

Checklist for Preparing your House for Sale

What impression will your house make the first time buyers pull up outside? That will be what they expect to see inside, so set their expectations high!

Outside...

When buyers pull up in front of a home for sale they either think "This is nice, I think I'm going to like this," or "This needs some work." So do a little cosmetic work outside before your home is shown. Go for more than "This is nice" - go for a reaction of **"Wow! Nice place!"**

1. Straighten and paint the fence
2. Keep the lawn mowed, the weeds pulled, and the hedges trimmed
3. If the season is right, plant some flowers
4. Paint the front door. Most of us never look at our front door, and sometimes it can get pretty shabby looking.
5. If you can paint the house, do it. If not, at least check the trim. If it's peeling, scrape and paint.
6. Put away the "stuff" that often gets left outside: toys, tools, etc.
7. Wash any stains from the driveway and walks.

Unless the buyers are "fixer-upper hunters," they're looking for a home that's "move-in ready," so seeing anything that spells "W-O-R-K" will make them keep looking.

Inside...

Inside the house, fresh paint can make a world of difference. Give it a critical look - if it appears tired or dingy, or if the colors and patterns lack universal appeal, repaint or re-paper. Decorator colors or patterns that appeal to you could "turn off" a buyer, so go for neutrals. If you can't afford to repaint or re-paper, start cleaning. The little smudges we all live with won't appeal to a buyer.

What about your flooring? If it is badly worn or if you have chosen wild colors that only appeal to you, replace it with something inexpensive and neutral. You want buyers to be able to picture themselves and their belongings here. You **don't** want them to start thinking about all the work they'd have to do before they could move in. If it looks good, shampoo so it also looks and smells fresh.

Now look at the details:

- Check your switchplates - wash them and replace any that are cracked
- Wash all the light fixtures and replace burned out bulbs. Turn on the lights before buyers arrive. During fly season, check and clean them regularly.

- Wash the windows - and keep the curtains and blinds open when buyers come through
- Replace that washer that lets the sink drip
- Wash the cabinet fronts
- De-clutter the entire house, paying special attention to the kitchen and bathroom counters and to the closets. Now is the time to take unused clothing and appliances to a nearby charity. Your aim is to create an appearance of having more room than you really need.
- Remove excess furniture to make your rooms appear larger
- Check the house for missing or damaged trim and replace where needed.
- Do you have hollow core doors with a hole or two? Replace them.
- Check the window and door screens and replace any that are torn
- Remove your treasures. Anything that could easily be broken by an unattended child should be put away, out of harm's reach.
- If you have a "collection" of anything that will either look like clutter or distract a buyer's attention from looking at the house, pack it.
- Replace family photos with "neutral" art.
- Take the kids' art work down from the refrigerator.
- Pack your trophies and awards
- Remove any fixtures you don't plan to leave with the house. If you're using Grandma's antique chandelier, take it down and replace it with a new one. Otherwise the buyers will fall in love and think they have to have it.
- Hang a new shower curtain

Even small things like putting a new slipcover on the sofa, replacing some of the pictures on the wall, or strategically placing a mirror can make a big difference in the overall appeal of the house. And when you list your home for sale, you want the greatest appeal possible.

If you have pets, have a non-pet person give your house the sniff test. You may need to wash your dogs' and cats' bedding and/or shampoo your furniture. Be sure to vacuum every day so pet hair is not in evidence.

If you smoke, wash all curtains and bedspreads, and shampoo the upholstery. Then try to step outside for a smoke until the house is sold. If walls or ceilings are stained, scrub and repaint them. Many people are sensitive to the smell of smoke.

Now, because many people are sensitive to the "energy" that lives in a home, and what pleases you may be "negative energy" to others, you need to remove some other personal items, if you have them:

- Controversial art work
- Political and religious items
- Displays of guns or other weapons
- Trophy mounts of once-live animals

If your budget allows, consult with a home stager to make the house look its most attractive. Proper placement of objects and colors can create an atmosphere in a home that appeals to people on an emotional level. If a stager isn't an option, ask me for some suggestions.

The more you can make your house look like a "model home" the better, because that will allow buyers to picture themselves living there instead of thinking about your life and how you live there.

Just before the buyers arrive...

- Put fresh, matching towels in the bathrooms
- Close the toilet lids
- Put away all personal toiletries, hair dryers, shavers, etc.
- Take out the trash.
- Clean the cat box! Better yet, hide it somewhere outside - away from the doorway. Put the cat in a carrier. If he's going to yowl, put the carrier in your car and take him for a ride.
- Put your dog in a kennel or take him for a ride.
- Put away the pet's food and water bowls.
- Do the sniff test: If you can detect traces of the last meal cooked, put some spices in a pan and boil them to give the house a "fresh baked" aroma. If you've cooked something strong smelling, such as fish, boil a little vinegar water. Do NOT freshen the air with a perfumed spray. Many people are allergic to perfumes and will not enter the house if the smell greets them at the door.
- And of course, run through the house to retrieve stray clothing and dishes, make the beds, and clean up the bag of chips that someone just dumped on the carpet.
- Open the drapes or blinds to let in light.
- **Leave the house during the showing.** This is important because buyers will stay longer, look more carefully, and see more to love if you aren't there. This is also important from a negotiation standpoint. You do not want to get into a conversation with the buyers.

You Don't Sell a House the Same Way You Live in a House

It really is true that you need to alter your habits when your house is for sale. For one thing, you need to keep everything clean and picked up, with beds made and dishes done. You also need to be ready to alter your plans on short notice when buyers want to come by.

Living in a home when it's for sale is not convenient, and that's why I'll work hard to get your house sold quickly and let your life get back to normal. Call me, and let's get moving!

