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Resolutions: Resolved

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Back in October, I encouraged homeowners interested in renting out for Masters to get the ball rolling, so to speak. Now we're down to the wire so it's time to tend to all the final details that will make or break the Masters experience for both you and your renters.

Improvements

Contractors of all kinds are swamped this time of year with Masters-minded home improvement projects, so if you haven't hired someone to groom your yard, power wash your house or address your honey-do list inside, it's probably D-I-Y time. Do yourself a favor and put in a little research time before you start disassembling your garbage disposal. There aren't many available handymen right now to fix the mess that your best intentions might create.

Cleaning

Make a list of all the cleaning tasks you need to complete and schedule one or two a week between now and April 5. Dusting and vacuuming should wait for the day before your guests' arrival, but windows, light fixtures, bookcases and appliances should be done in advance so you're not scrambling at the last minute.

Staging

Take advantage of end-of-season sales to spruce up your décor. Particularly if you have valuable or delicate items in your home that you will store safely out of sight during Masters Week, invest in some neutral, contemporary items – linens, throw pillows, art and accents – to create a warm, welcoming, widely appealing atmosphere throughout your home. Choose a gender-neutral color scheme and stick to it. Opt out of anything too trendy. If you rent out regularly, you'll want to use the same items year after year.

De-cluttering

A few days in advance of your renters' arrival, do a thorough sweep of any personal items or clutter. It's not the time to conduct a proper purge but it's crucial that you gather paperwork, photos, breakables, jewelry and other valuables for secure storage while you're away. Not only do you want to present a clean, welcoming atmosphere for your guests, you also want to protect your personal items and information.

Necessary extras

Make space for your renters to settle in. Again, this is not only for their comfort but also for the safekeeping of your property. Clear sufficient space in your closets, drawers and cabinets, as well as in the refrigerator. Designate some storage areas for your belongings and clearly identify empty areas as being available for renters' use.

Provide the necessary resources for your guests to respect your home. For example, place at least two luggage racks and two towels hooks in each bedroom to prevent dirty bags and wet towels from winding up on the furniture. I also recommend glass tops to protect nightstands, dressers and tables but, short of that, make coasters and trays readily available around your home.

Greet your guests with a letter that welcomes them to your home, and subtly sets boundaries between the spaces you have opened up for them and those you prefer to keep closed. Invite guests to make use of the materials you have provided, such as luggage and towel racks, and let them know which closets and drawers are emptied out for their use. I tie a ribbon around doorknobs of spaces I've cleared out for guests. Spaces without a



ribbon are meant not to be explored.

In addition to the welcome letter I leave in the kitchen, I also leave a short note in each bedroom pointing out the highlights and explaining the quirks of each. Charm your renters into visiting again by laying out a tea and coffee basket in the kitchen. Shampoo bottles and fresh soap are always welcome in the bathroom, even if most guests bring their own supplies.

The time and expense you invest in your first rental year should be more than paid back in rental fees, not to mention in the fabulous spring vacation you're forced to take. Come mid-April, clean and carefully pack up your Masters items along with a full inventory. Much like holiday decorating, the process gets simpler with experience, especially when you develop an organized system.

Once all the chaos has passed, take advantage of the perfect spring cleaning opportunity. Before you throw all the clutter back on your shelves, take a thorough look at what you can donate, recycle or throw away. You might appreciate your de-cluttered home as much as your renters do.

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Marin Rose owns *Libra Organizing*, an Augusta-based organizing, decorating and home staging business. Marin serves clients throughout the CSRA, as well as in her hometown of Washington, D.C., New York and beyond. For more information, including notices of free seminars and community events, visit libraorganizing.com.