

10 Things to Do Before You Sell Your House



Before you put your house on the market, ask your real estate agent for guidance on improving your home's presentation. Your agent can tell you what buyers expect in your particular market and at your home's price point. The following 10 steps are a way to get a good head start on preparing to sell your home.

1. Welcome buyers. Make your front door visible and accessible to buyers. Paint the door, clear debris and clutter from the walkway and yard, mow the lawn and prune hedges. Pot or plant colorful annuals and perennials to attract attention from the street. Fix broken screens, doorbells, roof tiles, shingles and outdoor lighting, and replace your doormat. Exterior defects can make a poor first impression on buyers.

2. Make it sparkle. Cleanliness implies a home has been well taken care of, so deep cleaning can win points with buyers. Buyers scrutinize homes, especially kitchens and bathrooms. Recaulk and repaint to give these grime-prone rooms a fresh and clean look. Clean rugs and carpets to eliminate unsightly stains or dinginess and eliminate odors. Tidy each

room, including cabinets, closets and the garage, before showing. And if it seems daunting to do all that cleaning yourself, consider hiring a professional cleaning company to take care of all of it for you.

3. Start packing. Cramped and cluttered rooms turn buyers off and make your house look smaller. A home packed with your personal belongings also makes it difficult for others to envision living there. Start by storing away excess furniture, toys and personal decorations, such as family photos. Pack up things you don't use on a daily basis, and put them in storage or ask a friend to hold onto them. Decluttering your house also gives you a head start on your move.

4. Paint wisely. A well-done, no-frills paint job is all you need. Put a fresh coat of paint on white or beige walls, and repaint walls that have eccentric or unconventional colors. Nature- and spa-inspired neutral colors, such as taupe and subtle gray, are the best choices. Definitely don't forget the trim and molding either. And a fresh paint job on outdated or worn cabinetry goes a long way, too.

5. Fix the small stuff. Repair or replace broken or outdated hardware throughout your home. You can install new door handles, faucets, towel bars and curtain rods – fixtures that are readily visible to homebuyers – rather inexpensively. New hardware in the bathroom, kitchen and on windows and doors also improves the functionality and safety of these components.

6. Update lighting. Replace decorative light fixtures that no longer fit your home's cleaner, fresher look. Install new bulbs with the appropriate lighting for specific areas of your home. For example, ambient, low-key lighting fills a room, whereas directional or task lighting works better in areas like a reading nook. Use accent lighting to highlight focal points in a room, such as the artwork above a mantle, to draw buyers' attention to certain selling points.

7. Frame windows. Ensure you have the right window treatments, which enhance natural brightness and boost the appearance of a home. Window treatments also can impact a room's temperature because they reduce or increase the amount of light entering the space. Adjust window treatments appropriately when showing your home in the mornings, afternoon and evenings.

8. Set the table. Fresh, decorative flowers in the kitchen or on the dining room table are always a nice touch. Also, keep place settings handy for

your tables so you can quickly set them out right before showings or an open house. Pull out all the formal stops for a dining room, and keep the table casual in the kitchen.

9. Hide unsightly everyday items. Don't leave children's toys and pet belongings out in the open during showings and open houses. Move litter boxes, pet dishes, toys, animal crates and kids' entertainment to less conspicuous areas of the home, such as an outdoor storage unit or garage before each showing or open house. Also think about where you can store things like dirty laundry and dirty kitchen sponges.

10. Don't forget the back. Keep your backyard looking spacious and functional. Plant or pot colorful flowers and keep the landscaping trimmed and neat. Consistently pick up after your pets so buyers feel comfortable touring the yard.