



## **To Airbnb or Not To Airbnb: Seven tips to help you stand out and get bookings**

*Wellesley-based design expert Valerie Gates has been managing 5-star reviewed rental properties around New England for years and has these tips to offer in prepping your spare bedroom for Airbnb guests.*

Airbnb and the sharing economy are hot topics these days and surely by now you know someone who has begun renting out their bedroom, in-law suite or guest house with great success — meeting interesting travelers from around the globe and gaining extra income as well. With an eye on your spare bedroom, you're thinking, "Is Airbnb right for me? What about all my clutter? Is my home nice enough? Where do I start? Arrrrgh!"

Airbnb travelers are looking for rentals that are safe, comfortable and unique alternatives to the usual blah hotels, yet they would like access to many of the same amenities as at their dream, plush boutique hotels. Here's how to get started:

1. Make sure there are sturdy bedside tables on either side of the bed large enough to hold a book, smart phone (with an outlet nearby), and eye glasses. This will also allow enough room on either side to access the bed and to make the bed easily. Bedside lamps on both sides need to be tall enough to read by.
2. Provide water glasses and a pitcher of water on a bedside table or a bureau. Your guests may be thirsty and will be relieved not to have to ask where the glasses are.
3. After cleanliness, the overall comfort of the bed itself is the number one priority for Airbnb guests. Investing in high quality linens and towels, comfortable pillows and window treatments will increase the likelihood of great reviews. Bright white sheets and towels with solid-color bed coverings not only look clean and crisp but will be easier to keep spotless than patterned ones. Add a soft textured throw on the end of the bed for added warmth.
4. Less is more. Remove all personal photos, travel souvenirs, and off-season clothing stuffed in the closet. Instead, hang a few pieces of art that match the bedding, and leave some hangers and an extra blanket and pillow in an otherwise empty closet.



5. Make sure your internet connection is fast and that you leave a note with the login and password information. This is the second most requested item by Airbnb guests as they often have to work and keep up with emails when they travel.
6. The bathroom should be spotless, and the towels will need to be good quality — the thicker and softer the better. You may want to offer small packets of toiletries for your guests, but again, less is more — keep it free of clutter and personal items.
7. Take good quality photographs of your bedroom and bathroom to post on your Airbnb listing. Airbnb guests have gotten very savvy and particular as their choices of lodgings increase, and good photography can make all the difference in whether they book or not — especially if your listing is new and you don't have glowing reviews yet.

If you are not confident with your design and photography skills, getting help is a good investment that will pay back in spades with great reviews and repeat guests. With a little work it's possible to make any bedroom into a boutique-style Airbnb rental you (and your guests) will love.

*Valerie Gates runs Wellesley-based Gates Studio Home offering staging, re-design, organization, de-cluttering and photography to Metrowest homeowners looking to sell, rent or refresh their homes or rooms.*

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