

## The Smart Living Guide to Getting Your Home Ready to Sell

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The “curb appeal” that your home offers a prospective buyer is extremely important, and can mean the difference of several thousands of dollars in the selling price you get for your home. The fact is that properly preparing your home for sale can get you an additional 10-15% per offer.

You will want to start getting your home ready a least a couple of months before you plan to put it on the market. Begin by walking through your entire home, pretending that you have never seen it before. We call this seeing your home through “buyers’ eyes.” You take things for granted when you are living in your home; you see past the clutter, the wear and tear, and the repairs that you’ve put off doing. Buyers see it differently. They will look at everything in detail, and make judgments based on how your home compares to others they have seen.

### **Pump up the Curb Appeal with Landscaping.**

Does your landscaping look tired and run-down? Have the weeds taken over? Keep your yard neat and trim, and healthy-looking. Remove toys or tools, and make sure walkways are clean and clear. There should be no obstacles to get to your front door!

### **Welcome Buyers with an Inviting Front Door.**

Make sure your front door is clean, easy to open, and all locks are working smoothly. If your front door is worn, faded, or deteriorated, you should paint it, have it refinished, or even replace it. Studies show that replacing the front door is the one upgrade that brings the biggest return on investment in the sale of a home.

### **Conquer the Clutter.**

Now that you’ve made the decision to sell your home, it’s the perfect time to begin packing up things that you won’t be needing on a day to day basis – such as family photos, knick-knacks and rarely used personal. Most people pack up after they sell the house, but why wait? Sellers should start packing as early as possible—ideally, before they put the home on the market.

Here are some general guidelines to de-clutter and make your home more appealing to buyers.

- Clear all flat surfaces, including countertops and tables. The items that stay should be neat and attractive.
- Pack away all personal photos and knick-knacks – they make it hard for buyers to imagine themselves in the space.
- Clear away all cleaning products, personal hygiene items, and medications, and put them neatly in cabinets.
- Remove products that suggest problems, such as ant spray or mouse traps.
- Kids and pets toys should be put away in cabinets, bins, or packed up and stored away.
- Remove as much furniture and equipment as possible to make your home look bigger. This is especially true for items that block doors, hallways, or obvious traffic patterns in your house.
- Clear desktops and bookcases of all but a few showcase items.
- Remove hooks and hanging items from hallways. They make the space seem narrow and dangerous.
- Packed boxes should be stored away from view.

### **Brighten up the Floors.**

Dirty, worn carpet is a turnoff for buyers. A professional cleaning may do wonders, and may bring you a better price for your home.

If your tile is dull or grout is dirty, give it a good cleaning. If the job is bigger than you want to take on, there are professional tile companies that can do a good job of cleaning tile and freshening grout.

One other option for lackluster flooring: Use an area rug, even over carpets. It'll add a splash of color, and bring definition to living areas.

### **Refresh & Repair**

Minor imperfections that we often overlook in our own homes tend to turn prospective buyers off, because they overestimate the cost of repairs. Faded and scraped walls, as well as any scratched woodwork, should be restored to good condition.

Even small things such as calcified faucets, loose doorknobs or aging grout can lead potential buyers to mentally deduct value from your asking price. Need some more motivation?

### **Let the light shine in.**

Clean windows, open the blinds and draperies to highlight your walls and ceilings. You'd be surprised at how much a simple window cleaning can instantly improve natural light.

By letting in the light, you are letting buyers see how bright and cheery your home can be.

### **A clean kitchen is a must!**

Many buyers judge housekeeping based on the condition of the oven and the stove. Make sure both look as shiny as possible. Clean the interior of your dishwasher, removing stains, especially on the door. Clean out your kitchen cabinets, packing away unnecessary items.

After clearing away clutter, polish your wood cabinets, clean the countertops, and dust the light fixtures. You can make a stainless steel sink shine with thrifty cleaning remedies such as baby oil or club soda

### **Sparkling bathrooms will help sell your home.**

All sinks, showers, tubs, tile, grouting, and countertops should be clean and free of soap scum. Fixtures should be in good working order and free of calcium deposits and water marks. Dirty towels and bath mats should be cleaned. Even better, add some colorful towels, candles, or pretty soap displays to give a spa-like feel.

### **Make closets appear larger**

A high priority for buyers is having adequate storage space. By removing items that can be packed or stored elsewhere, closets appear neat and organized, making them seem larger and more enticing to buyers. Don't overlook your utility space - The attic, garage, and other utility spaces should be as neat a possible, so remove any unnecessary items.

**Show off the laundry space.** Buyers will be impressed if the laundry room is fresh, inviting, and organized. Make sure light bulbs are working, and hide soaps in a cupboard or line them neatly on a shelf.

### **Make necessary repairs.**

Unless they are looking for the challenge of a fixer upper, prospective buyers do not look forward to making a lot of repairs right after they have moved into a new home. Doing repairs before your home goes on the market can lead to a higher price later. Buyers tend to overestimate the cost of most repairs, so it is generally in your best interest to make necessary repairs yourself rather than leave it to them. If closet doors or screen doors are off track, or if doorknobs are loose, fix them. Dripping faucets and cracked molding also suggest neglect to prospective buyers. By fixing them now you should be able to get top dollar for your house.

If you have an older home, it might pay to have a Pre-Inspection (See our download, "[7 Ways a PRE-Inspection Can Save You Money](#)", for more details). A Pre-Inspection will uncover any major repairs that may be needed so there are no surprises later once you have your home

under contract. You can elect to make the necessary repairs, or you can disclose the need for repairs to buyers and take the cost of repairs into account when you price your home.

### **Give your home a light makeover.**

If you feel your home needs more than just a cleaning to make it shine, consider adding some new lighting fixtures as a quick and relatively inexpensive way to create ambiance. Old, outdated ceiling fans can be replaced with new, more contemporary styles for an instant uplift. Lighting can highlight special features in your home —pendant lights to show off a kitchen island, or sconces to illuminate a foyer. Under-cabinet lighting in the kitchen is affordable and makes countertops shine. Fluorescent light strips are fairly inexpensive and easy to install.

If your walls are dirty or dingy, a few gallons of paint can go a long way in making a home more chic—and the cost can't be beat. Covering a 12-by-12-foot room with two coats will cost you about \$50 to \$100, including supplies. Light, neutral wall colors give buyers an idea of what they can do with a space. Darker or trendier colors can be used for accent walls or to highlight details such as a fireplace or an arched doorway. To bring depth to a long hallway, you can paint the wall at the end of a long hallway a different shade than the others.