

Getting Your Home Ready to Sell



▶ A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION CAN HELP SELL YOUR HOME:

People usually decide within two minutes whether they like your home. Prospective buyers start forming their opinion before they even walk in the door! You can assist your REALTOR when you are showing your home by remembering that first impressions are the most lasting and the most important to its sale.

Your major role as a seller will be to make your home as attractive as possible to potential buyers. The time, effort and limited financial investment involved can give you the competitive edge needed to sell your home when you want, at the price you want. The best way to find out if your home is in the most presentable condition it can be is to imagine you are a prospective buyer. You've probably been looking at other homes, so approach your present home the way you look at the other houses.

Your real estate representative will do all the activities necessary to bring in the prospects, but your house is going to have to help sell itself.

Here are some time-tested tips Star Real Estate suggests to make your home more presentable. A good rule to follow is to do cosmetic improvements, but avoid making major changes unless they will increase the value of your home more than the cost of the improvement. Most buyers want to make their own major changes. You are usually wiser to sell them the potential at a price they can afford.

▶ YOUR HOME'S EXTERIOR CREATES THE PROSPECTIVE BUYER'S FIRST IMPRESSION:

Since the exterior of your home is the first thing a prospective buyer sees, a little time and effort can make a big difference in the impression your home creates and pay big dividends when the sale is made. This is often referred to as "curb appeal."

Use this checklist to make sure your home's exterior looks its best:

- Invest in landscaping where it can be seen at first sight. A well-manicured lawn, neatly clipped shrubbery and cleanly swept walks create a good first impression. Consider putting flowers outside that door.
- Cut back overgrown shrubbery that looks scraggly or keeps light out of the house. Weed the flower garden.
- Paint your house if necessary. This can probably do more sales appeal than any other factor. If you decide against painting, at least consider touching up the front door, front shutters and window frames. A new paint job, well done, will normally enhance the sale value a good deal more than the cost of the paint.
- Know how to Pack Plates and Records—Plates and record albums should be packed on end vertically, rather than placed flat and stacked.
- Inspect the roof, gutters, and downspouts and make sure they are all in good condition.
- Repair and re-paint fences and gates, if necessary. Neatly store all lawn equipment and toys.
- Dispose of all debris. Wash down driveways and sidewalks. Check for cracking and crumbling.
- Replace cracked windows and torn screens. Wash all windows, screens and windowsills, inside and out.
- Polish doorknobs.
- Make sure that the doorbell and front lights are in good working order.
- Check that all sides of the house and backyard are in good order.



▶ A SPOTLESS INTERIOR WILL REINFORCE YOUR HOME'S GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION:

Interior dirt and clutter can obscure your home's good points, so start with a full house cleaning from top to bottom. Store unused or unnecessary items in closets and storage areas or hold a garage sale. Eliminate clutter and your home will look more spacious, which is an important selling point. Take an inspection tour of your home, observing it as a potential buyer would.

Use the following checklist to make sure it's ready to show:

Kitchen

- The kitchen is the most important room in the house. Make it bright and attractive. If dull, paint cabinets and put up new curtains.
- The kitchen should be spotless, including cupboards, stove, oven, appliances and ventilating hood.
- If the kitchen floor is badly worn, put down new flooring. Replace any loose tiles.
- Remove any appliances that are on your counters. Clean counters make the room look larger.

Living Area

- Walls are clean and free of smudges, fingerprints and dents. Repaint if necessary but avoid offbeat colors.
- Inspect woodwork and wallpaper for problem areas and repair if necessary. Clean wallpaper and wash woodwork.
- Have all plaster in top shape. Cracks (or nail-pops, visible seams in dry walls) are easy to fix.
- Check ceilings for leaks and stains. Fix the cause of the damage, repair the ceiling and paint.
- Make the floors shine. Clean and polish them and nail down any cracking boards or stair treads.
- Shampoo all rugs and carpets.
- Clean or launder all window coverings including curtains and drapes.
- Check to see that all windows open and close easily. Rub the tracks with paraffin or candle wax if needed.
- Repair loose doorknobs, sticking doors, windows and warped drawers.
- Replace burned-out light bulbs. Use brighter bulbs. Make sure all light switches, fixtures and electrical outlets work. Repair or replace discolored or cracked switch plates, lampshades and fixtures.

Bathroom

- Repair dripping or leaking faucets
- Use special cleaning products to remove stains from toilets, bathtubs, sinks and showers.
- If sink and bathtub drain too slowly, unclog them. Clean all caulking and repair if necessary
- Clean mirrors, picture frames and glass.
- Strategically place mirrors to create an impression of added space in problem areas.
- If you have a fireplace, clean it out and lay some logs in it to make it look inviting.
- Tighten loose stair banisters and clear steps of any obstructions.
- Bedrooms should be neat and tidy. Bedspreads and curtains should be attractive.
- Clothing, Shoes and other objects should be organized neatly.
- Closets, shelves and drawers should be organized to display spaciousness.
- Badly worn furniture should be temporarily stored in a family's or neighbor's attic or basement.
- Use air fresheners to eliminate odors.
- Clean out attic, basement and garage and dispose of everything you are not going to move. Package everything you won't need until you're settled in your new home.



▶ LAST-MINUTE DETAILS THAT WILL MAXIMIZE YOUR HOME'S SELLING POTENTIAL:

- Play soothing music on radio or stereo, but low enough to allow the salesperson and buyer(s) to talk. Keep the TV turned off.
- Send children and pets outdoors to eliminate confusion and to keep the prospect's attention focused positively on your house
- Eliminate bad odors. Use an air freshener before the potential buyer arrives, especially if you have pets or if the house has been closed up for some time.
- Good lighting will make your home seem more cheery and spacious. Open the drapes during the daytime, and put plenty of lights on at night including the porch and outside lights.
- Store wood next to the fireplace. Light a fire in winter.
- Neatness makes a room look bigger. Avoid clutter. Organize magazines and children's toys.
- Avoid having dirty dishes in the sink or on counters.
- Water all plants and make sure they look healthy. Tastefully arrange fresh flowers around the house.
- Take your family away if your REALTOR is holding an open house.

▶ WHAT YOU CAN DO WHILE YOUR HOUSE IS BEING SHOWN:

- Be courteous, but don't force conversation with the potential buyer(s). Ask your REALTOR if your presence is necessary.
- Never apologize for the appearance of your home. Let your REALTOR answer any objections.
- Leave it to your REALTOR to emphasize the features of your home.
- Let your REALTOR show your house and don't tag along. Answer questions candidly when asked, but don't offer answers to unasked questions.
- Don't mention furniture or furnishings you wish to dispose of unless asked as it can kill the sale.
- Refer direct inquiries you receive about seeing your house to your REALTOR to take advantage of his or her professional skills in selling your home.
- Let your REALTOR discuss price, terms, possession and other factors with the potential buyer.

If you've followed the guidelines provided, you will know you have already done your part by making sure your home creates a good first impression.

For more information contact your local Advantage One escrow officer.

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