving you can have a final, **short sift** and if

you really don't care for the accessories you've used to enhance the house for sale purposes, you can leave them behind. Don't take anything you have no use for.

Familiarity breeds acceptance. After a while you don't consciously see, smell, hear, feel the things that surround you but viewers do. Things which you think you have become immune to (erroneously in fact, but that's another feng shui story), will become apparent to them immediately.

Ask someone with an objective eye – a good friend, neighbour or feng shui practitioner, to identify any faults you may have overlooked. A feng shui practitioner will also be able to identify areas of unbalanced energy. Record their comments in a 'snag list' and work on them later.

③ REPAIRS AND MENDING

You don't want to leave with a guilty conscience, so fix faults, don't hide them.

People want to move into a **well-maintained house**. Most viewers will be unimpressed by obvious flaws so correct them straight away. It's been shown that a simple scratch on the door of a central heating boiler can lead many people to assume that the *whole system* needs replacing! Superficial things like this can result in a potential buyer making a disproportionately reduced offer on your house. You simply don't need the stress. Put the house right and you won't have any. If you aren't up to it or don't have the time, think about hiring a handyman and/or a seamstress for a couple of days. They're worth the investment. Things to look out for and put right include:

- cracked ceilings
- sticking doors

- rattling door handles
- droopy kitchen unit doors
- dripping taps and sundry leaks
- peeling wallpaper
- lifting or stained carpet
- torn or scratched lino
- chipped paint work (try not to paint the day before showtime – the smell lingers)
- blocked gutters
- cracked tiles
- unhemmed curtains
- bent or crooked blinds
- fraying upholstery.

Not everyone will be put off by these faults *but some will* so it's worth taking the trouble to **set everything straight**. Most people are terrified of accidentally taking on a house with seriously expensive problems. They will therefore be alert to any hint of electrical, plumbing or foundation trouble. Reassure them and yourself by making sure these things are in good working order before you place your house on the market.

Think about **updating a few things** too. Fresh, clever and often relatively cheap details can have a big impact and make the house seem more expensive than it really is.

Consider:

- chrome or brass-plated plug sockets
- designer light switches and lampshades
- new kitchen and bathroom taps
- wooden toilet seats
- trendy door handles on kitchen units
- quality door handles and finger plates (new or antique)
- unusual curtain tiebacks

- sumptuous cushions and throws (you can take them with you)
- panelled interior doors, particularly if yours are the flushed, wood veneer type
- ceiling coving.

Your house is being interviewed each time you open your door to viewers. Present it as well as you would present yourself at a job interview: at its best.

4 CLEANING

Nothing repels a likely buyer more than other people's dirt.

A thorough clean can make the cheapest, quickest and most effective impact on any house. However, there's a difference between shabby and dirty.

- *Shabby* can be chic, charming, endearing almost. Shabby is faded but cosy armchairs, old but quality curtains, well-used but scrupulously clean furniture.
- *Dirty* is just plain dirty. Dirty is greasy upholstery, sticky door frames, tacky carpet, unspeakable toilets. Dirty is horrible.
- Moral of the story? In the first instance you're better off spending your time and money on cleaning than expensive knick-knacks. So clean then accessorise.
- Bring in the professionals if you can't face it yourself. Have the carpets and curtains steam-cleaned, particularly if you smoke. Invest in a good quality ioniser once the job's been done to prevent build-up (you can take it with you).
- Sparkling windows are a must, inside and out, and don't forget the sills. Chi enters through glass but smut slows it down or blocks entry altogether and you want as much positive energy as you can muster in your home.

- Wash – bleach if necessary – all nets, lace and voile, or simply replace.
- Degrease all interior woodwork – doors, architraves, dados and skirtings.
- Be particular about cat and dog hair, it equals sneezing to many people.
- Vacuum louvres, wash aluminium blinds.
- All metal surfaces should gleam, as should all interior glass including cabinet and unit doors. Clean, clear surfaces encourage a good flow of chi.
- Polish your real plants and dust the artificial versions, particularly those tucked away in corners. They work harder at stopping the stagnation of chi than those placed in more open spaces.

Create a pre-visit list of things you need to put away or in place just before viewers arrive, eg fresh towels, flowers, clean pillow cases, new soaps and so on. Use it as a tick list and save having to remember what goes where every time.

⑤ CREATING SPACE

Colour can be a point of controversy. What is ‘pretty lavender’ to you might be ‘sickly mauve’ to them. Choose neutral shades whenever possible. Likewise try to make your decor sexless. Making it either too feminine or too masculine may alienate 50% of your viewers.

Everyone is looking for **extra space**: space to spread out, space to store things, space to simply *breathe*. To a certain extent space can be created by illusion. Light – both natural and artificial – decorating materials, window treatments, furniture type and placement all play a part in maximising this much-valued commodity. **Space also allows chi to circulate more easily**, ebbing its way from

room to room, cleansing and lifting the energy as it meanders around the house. Encourage this movement by **opening up the space** around you.

- **Begin by pulling curtains away from the windows** as far as you can. Feel the airiness this creates. Tie them back if necessary. Remove excess plants and ornaments from sills. Allow as much natural light as possible into every room.
- **Consider a harmonising colour scheme** for walls and flooring throughout the whole house. This gives the impression that you're wandering around a single area instead of many different rooms.
- **Keep your colour scheme as light as possible** – dark colours close you in. Use warm, colours in North-facing rooms.
- **Do without patterns.** Instead use texture on walls, upholstery, carpets and accessories.
- **Use mirrors and lamps** to light up and draw chi into shadowy areas, eg under stairs, in alcoves.
- **Keep surfaces as clear as possible** without creating a stark look.
- **Remove obstacles** from halls, landings and corridors so people and chi can move freely.
- **Lift things from the floor** and allow chi to reach the farthest corners of the room. Show as much skirting board as possible.
- **Choose furniture with open legs** so you can see the floor stretching to the wall beneath them.
- **Think relaxing curves and circles** for the home. These allow natural sweeping movements for both energy and people.
- Use **uplighters** in low-ceilinged rooms and under dormers.

- **Ensure everything in a room is in proportion** to the size of the room, ie no oversized sofas in tiny spaces.
- **Consider pictures with a feeling of depth**, i.e. land or seascapes where you can see into the distance. Pictures should be hung so the middle is aligned with your eye when you are standing up.
- **Hang many pictures on the same wall** with the base of the frame of each one the same distance from the floor. This draws the eye slowly around the room.

Viewers want to live in a home that has **good predecessor law** in feng shui terms. Give them this assurance by creating a home which feels loved and cared for. Be happy when you show people around and induce the rest of the family to greet them cheerfully. Relaxed viewers will linger, imagining themselves living happily in your home. On edge they will exit asap, never to be seen again no matter how nice the house is.

Make the effort; make viewers feel welcome. It will make you feel good too.

⑥ HONING THE SENSES

Much of feng shui is about bringing **nature** into the home; re-creating the natural, external environment in our 'cave'. Protected from the elements by the roof over our head and the walls around us, our senses become dulled, our *sense of life* buried.

Occasionally exposing ourselves to the sun on our face, the wind in our hair, the ground beneath our bare feet, can help to reawaken these senses. This keeps us in touch with the elements and through them, ourselves. Bring **life** into your internal environment using the elements **fire, water,**

wood, earth, and metal. While others may not be as attuned as you to these sensations, they will certainly be aware of a feel-good factor when they enter your home and that's what you're aiming for.

- Fill your home with benign depictions of nature.
- Open your windows to the sounds of nature or re-create them with CDs.
- Consider a tumbling water feature.
- Introduce natural smells: flowers, cut wood, wicker, beeswax, herbs, linen, vanilla.
- Use different surface textures in your furnishings and develop your sense of touch. Feel the difference between linen and velvet, hemp and silk.
- Light a real fire, have a barbecue and burn real wood: relish the aroma. Feel *alive*.
- Do things personally. Become more tactile, literally more hands-on. Wherever it's possible and convenient, don't put a machine between you and your activity.
- Write personal letters by hand – avoid the PC.
- Forget the gym treadmill – run in the open air.
- Watch the sun come up outside – not on TV.
- Refuse a chair, sit on the grass.
- Knead bread.
- Wash your hair with rain water.

No need to tell everybody what you're up to of course, just do it for yourself. As your five senses become more exercised and finely attuned, so the sixth, **your intuition** comes into its own. And that's when things become really interesting. **People you come into contact with, viewers included, will pick up on this.** They may not know what's going on but they'll know they feel good around you and *in your home*.

Think neutral about the house you're selling. If there's any chance of something causing offence or embarrassment, put it away. Think magnolia and white gloss and you'll be on the right lines.



MAKING WHAT MATTERS WORK FOR YOU

- ② Remember why you are doing all this: you need to move. You want to sell your home and have embarked on a short-term project. You are creating a *stage* home for a house-buying *audience*.
- ② Living in a house like this is a little surreal, like trying to live on a room set. All the evidence of day-to-day living has to be eradicated; all personality removed.
- ② It's hard work maintaining a fantasy house where everything is clean all the time, the flowers are always fresh and the sink never full of dishes, but that's the impression you have to create for your viewers when they call.
- ② While it's exhausting, it's also invigorating. In cleaning and clearing the home you are shifting the energy. Take advantage of this and try to view the whole experience as one to be gained from, not simply endured.

3 Tackling the House

An ounce of image is worth a ton of performance.

Unknown

6

things that
really matter

- 1 THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE
- 2 THE ENTRANCE LOCATION
- 3 THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM
- 4 ASSESSING THE LIVING ROOM
- 5 FOUL ENERGY AREAS
- 6 ENHANCING BEDROOMS

What is it about a house that appeals to each sex specifically? On the whole men and women are looking for different things when they view a potential new home. Men are impressed by gadgets that engage their *yang* attention – sauna, real fire, range, tool shed, power shower, big TV – but also by practicalities, things that cost a lot of money to maintain – central heating, plumbing, security system, refuse disposal unit, air conditioning and so on.

Women notice the cleanliness and *feel* of a house. They are concerned about the daily practicalities of running a working home – how to feed and clear up quickly and easily. They will also be interested in the security aspects but will view the location as a whole and include the outside in their calculations. Lighting, sunlight in particular, is important to them as are window views and ambient temperature. Most women, being *yin* in nature, tend to search for warmth and cosiness. Above all they will have a **gut reaction to your house**, often without knowing exactly

how they have arrived at it. Here feng shui has a big part to play.

Running costs and decor are important to both sexes, as are storage and space. Men like a large entrance hall and room to spread out in the lounge. Women also like their space but tend to link it to kitchen and wardrobe and bathroom areas. Give them both something special to look at by making **each room a showpiece with a positive feel of its own.**



THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

Many potential buyers select the houses they want to view and know more about by using the 'drive past' method. If your home gives **a good impression from the street** (known as 'curb appeal') they'll be more likely to want to look inside. External presentation is therefore all-important. This is not only true for people. Chi (healthy energy) is attracted to a home with a clear and visible pathway to the front door, vibrant plants by the steps, an extruding porch or outside light left on. If your house is on the market **check its appearance every day**, both as you enter and as you leave. Buyers will.

- **Start in the street.** Look at your house. Is the roof OK? Are the skylights sparkling? What about gutters and downpipes? Paint in good condition? How about the paint colour – does it generally fit in with the rest of the street? Buyers are frightened of too much front-of-house colour. If it's really too much, think about toning it down a bit.
- What about the **windows**? People are attracted by symmetry and tend to like windows that all look the same from the outside, ie matching lace curtains or

blinds. Think about what you could do to improve your windows including straightening the drapes, removing stickers, glue, putty marks, mildew, stick-on toys, etc.

- **Open the windows** (weather permitting). This gives a subconscious impression of security and welcome to those looking at the front of the house as well as benefiting those within.
- **Are your walls sound?** No worrying cracks? You might have had these looked at and know there's nothing to be concerned about but to the average viewer they can signify subsidence and big expenditure. Have cracks seen to.
- **Is there a large tree or shrub 'blocking' the front door?** Not only will this inhibit the entry of chi, but it also provides good cover for undesirable types. It also stops the passing viewer from seeing your front door, giving the subconscious impression you have something to hide. Shift obstructions or get rid of them altogether.
- Ensure there are no **tree limbs** touching or brushing against the house; this can be quite unnerving. Trim them back. Likewise if they are growing across the front of a window.
- Can you read the **number or house name** from the street? This really is crucial. Buyers give up easily if they can't find where they're going. Think about highlighting numbers and nameplates or raising them to a better position if necessary.
- Does the **street lamp** outside your house work? Important if viewers are arriving after dark. If not, get it seen to. Likewise any potholes in the road and untrimmed verge. Tidy this yourself if necessary.
- If possible, plant red or yellow **flowers outside your gate**. This gives the impression of a generosity of spirit

and draws chi and potential buyers towards your home.

- **Check your boundaries.** Are fences upright and solid? In need of paint or stain?
- Sweep the **pavement.** Hose and scrub it if it helps, never mind what the neighbours think. You're trying to sell your house they're not.
- If **street parking** is the only option, make sure there is a space for viewers when they arrive and try to fix a time for visits when the street is relatively empty of other cars.
- Ensure the **For Sale sign** does not line up with your front door (blocks the entry of chi), points away from the house (guiding cutting chi elsewhere), and is clean, upright and solidly fixed.
- **Gates** should be in good working order, no squeaks or scraping. Fix the latch and paint if necessary.
- Be sure **free-standing mailboxes** are clean and upright.
- **Gravel** should be raked and of sufficient quantity to avoid looking scrappy.
- Wash and if need be degrease and remove rust stains from your **driveway.** Manicure the edges. Fix cracks and holes. Remove mushroom or weed outbreaks and any doggie accidents.
- Close **garage doors** and hide that cavern of clutter. Your house is on sale — on *show* – 24 hours a day and potential buyers are passing by all this time. A messy garage could put them off.
- **Cars** should not dominate the house; either garage them or park them elsewhere. If they must be on show ensure they are immaculately clean and not blocking the front door. Try to remove **boats and caravans**, for the same reason.

All getting too much? Remember: exteriors sell. So get

selling! And don't forget to smile – buyers will be watching you as they tootle past in their car and you're part of the package, so play your part!

- Trim the lawn twice a week. It's actually less effort this way plus you get the chance to enjoy the scent of cut grass twice as often. Two weeks before the house goes on the market, feed the grass. Re-turf if necessary.
- Resist the temptation to use **manure** or any other worthy but stinky organic fertiliser for the duration.
- Remove **rubbish bins** and any piles of compost which have accumulated towards the front of the house, also tatty garden furniture, lawnmowers, hoses, faded plastic toys and anything 'on its way somewhere else'.
- Put away **gnomes**, windmills and other manifestations of your personal taste in garden ornamentation. What might be to your liking could repel others.
- **Weed flower beds** and mulch borders.
- **Clean ponds** and possibly invest in a couple of new fish. People love to look for wildlife in the garden. Give them something to find – it's a real icebreaker.
- If you have a **water feature**, switch it on. Fountains are particularly fortunate in feng shui.
- Deadhead roses, **remove anything lifeless**, clear all debris.
- Cut back intrusive **bushes** from gate, path and doorway. Stand blooming, brimming pots over manhole covers.
- **No front garden?** Use pots, baskets, window boxes, trellis. You can take these with you to your new property. Fill with colour – reds and yellows are the best, avoid red and white though. Consider some help from a landscape gardener. A relatively small investment can reap huge rewards; attractive, well-maintained gardens attract both buyers and chi. You can't lose.

- Sweep the **path** and step to the front door. Remove any moss. Discourage chi from rushing at the front door if your path is straight by placing ground cover plants along the edges. As they spread over the sides a more undulating walkway will be created, slowing down chi. Consider using chamomile. It has the bonus of smelling wonderful every time it's stepped on. If your front door is preceded by paving stones, ensure they are steady. Reset anything wobbly.
- **Clear snow** if you have had a fall, including the front pavement. Make sure it's not slippery.
- Along the front of the house **fill matching tubs** with the same type of plant and place in a row. Three yellow plants or three red create an interesting effect. Go for terracotta or stone tubs rather than plastic. Scatter the soil with gravel, pebbles or glass beads for a neater finish.
- **Porches** should be clean and tidy, not a storage area for welly boots and dog bowls. Plants on shelves should be potted up properly and thriving. Not too many, though, and keep them of the same type and height for a contemporary look.
- All **vegetation near the front door** should be particularly healthy. Better to have no plants than dead ones. Mix herbs with flowers for colour and scent, released as people brush by them.
- Consider a wall or **hanging basket** next to your front door. Even in winter these can be filled to create an inviting touch of life. If it's nearing Christmas, hang a wreath at the entrance.
- Your **external door light** should be gleaming and bright at all times. Leave on 24 hours a day. It will both draw chi towards the house and create a welcoming glow for

viewers arriving at dusk.

- Viewers can spend up to three minutes at your front door, more if your **doorbell** doesn't work properly. Don't make them wait and give them a reason for leaving in a huff. Fix it while you can. Assuming your bell works, people are still going to have ample time to ponder the quality of your household maintenance. Your front door provides examples of your DIY, housekeeping and decorative taste and they will begin to form an impression of you and the rest of your house. Make sure it's a good one. Wash or redo the paint work with a conservative colour. Polish the brass, even update it, scrub or paint the step, clean the glass, particularly the fan light.
- **House numbers** benefit from leaning and lifting to the right (if you are in dual or more figures) with the last number highest. This prompts uplifting thoughts.
- If there is a **house name**, make sure it is a cheerful one. No one wants to live in a home with negative connotations.
- **Wash windows** both inside and out, regularly. Don't just do it once and hope it will last until you're gone. Feel the difference it makes and you'll wonder why it took you so long. A professional window cleaner is a good investment for any home.



THE ENTRANCE LOCATION

*The most important area of the house, of any building in fact. This cannot be emphasised enough. **Energy enters the home here.** It can either be helped on its way, cleanly and smoothly, or it can be blocked, causing it to stagnate and become unhealthy. **People entering and leaving can***

be inspired and supported by this location. They can also be depressed and depleted if it is dismal, cluttered or dirty. Take it to its full potential and invite your buyers to enjoy their viewing experience by observing the following points:

- All the senses are assaulted at once when you enter someone else's home. Try to **imagine yourself as a potential buyer** stepping into your home for the first time. What is your immediate response? Do you feel warm, relaxed, comforted, intrigued? Or jittery, chilly, alienated, put off? If your responses to all those things are not positive then work on this area of the house until they are.
- Ensure the **front door** opens easily and fully. It should not stick or be blocked in any way or you will be inhibiting not only the entry of viewers but also of chi. Take away anything from behind the door which could impede its swing.
- Have a **focal point** as soon as you come into the house proper – a painting of something positive, a sunrise or sunflowers perhaps, or smiling faces. Don't have a mirror immediately opposite the front door, it's disconcerting to viewers and pushes all the energy you've worked so hard to entice into the house straight back out again.
- If you **step down** as you enter the house, energy will do the same and may well stagnate there. Lift it, and yourself, by using uplighters or wall washers to make chi rise and get it moving around the house. You can take any items like this with you when you go.
- Make the most of any original terracotta **floor tiles** by buffing them to a high sheen. They're a great selling point.

- Try not to use **air freshener**. It's generally unpleasant and smells like you're trying to mask something. Which you may be if your hall is still full of old shoes and mouldering coats. Solution: remove them and try to discipline everybody into regularly putting them away.
- The same goes for reeking **sports kit** and piles of stuff for **recycling**. **Also bags of clutter** on their way to the charity shop, gloves, hats, and other detritus just brought in from the car.
- Remove the **coat mountain** from the newel post at the bottom of the stairs. Apart from the fact that an elegant sweep of stairs can be a terrific selling feature which you shouldn't be obliterating, a heap of outerwear blocks both traffic and chi.
- For the same reason ensure there is nothing piled up at the **foot of the stairs** either. Use a stair basket if need be.
- **Plants** at the end of the hall are great for drawing chi further into the home and creating a healthy environment. Use species with broad, round leaves. These eat household bacteria and are conducive to the soft, undulating feel you should be trying to create around you. Artificial foliage will do if you're desperate but make sure it's silk and a good quality imitation. Place these somewhere out of direct view so they can't be examined too closely.
- Avoid overhead lighting. It's unflattering and soulless. Use **side lamps and up-lighters** for a gentle, warming welcome. Stand table lamps in front of mirrors for a doubled-up glow.
- Check your **rugs**. Curling or rucked? Perhaps the fringes are worn and grubby. Clean or replace. If they slip get some gripping underlay.

- If the **entrance faces a staircase** you will find chi disappears up it immediately on opening the front door. Deal with this by hanging a fringed or beaded lampshade at the foot of the stairs to slow the flow of energy. A chandelier would also do.
- Placing a **circular mat** at the base of the stairs will encourage chi to swirl and enter other areas before disappearing to the rooms above. This has the same effect on people if you have the type of home where the family just go straight up to their bedrooms when they come in rather than joining the rest of the household downstairs.
- Consider a **warm, mellow yellow** if the hall needs repainting. It reflects the light outside in summertime and provides a cosy contrast in winter.
- Remove any **artwork or sculpture** which represents misery, pain, loneliness, wet or stormy weather, heavy industry and so on. This is for your benefit, not just the viewers'. Support yourself and yours with the positive things of life.

If it looks tatty, the assumption will be that it must need replacing or redoing. Most viewers won't be bothered and will simply move on to the next house. Don't give them the opportunity: if it looks sad – put it right. Even if you don't sell immediately, you'll be pleased you made the effort for your own sake.

3 THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM

Many people consider the kitchen to be the most important area of the home. Certainly in feng shui it is second only to the entrance location. The stove represents **family wealth** and the dining table **household abundance**, which is why it is so often suggested that it can be doubled up by the

use of a large mirror.

You may not be able to do anything about the *style* of your kitchen but you most certainly can do something about the **condition and cleanliness** of it. Most people can live with decor that is not to their taste; what they cannot live with is muck. Muck in the kitchen also affects your feng shui in terms of **your prosperity in life**.

Crowded, sticky Welsh dressers, groaning with a decade's worth of yellowing postcards and knick-knacks, are often owned by people living in the past. Everything they surround themselves with is pulling them backwards. Scraggly old bunches of herbs (dead), an abundance of antiques (yesterday), stacks of ancient Sunday supplements (old news) all add up to stagnation. The key here is **balance**.

Remember: What you see around you goes in. By all means display the craftsmanship of days gone by – but in moderation.

Is this a description of you? You may not be sure but viewers will be and while the country kitchen look is perennially popular, fossilisation is not. Kitchens like this feel a bit sad and nobody wants to move into a sad house. Do something about it.

Begin with **the classic first step. Clear your clutter**. As you wash your ornaments and store them away (in boxes to go out of the house), as you fill your bin bags with prehistoric cooking gadgets and create empty spaces on your shelves, feel the years drop away. Then **clean and clean again**, especially in the most disgusting places. If a viewer can come into your house and go straight to the cupboard under the kitchen sink and be greeted with a non-greasy u-bend, sparkling base and sides, a tidy basket of cleaning materials, they will subconsciously feel assured

about the cleanliness of the rest of the house.

Note: This should not be used as a selling 'con'. Sink and bath outlets are traditionally known in feng shui as **foul energy areas**. Historically they would have been sited well away from the house towards the rear of the property. The contemporary Western custom of internalising these facilities is very convenient but does not alter the fact that they are still noxious in terms of energy and should be maintained to the very highest standard. Keep them clean for your own prosperity.

Also:

- Wash and polish the **floor**, lino or tiles. Clean or replace floor mats.
- Line **cupboards** with new paper. Repair any badly hanging or ill-fitting doors.
- Clean the **oven**. Line the grill pan, polish the hob. Anyone who has a ceramic hob which looks like a volcanic landscape will not be suffering with excess money problems. Chi likes to flow over surfaces. Congestion like this only serves to halt its progress.
- Wipe clean all **cooking gadgets** and accessories. Have no grease splashes in your kitchen.
- Scrub **wall tiles**, bleach grout or replace if necessary.
- Do not leave **dirty dishes** on show or try hiding them in a cupboard. It's bound to be the one people decide to have a look in.
- If your **kitchen window** is south-facing take advantage of the light and install a row of herbs on the sill. Use attractive containers (not plastic pots) and enjoy the scent at the same time.
- Deodorise your **rubbish bin**.
- **Ceiling fan?** These are great for circulating chi as well as distributing heat and cool air but do make sure the

blades are clean.

- Likewise replace **hob extractor** filters. Dripping grease is the last thing you need on show.
- Destain and polish all **stainless steel**. Bleach your u-bend or treat it with caustic soda (read the instructions first).
- Decant **washing-up liquid** into a pretty bottle or put it out of sight. Store sponges and scourers.
- Straighten up your **cookery books**. Have fashionable and established authors most prominent. Displaying your culinary credentials allows viewers to be reassured about your standards in this room, the heart of the house.
- An inherited but scrupulously clean **bread board** is both a point of interest and evidence of your commitment to the kitchen as a source of homeliness.
- Big, shiny, expensive **kitchen gadgets** are fashionable. If you have a high-tech blender, juicer, espresso machine or the like, position the odd one to catch the light. Don't go mad though. You don't want to block chi. (This advice does not extend to sandwich makers – sorry, but the style-conscious just don't seem to be into these.)
- Well-cared for **copper-bottomed pans** look great hanging up but use some restraint with this display technique. Anything hanging, from plants to tea towels and utensils, hampers the flow of chi so be careful.
- **Glass-fronted cabinets** should show order and attractiveness within.
- Part with any ugly, inappropriate or plain dead **plants**. Again, replace with discretion. Undoubtedly they are good feng shui in as much as they provide moving wood energy, but aesthetically they are also a household accessory and over-accessorising can distract and overwhelm. Keep it simple and ensure any you keep are potted into attractive

containers, not left in cheap plastic pots.

- Remove all **magnets** from **fridge** together with old notes, business cards, coupons and vouchers from **notice boards**. Take down tatty or tasteless **calendars**.
- Touch up chips or scrapes on **white enamelled goods** and see to any watermarks or scratches on **wood surfaces**.
- Put away **cutlery**. Buy a drawer organiser if you have to.
- Bag up **carrier bags** or throw them away, likewise old **aluminium foil, plastic tubs** and assorted lids.
- Sort out **food storage areas**. Clear out old stuff and dust anything you never use but insist on keeping. Turn tin and package labels to the front. If you have anything attractive or expensive in there, move it forward. Show your discrimination as a cook when they open the doors.

If you're lucky enough to have a **walk-in pantry**, make the most of it. People love them; they're both practical and romantic. A very influential selling point. Whitewash the walls. Buy some new food containers and decant your dried goods. Label up smartly. Line shelves with gingham. Stack fruit and veg into wicker baskets and remove anything not associated with food, i.e. ironing boards, garden chairs, tools etc. Get everything up off the floor. A **built-in larder** is nearly as good. Treat the inside in the same way as your pantry. If you have both, coordinate your goods and decor.

A kitchen with sufficient room for a **breakfast table/bar** is another big plus. Highlight it with a generous bowl of **fresh fruit** on the middle. Consider some new **chair cushions** or covers to give the room a lift. If your **boiler** is in the kitchen, make sure it's clean and polished and that the door is free from nicks or scrapes.

Separate dining room? A bit of an indulgence these days. Many people have turned them into home offices,

but you can't beat one for big occasions. Be aware that dining rooms are often dead areas – yin, in feng shui parlance. This is usually because they are so little used that the energy becomes stale and cheerless. Also dining rooms are frequently filled with heavy furniture and dark wood which create a solemn atmosphere and an impression of a space smaller and more congested than it really is. Correct this by incorporating more yang:

- Leave the door open and **heat the room**. Expensive but the alternative is a lifeless area in your house and do you really want that?
- **Ensure that energy is drawn into far corners of the room** by leaving table lamps on in alcoves. This looks very cosy as you catch a glimpse of a warm glow on your way past to another room. Or use plants and live flowers. A tumbling water feature would also ensure movement, which is the object of the exercise.
- **Hang paintings or use sculpture** that depict **activity and movement**.
- **Let plenty of natural light** into the room. Pull back curtains and open windows as often as you can. Likewise draw them at night. Physically going in and out of the room will bring some human energy into the area.
- Place **fresh flowers** on the table. If the table is dark wood, think about covering it with a white lace cloth.
- **Polish silver and glass** and try to position it in a situation where it will catch the best of the sun. At night place it in a lighted cabinet and leave the light on.
- Think about **hanging a good quality lead crystal chandelier** in the room. An investment, but remember you can take it with you. They catch and shift light and chi in a way that is both beautiful and extremely effective.

Seriously consider if you really need all the bits and pieces you have in your dining room. These areas do tend to become dumping grounds for every odd stick of furniture that can't find a home elsewhere, particularly those inherited goods. These can be a problem in a home, things that nobody really likes but which can't be parted with on sentimental grounds. Perhaps now's the time to think about this. After all, no one who really cared about you would want you to hang on to something if they thought it was going to cause difficulties. Neither is your home a museum.

If something doesn't earn its place and it isn't enhancing your house, move it on. You are not a curator.

④ ASSESSING THE LIVING ROOM

Stand at the door and look in. What do you see. *Can you see or is your line of vision blocked by some huge piece of furniture? Is it comfortable, clean and tidy? Can you get in to it without having to circumnavigate anything immediately in your path?* These and the following points should be taken into consideration before you allow anyone into your living room:

- If this room is dominated by the **television** think about boxing it in. TVs hypnotise people even when they're switched off. Viewers should be taking in the general ambiance of your living space not admiring the size and quality of your audio/visual equipment.
- Try not to have any dark, heavy furniture against the **window wall**. This area should be as light as possible.
- If there is a cabinet or something similar **blocking your view or entry** to the room, move it or put it into storage. Congestion of this sort drastically stops the flow of energy around a home.

- Put away **family photographs**. Don't encourage viewers to subconsciously form an opinion of your household on the grounds of the antics of your nearest and dearest.
- Do you need a **central rug** and a **central coffee** table? Side tables give a greater impression of space.
- On the other hand, be careful not to site all your furniture around the walls like a doctor's waiting room. Angle some of it into the room.
- Look at your **paintings and prints**. Do they make you feel good? Or are they pictures of lonely folk, ships in stormy weather? Everything you see around you tells a story. Make sure it's a good one.
- Polish **floorboards**. Straighten rug fringes (use an afro comb).
- Cover a **worn suite** or chair with a *generous* throw. Prop cushions up in an overlapping row.
- If you don't have a **hearth**, think about creating one. It brings a focus to the living room and need not be expensive. A glass shelf mounted on a couple of decorative corbels can make a very effective mantle. Place a large, stout beeswax candle in the centre, hang an appropriately sized picture above and there you have it: your fireplace.
- Sort out your **bookshelves**. Remove anything contentious. Who wants to be psychoanalysed on the basis of their reading matter? Place the odd ornament in front of what's left.
- Fill the **fruit bowl** with *fresh* fruit. Fill side bowls with sugared almonds, chocolate buttons, jelly beans or whole nuts.
- Lay a **glossy magazine** in a cosy corner where people might like to imagine themselves sitting and reading.

⑤ FOUL ENERGY AREAS

Most people dread looking around the bathroom and toilet. It's embarrassing trying to surreptitiously inspect the loo and imagine yourself sitting in someone else's bath. It's also the first room viewers will return to when they've a chance to have a look round by themselves (don't forget to give them that chance). Then they'll really set to and check out the state of the place. They're going to be much tougher on your cleaning standards than they are on their own. You of course will be doing exactly the same thing while shopping for your next house.

- Don't forget: **cleanliness equals reassurance in terms of house sales**. Try to make your bathroom and toilet look as immaculate as those you would find in a new show house.
- Clear all bits and pieces. Show as much (clean) **surface** as possible. Think clinical.
- Display *one or two* expensive and good quality **toiletries or perfumes**.
- Buy a display set of deep, fluffy **towels** plus a new bath mat and save them for viewing times only. Stack in a neat pile and fold in edges.
- Decant everything inside **cupboards** into matching baskets. Expect these areas to be viewed carefully.
- Use quilted **toilet paper** or something equally as luxurious – in white.
- Open the **window**, even if it's only a little and try to fit in a posy of fresh flowers somewhere.
- Replace the **shower curtain** with something new and fresh.
- Put away the furry **toilet seat and pedestal** cover; also lace-lined bins. Think minimal.
- Lay on new soap, preferably a classic, at the **sink**. Next

to the **bath**, fill a clam shell with bath pearls or tiny decorative soaps. Dispose of all facecloths.

- Hide **dental accessories** – tooth brushes, floss, mouthwash, etc – in fact try to pretend your mouth doesn't exist when it comes to selling your home. No one wants to know about these things thank you.
- The same goes for **razors, nail clippers** and other paraphernalia concerned with personal ablutions. These things are *private* and people would rather not share them with you given the choice.
- People are reassured by the smell of bleach in bathrooms and toilets. Try to ensure there is some *faint* evidence of its use.

Finally, if your **toilet** is exceptionally grim and won't respond to any known cleaning agent, think about replacing it. An expense maybe, but a dejected looking toilet will turn 99% of potential buyers off a house no matter how perfect the rest of the place is. Remember toilets are foul energy areas; no need to make them any fouler than they have to be. Assuming the WC's OK, adhere to the classic feng shui guidelines about keeping the lid down and the door shut.

Don't forget what is happening here; once this building was a place you and your family loved and called home. Now it has become a commodity, a house, which you are in the process of selling to the highest bidder. When you move out and they move in it will become a home once more; theirs. You, of course, will be setting up home somewhere else.



5 ENHANCING BEDROOMS

Places to sleep; often regarded as studio flats or bedsits by

teenagers and as pits by children, the number, size and decor of bedrooms can make or break a sale. Take into account the following points to enhance the bedrooms in your house:

- First and foremost, make sure the **end of your bed** does not line up with the bedroom door threshold. If it does, shift it.
- Look at every piece of **furniture** carefully. If you can do without it, get rid of it somehow, even if only temporarily. You should be able to spread out and breathe in the bedroom. Try to create that impression.
- Disguise the base of your bed with a **valance** (not too frothy), but do not use the underneath area for storing anything other than soft goods – linens and clothes – and preferably not even these. *Chi* should be allowed to circulate around the bed at all times; you do not want to be sleeping over stagnation.
- Have fresh, pressed **linens** ready to use specifically for viewing times. Buy a *plain* duvet cover and pillow slips.
- Make sure your **pillows** are plump and inviting. If they aren't, buy new ones, if only for your own benefit. Use two; it looks and feels more sumptuous, with oxford rather than housewife pillow cases.
- Lean a single large decorative **cushion** on the bed in the centre of the pillows.
- Consider **freshness**. Open windows for as long as possible without letting the room get chilly and light an aromatic candle before anyone arrives.
- Put out of sight anything medicinal.
- **Mirrors** in bedrooms have a negative effect. They're a real no-no in feng shui, particularly the full-length type which reflect the bed. If you have these, fix a slim brass

rod across the top and hang a voile or muslin curtain in front. By day this can be swept to the side with tie backs. By night it gives you the protection you need. A bureau-mounted vanity mirror can be dealt with by draping a shawl over it before going to bed. Neither of these solutions will look out of place in a bedroom.

- Pick up **dirty clothes** and remove laundry basket. The bedroom is no place for staleness.
- Consider **over-all colour and design**. Many people dislike too many florals, flounces, lace and satin. Keep the room fresh and simple. Chambray blue is a good choice, it's light and warm, clear and calming. Plain white sheets look perfect with it.
- Add some restful watercolour or chalk pastel **paintings** in unpainted frames. Avoid too much dark wood.
- Arrange a **knitted throw** over the end of the bed.
- Place a smart bottle of mineral water, a pretty glass and an old book or a posy of flowers on your **bedside table**. Inspect the lamps and think about new shades if necessary.
- Clear out **closets and walk-in wardrobes**. They should not be so stuffed that you could safely remove the rail without the clothes collapsing. When you've emptied, vacuum and dust. Drop deodorisers into your shoes.
- Throw away **mothballs** unless you enjoy the unique smell of granny's cardigan. Use cedar shavings instead. You want subliminal messages of the great outdoors and spaciousness, not arsenic and old lace.
- Furnish **children's rooms** with a toy chest, wicker hamper or large basket. Arrange stuffed animals and dolls for effect. Use mini storage boxes in coordinating colours for small things. Straighten rugs and stack books. Try not to let the room become overcrowded.

Attempt to involve them in controlling their own clutter – motivate by example rather than coercion.

- Beg teenagers to remove angry young person manifestations from their bedrooms, eg posters of nasty films, alien monsters etc. Explain the thinking behind what you are doing. Many are interested in feng shui so give them a chance to contribute.



MAKING WHAT MATTERS WORK FOR YOU

- ② When you put the For Sale sign up you raise the curtain on a show called **Me and My Home**. Every day an audience of potential buyers is likely to drop by. It's nerve-wracking but can be exhilarating too.
- ② You are acting and your part is The Happy Home Owner but in reality you are the *house* owner, because mentally you have let go.
- ② This house, once your home, has become temporary accommodation that you are maintaining for the next inhabitants. You are therefore duty-bound to care for it, clean it and hand it over in the best possible condition.
- ② It's an experience you can choose to enjoy or not. It's up to you.

By perseverance the snail reached the Ark. CH Spurgeon

4 Checking the Outside

Spring is the best season for re-location. The season of growth and renewal.

3

things that
really matter

1 THE CONSERVATORY

2 MAKING YOUR GARDEN MATTER

3 GARAGE AND OUTHOUSES

The area around your house is what's left showing of the original plot. It can either look like that – leftovers – or it can be a **setting for your house**. A garden may not only be lovely in its own right but can enhance a home too. Think of it this way; no matter how nice a house is inside, if it's set in the middle of a bog few buyers are going to make the journey across to have a look.

① THE CONSERVATORY

Much more common now, though no less desirable, everybody loves a conservatory. People say 'We've just had a conservatory built and it's changed our lives.' How so? It's because they are able to **commune with nature** much more easily. It sounds fanciful but it's true. Poor weather and unreliable seasons mean many people get outside much less than they should. A glass extension to the home enables us to enjoy our garden most of the year round – all year if it's heated. Much of feng shui is about bringing the

outside in, fooling our senses into believing that we're actually experiencing nature in the raw. And very effective it can be too, placing a plant here, a daylight bulb there, a water feature where it matters. But **a conservatory can have the most profound effect.** Play up this most advantageous feature of your house if you have one.

- Show it off as an **extra room** for relaxing in, not a thoroughfare from garden to back door.
- If it's become a bit of a utility room, disguise white goods with screens and hide outerwear and footwear in a free-standing closet.
- Try not to hang onions or store barrels of apples in there (at least not while viewers are on the premises). It will end up smelling like a potting shed – pleasant in itself, but not really appropriate. Fresh flowers are the thing.
- Give it the most **thorough clean** it's ever had. Employ someone to scrub the roof panels if you can't do it yourself, likewise the windows. Get rid of any mildew.
- Do not **overcrowd** a conservatory. Spaciousness and clarity of view are part of the appeal. Take away anything that impinges on these assets.
- Don't overdo the **plant life** either, or it can feel a bit creepy.
- Take down **faded curtains** and curling blinds.
- Pep up **jaded furniture** with throws and cushions.



MAKING YOUR GARDEN MATTER

The outside of your house is just waiting to be **enhanced and exploited.** It need not be a large area; it need not even be garden – **a yard, balcony or deck can be an asset** to any property. But to enhance the feng shui of your

home and endear it to potential buyers, it needs to be made the best of. While most people understand the need for tending the front of the house, the back is often a neglected pet-run or playground. **Prove your garden has potential by clearing it out.** This includes building materials, punctured paddling pools, old toys and rusty furniture. Then:

- Tend to the **boundaries**. You and your neighbour may have a good relationship but viewers may not have been so lucky. Save them the worry about where your property ends and the neighbours' begins by establishing it with sound fencing walls, etc.
- Patch the **lawn**, weed **borders**, clean the patio, retouch **rust**, deadhead **shrubs** and **flowers**.
- Ensure **water features** are in working order so they will be perceived as an asset as opposed to a responsibility.
- Paint or restain faded **wooden furniture, outbuildings**, etc.
- Remove *thoroughly* any **pet mess**. Tidy up doghouses to look cute rather than intimidating.
- Site a solid-looking **park bench** outside the back of the house or under a shady nook, or think about a hefty picnic table.
- Coil **hose** and stash away neatly.
- Fill **tubs** with flowering plants and foliage or herbs. Group tubs in threes and position on either side of door area. Remove or fill wall-mounted and hanging baskets. Leave no container empty or forlorn. Nothing at all is better than dead or neglected plant life.
- Consider **window boxes** in wood, terracotta or aluminium. Avoid plastic if possible.
- Paint the **back door** the same colour as the front door, the back windows the same as the front.

- Clean and mend **garden furniture**.
- Put up *retractable* **washing lines** and remove anything unsightly.

Surrounded by junk that has nowhere to go? Viewers will notice it. Garden storage and security are as essential today as in-house storage. Consider investing in a small shed. If it will help sell your home, it has to be worth the relatively minor cost.

You have a **gazebo** in the garden? Lucky you. Properties have sold on the charm of the summer house alone. Let viewers slip in to the age of romance by filling the interior with a couple of chairs and a small table in rickety cane or aged wicker, soften with some faded chintz or simple striped cushions. Add peonies or sweet peas in a glass jug, old gardening books and the Sunday papers. Cover the floor with a jute rug or sun-bleached runner. Polish the windows, inside and out, open the doors, and put the kettle on.

A **pergola** is nearly as effective and can be relatively easy and inexpensive to erect. Again, these can seduce even the most jaded house hunter. Beware, however. Once in peak condition, your garden can be almost harder to leave than your house.

Box in **garbage bins**. They are such an eyesore. Trellis is quick and cheap. Group bins together tidily, deodorise and bleach the area they stand on if it's at all odiferous. Keep clean and free from extraneous bags of trash. Let nothing touch the ground where bugs might congregate and breed. While there really is no such thing as *bad* energy in feng shui, there are things which, although harmless in themselves, are usually considered inappropriate to the well-being of human beings. Organisms which thrive

around rubbish come into this category.

Finally, don't forget the sides of the house. Out of sight will not mean out of mind to viewers as they have to side-step all the old rubbish stored round here. Get rid of goods leaning against walls and/or blocking the path. Clutter means stagnation. Chi cannot circulate. Once cleared, clean, and if necessary, repair path.

③ GARAGE AND outhouses

These may be places that you only use for storing the potatoes but that's no reason to neglect them in terms of preparation. They should be an asset to the property along with the house and garden. Your viewers will certainly be looking at them in these terms.

- Begin, naturally, by **clutter-clearing**. Then clean, sweep, wash, degrease, tidy and repair. Hang bikes, sledges, large garden equipment.
- Whitewash (internal) **garage walls**. Ensure door/s are in good working order and that the area is well lit. Fix locks and catches. If the garage is used for storage, set all boxes etc tidily to show how much can be fitted in. If it's used as a utility room, get it shipshape. Clear all drawers and cupboards. Make it a *serviceable* if not an attractive area.
- Sort out your **workbench**. Rack tools and shelve materials. Put up a pegboard. Bin rags.

If you enter the house via the garage ensure the threshold is inviting and tidy, not dismal and messy. Make the most of **outhouses**, **attics** and **cellars** by applying the above guidelines.



MAKING WHAT MATTERS WORK FOR YOU

- ② You have now worked your way through the entire house and garden.
- ② You have cleared clutter, repaired and mended, cleaned, decorated and revitalised. The inside will be gleaming and the outside thriving.
- ② Family will be exhausted but probably a little excited too.
- ② Now all you need are some viewers and if you've fixed up the front of house the way you should have done, they'll be on their way.

5 The Final Stage

We do not want anything more than clarity, simplicity and integrity. Dr von Schnitzler

4

things that
really matter

- 1 LAST-MINUTE DETAILS
- 2 WELCOMING THE VIEWERS
- 3 TOURING THE HOUSE
- 4 SAYING GOOD-BYE

By this time your house will be in working order. Your family should all have a part to play in **setting the scene** before viewers arrive. Your pre-visit list of last-minute jobs and final touches should be ready and in use. You have rehearsed and this is the opening night.

I LAST-MINUTE DETAILS

Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful. W. Morris

These are the finishing touches. They are to be carried out prior to every visit, although the general upkeep of the house should be kept tiptop so you are ready for anything.

- Have coffee/bread/apple pie already on the go so viewers benefit from the **smell** as soon as you open the front door.
- Switch *off* the **TV**.
- Turn *on* soft **music**: classical, something feel-good but

neutral and relaxing.

- Ensure **furniture** is not blocking either traffic or chi.
- Switch on all **side lamps**, under-unit kitchen lights, passage lights, external and garage lights. Leave off central overhead lights.
- Straighten **rugs**, plump cushions, change bed linen, display new soaps and towels.
- Turn down **answer phones**. Listening to other people's personal messages can be very unnerving.
- Switch off **washing machines**, dishwashers and anything else that makes a distracting noise.
- If you have a **fire**, light it.
- Make sure everyone in the house is '**in role**', eg kids are playing quietly on the computer/at a game.
- Pull back drapes and blinds – **let the light in**.
- Place fresh **fruit and flowers**.
- Check the **ambient temperature** of the house and make sure it's comfortable.
- Put down toilet seats.
- Put away **valuables**.



WELCOMING THE VIEWERS

You're ready. The preparation's done and viewers will shortly be arriving.

After all this a sale has to be a cinch, you're thinking. Not so. Never take anything for granted. There's a skill to making a viewer – a *stranger* as opposed to friend or family – **feel welcome in your home**. Remember:

- They'll be as jittery as you, but you have to **put them at their ease**. You're the one doing the selling. The more relaxed you are, the more relaxed they will become.
- **Avoid verbal diarrhoea**. Nervousness makes people

gabble and reveal too much. There is no need to draw attention to aspects of the house which you have always found personally unsatisfactory. They may not feel the same way about dormer ceilings or too-low doors. To potential buyers, these may be charming assets. Highlighting them as faults will simply plant seeds of doubt.

- One person only to **greet visitors**. Nothing's more intimidating than a mass of faces jostling round the front door to get a look at you. Likewise, try to stop the family gawping and pointing through the windows, it puts people off before they're even over the threshold.
- Practise **opening your front door**. No, this is not a joke. Opening the door to strangers can be unnerving for both parties. Involve the family in some role-play. Stand to the side which allows most space and the best view into the house. Practise being a stranger in your own home.
- **Be prompt** about opening the door. Smile and try to avoid giving them the once-over. You're selling them a house, not taking them on as lodgers.
- **Shake hands** if it is customary and it comes naturally to you. Address them by name and make normal eye contact.
- **Hand them a House Feature Sheet** which details aspects of the house which you would like to highlight. Include the view (if there is one), any historically interesting facts about the property, original features, contemporary features (power shower, water filter, dimmer switches, double glazing, air conditioning), structural updates, unusual trees or shrubs. Embolden points which make your house different from others in the street, eg stripped floors, 100% wool carpet (with

receipt) etc.

- You might also like to **give them a General Information Sheet** about the neighbourhood itself. Include shopping centres, doctors' surgeries, schools, public transport, recreation facilities etc.

3 TOURING THE HOUSE

By now you should be glowing with achievement. You've put a tremendous amount of effort into your house and turned the energy upside down.

Your pride and enthusiasm while showing people around will be tangible and infectious. Enjoy yourself. If you are showing the house yourself, walk viewers through it in the first instance and then leave them to their own devices while you make some refreshments. Begin by:

- Leading them to the **best room first** – try to make this the kitchen and finish up back here too. Stand well away in a far corner to allow them a panoramic view. Use this technique with the rest of the rooms in the house except those which are too small. In this case, stand outside and let viewers go in to the room.
- People can feel uncomfortably like voyeurs whilst looking around the **main bedroom**. Put them at ease by pretending it is a set in a department store and acting as impersonally as possible. They should pick up on this and adopt the same attitude.
- Show all **built-in storage**.

Do not undersell yourself. Pick out worthwhile features and answer queries honestly. Do not talk down your house out of misguided modesty. On the other hand, avoid the hard sell. Most people hate it. If viewers pick holes despite

all your hard work, do not take offence. Answer reasonably that the age, condition etc of the house are reflected in the **asking price**.

SAYING GOODBYE

So it's sold and it's time to move on. You've packed your bags, filled out the forms, removals are underway and everyone else has left the house. Consciously, you've moved on but subconsciously there's something nagging. Walking away seems vaguely unsatisfactory. The moment needs marking. **You need to say good-bye**. Allow yourself half-an-hour for a wander through your empty rooms. Stop in each one and just **be still** for a moment. Experience the memories. Move on. Reach the front door, say farewell aloud if you wish, then walk away.

You are leaving something behind in this old house, some of yourself, a piece of your chi. It is natural to feel a little bereft. Acknowledging this is healthy and healing. In doing so you are metaphorically and literally **closing the door on this part of your life**. This ritual doesn't take long. It's like releasing a long breath and composing yourself for the next intake which will be heady and full of change. Make time to prepare for it by **taking your leave formally and with meaning**.

You will then be ready for *Moving House with Feng Shui*, (see page ii).

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About the Author

Jane Purr is an established practitioner of feng shui in the classical tradition. Based in the North of England, she undertakes both domestic and commercial consultative work in feng shui as well as training in the subject. She also contributes to a variety of publications, TV and radio and speaks regularly to an array of audiences.

A background in management and personal development training, combined with a long-standing involvement with allied studies of vibrational energy, underpin the professional methodology she uses in her day-to-day work in feng shui.

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