

Jake's Top Tips on Preparing Your Home for Sale

The First Impression Counts... Let's Make it a Positive One!

The most important single reason that a home sells is its Emotional Appeal. Over 90% of buyers in today's market buy on emotion. Looking at your house through "buyer's eyes" can help you prepare your home to sell for the best price, in the least amount of time.

When you begin preparing your home, begin outside and work your way in. Make up a "to do" list as you go along, keeping in mind the importance of first impressions.

EXTERIOR TIPS

It's estimated that more than half of all houses are sold before buyers even get out of their cars. Stand across the street from your home and review its "curb appeal". What can you do to improve the very first impression?

- Keep sidewalks and patios hosed off. Hose down house siding to remove cobwebs and dirt. Hose down your garage and clean your driveway of any grease spots. A garage can be an important selling point for your home, and a good spraying with a garden hose and just a drop of industrial strength cleaner can make a big difference.
- Mow, trim, weed, and water lawns and gardens. Add a fresh layer of mulch or gravel if needed and plant flowers for color.
- The front door is one of the first things prospective buyers see. If it shows signs of wear — clean it, stain it, or paint it.
- Make sure the doorbell and porch lights work.
- Remove trash and debris from the yard and around house.
- Remove extra vehicles from view.
- Repair any fences or gates.
- Remove holiday lights that may still be hanging.
- Paint exterior window sashes, trim, and shutters (repainting the entire exterior can be an expensive and unnecessary venture — unless there is bad blistering or peeling.)
- Apply fresh paint to wooden fences
- Buy a new welcome mat

- Place potted flowers near the door
- Clean windows inside and out
- Power wash the home's exterior
- Ensure gutters and downspouts are firmly attached and functioning

INTERIOR TIPS

When showing your home to prospective buyers you want to make everything look spacious, organized, bright, warm, and "homey." Start with a full housecleaning from top to bottom.

Don't let dirt and clutter obscure your home's good points. A clean home will sell a lot faster than a dirty one.

- Be sure walls are clean and free of dirt and fingerprints — consider a fresh coat of paint if washing doesn't do the trick.
- Wash all windows and sills.
- Curtains and drapes should be freshly cleaned.
- Arrange furniture to make rooms appear spacious and attractive.
- Evaluate the furniture in each room and remove anything that interrupts the flow or makes the room appear smaller. Consider renting a storage unit to move the items off-site.
- Clean all light fixtures and ceiling fans
- Have carpets cleaned
- Make minor repairs
- Replace any burned out light bulbs. You can make rooms seem warmer and brighter by using high intensity light bulbs that give the house a warm glow.
- Discard or replace any dying houseplants.

KITCHEN & BATH TIPS

The bathrooms and kitchen are focal points for most buyers. Be sure those rooms are clean and clear of clutter.

- Clear extra appliances, accessories, etc. from counters.
- Polish sinks and remove stains.
- Clean appliances thoroughly inside and out.
- Straighten and remove excess papers from kitchen memo area.

- Clean out your cabinets and drawers and add shelf paper and utensil trays to make them look as organized as possible.
- Buy a new shower curtain.

UNCLUTTERING TIPS

Eliminating clutter will give your home a more spacious look. By removing or storing things you don't need, you create a roomy, comfortable feeling that will be inviting to prospective buyers. If a house is too cluttered, buyers have trouble imagining themselves and their belongings in it. Remember, when in doubt—move it out!

- Clean out closets to display their roominess. Prospective buyers love to inspect for storage space, so it's important to make whatever closets you have look as spacious as possible. Another trick is to clear the floor space in closets. This simple strategy will make the closet 'appear' as large as possible.
- Be sure clothes are hung neatly and shoes and other objects are neatly arranged. If something you have stored away hasn't been worn or used in the last year, chances are it never will be. Give it away, sell it, or pack it neatly in a box and store it in the garage.
- Have a garage sale! Not only will you be reducing clutter, but you can use the money you earn to finance your touch-ups.
- Straighten bookshelves and remove unnecessary papers from coffee tables.
- In children's rooms, straighten or store extra toys and remove distracting posters. Arrange toys to look fun and inviting, open a book on a night stand, add a flowering plant and arrange decorative pillows or shams on the bed.
- If you have a spare room or storage area, turn it into an area with a purpose. If it's too small to be a bedroom, turn it into a hobby center, study or office.
- Again, consider renting storage space to move out items you won't need before you move.

CLEANING TIPS

When a home is clean, it gives the impression that it has been well cared for. Some fresh paint and a one-time professional cleaning service can make your house look like new.

- Be sure every room smells as good as it looks, paying special attention to pet areas, children's nurseries and bathrooms.
- Polish all brass and chrome fixtures.
- Polish mirrors so they sparkle.

- Scrub and wax floors.
- Have carpets professionally cleaned and deodorized.
- Clean and deodorize garbage areas.
- Clean sliding door track so that the door moves quietly and smoothly.

REPAIRING TIPS

Making little repairs can make a big difference. Although many families learn to live with a broken doorknob or a cracked window—all of these little things should be fixed when selling your home. The savvy homeowner concentrates his efforts on cosmetic repairs that cost relatively little but return a lot on the investment (don't forget those first impressions!).

- Repair leaking faucets, running toilets, grout, and caulking as needed.
- Replace any cracked windows and torn screens.
- Patch and paint wall and ceiling cracks.
- Repair or replace loose doorknobs, drawer pulls, sticking doors and windows, warped drawers, cabinet handles, towel racks, switch plates and outlet covers.
- Tack down any loose molding and glue down any lifted wallpaper.

NEUTRALIZING

Try to create an appearance that allows the buyers to picture themselves living there. Neutral paint, décor and carpeting create a home for any life style.

- Eliminate distracting colors and accessories so that buyers can concentrate on positive impressions.
- Brighten things with fresh paint. White, off-white, or beige walls make a room look bigger and lighter. Interior painting costs very little, and it can make a big difference in buyer perception—so go ahead and do it.

DON'T OVER IMPROVE

Preparing your home for sale doesn't need to be expensive or time-consuming, as long as you keep up with normal maintenance. In the event you do not have the time to do the cleaning or repair work, consider hiring a professional: it could save you time and money later. And a few hundred dollars well spent can be the best investment you'll ever make. Remember, you need to think like a buyer now and have a critical eye.

JAKE