

A Good First Impression Can Help Sell Your Home

When showing your home to prospective buyers, 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.

Your Home's Exterior Creates the Prospective Buyer's First Impression

Since the exterior of your home is the first thing a prospective buyers 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.

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

- Lawn is well cut and neatly trimmed around the walks and drive.
- Flower garden is weeded.
- Shrubs are trimmed and dead trees and branches are eliminated.
- All debris is disposed of and toys and lawn equipment are neatly stored.
- Fences and gates are repaired and repainted, if necessary.
- The roof, gutters and downspouts are in good repair.
- Cracked windows and torn screens are replaced. Screens, windows and window sills are washed. Doorknobs are polished.
- Doorbell and front lights are in good working order.

If you would have planned to paint the house within the coming year, consider painting the house before showing it. A new paint job, well done, will normally enhance the sale value a good deal more than the cost of the paint.

Remember, if your home's exterior looks clean, orderly and in good repair, that's the impression your house will first convey.

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 housecleaning 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 — an important selling point.

Take an inspection tour of your home, observing it as a potential buyer would, and use the following checklist to make sure it's ready to show:

- Walls are clean and free of smudges, fingerprints and dents.
- Woodwork and wallpaper are inspected for problem areas; wallpaper is cleaned and woodwork waxed.
- Badly worn furniture is temporarily stored in a family's or neighbor's attic or basement.
- Curtains and drapes are freshly laundered.
- Rugs and carpets are shampooed. Floors are waxed.
- Loose doorknobs, sticking doors, windows and warped drawers are repaired.
- Leaky faucets are fixed. Water discoloration in sink is eliminated.
- Loose stair banisters are tightened and steps are free of objects.
- Light fixtures are in good working order. Discolored or cracked switch plates are replaced.
- Closets, shelves and drawers are organized to display spaciousness.
- Clothing is hung neatly and shoes and other objects are neatly arranged.
- Bathrooms are sparkling clean. Tub and shower caulking is repaired.
- Bedrooms are neat. Bedspreads and curtains are attractive.
- The kitchen is clean and tidy, including cupboards, stove and oven.
- The basement, attic and garage are clean and well organized.
- Mirrors, picture frames and glass covering pictures are clean.
- Mirrors are strategically placed to create an impression of added space in problem areas.
- Lamp shades are in good condition.
- Electrical connections are plugged in.
- Consider painting walls and replacing carpeting if cleaning doesn't do the trick.

It is also important to keep lighting in mind when you show your home. Good lighting will make your home seem more cheery and spacious.

Over-improving Doesn't Pay

Don't plan major improvements on your home. Most home-buyers want to make their own major changes. You are usually wiser to sell them the potential — at a price they can afford.

What You Can Do to Help Your Real Estate Agent Show Your Home

Showing your home is all important to its sale, and there are many ways you can help your real estate professional do his or her job successfully.

Here are some last-minute details that will maximize your home's selling potential:

- The television and radio are turned off or low enough to allow the salesperson and buyer(s) to talk, free of disturbances.
- Children and pets are sent outdoors to play or otherwise entertained to eliminate confusion and to keep the prospect's attention focused positively on your house.
- Bad odors are eliminated. Air freshener is used before the potential buyer arrives, especially if you have pets or the house has been closed up for some time.
- The house has adequate lighting (during daytime, drapes are open; at night plenty of lights are on, including the porch light).
- Wood is stored next to the fireplace. In winter, a fire is lit.
- The kitchen sink is free of dishes.
- Magazines and children's toys are in order.
- Plants have been watered and look healthy.
- Fresh flowers are arranged tastefully around the 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 real estate broker or agent if your presence is necessary.

- Never apologize for the appearance of your home. Let your real estate broker or agent answer any objections.
- Leave it to your real estate professional to emphasize the features of your home.
- Make sure your agent or broker knows where you are so you may answer questions, but don't tag along.
- Let your real estate professional discuss price, terms, possession and other factors with the potential buyer(s).

Remember, your real estate broker or agent has the experience and training necessary to bring negotiations to a successful conclusion. And, if you've

followed the guidelines provided, you'll know you've already done your part in helping your home sell by making sure it creates a good first impression.