

## Step-by-Step Tips for Prepping Your Home for Sale

There are three things that sell a home: Price, Condition, and Location. Condition is the item that you have the most control over. The condition of your home will affect how quickly it sells and the price the buyer is willing to offer. *First impressions are the most important.* The following tips can help you take a fresh look at your home to make it more appealing to buyers.

### Start with the Outside - Curb Appeal

When we live in a home, we don't always see the little details in our home that may leave a negative impression with buyers. Walk across the street and imagine that this is your first time seeing your home. With this fresh perspective, jot down items below that need cleaning, maintenance, replacing, or freshening up. Now look at the following list of ideas and determine what else might need to be done.

#### First Impression List of Exterior Cleaning/Maintenance Items

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

#### Yard and Landscaping

- Overseed, fertilize lawn, and spray for weeds.
- Cut the grass and edge the walkways.
- Rake the leaves.
- Add colorful flowers.
- Prune trees and shrubs.
- Place fresh mulch around plants and walkways.
- Buy a new mailbox.
- If you can, invest in professional landscaping.
- Move garden tools, hoses, and toys out of sight.

#### Home's Exterior

- Power wash your home's exterior, including deck, patio, driveway, and sidewalk.
- Wash your windows and screens to let the light shine in.
- Give the shutters and trim a fresh coat of paint.
- Clean out and maintain the gutters and downspouts.
- Replace old siding and loose roof shingles.
- Fix everything that's broken.
- Check a wood deck for signs of rot.
- Repair any holes or cracks in your driveway and reapply sealant.
- Inspect paved surfaces for cracks, settlement, and erosion.
- Remove dated elements like awnings.
- Polish or replace your house numbers and light fixtures.
- Install new doorknobs on your front door.
- Paint the front door and surrounding trim.
- Place a seasonal wreath on your door.
- Place a pot of bright flowers near the entryway.
- Buy a new doormat.
- Ensure that patio furniture and swing set are in good shape.

## Move to the Inside - Interior Appeal

Starting at your front door, again imagine that this is your first time seeing your home. Small problems such as sticky doors, cracked caulking, dripping faucet, or a dusty ceiling fan may seem trivial, but they'll give buyers the impression that the house isn't well-maintained. A clean house and maintained home will make a strong first impression and send a message to buyers that the home has been well-cared for. It's worth hiring a cleaning service or handyman if you can afford it. With this fresh perspective, go from room to room, jotting down items below that need cleaning, maintenance, replacing, or freshening up. Now look at the following list of ideas and determine what else might need to be done.

### First Impression List of Interior Cleaning/Maintenance Items

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Home's Interior Maintenance

- Fix everything that's broken.
- Patch holes in drywall.
- Check walls and ceilings for cracks and repair.
- Remove dated elements.
- Oil or fix sticky doors/cabinets.
- Tighten doorknobs.
- Replace torn screens.
- Replace broken tiles.
- Clean discolored grout.
- Replace cracked caulking.
- Fix leaky faucets or running toilets.
- Inspect plumbing for leaks.
- Replace burned-out bulbs.
- Put highest wattage bulb allowed in light fixtures to brighten up rooms and basements.
- Check basement for dampness or leaks.

### Home's Interior Cleaning

- Identify and rid home of all smells (pets, smoke, cooking smells, etc.).
- Clean the walls, or better yet, brush on a fresh coat of neutral color paint.
- Wash fingerprints from light switch plates, doorknobs, and door frames.
- Wash baseboards.
- Wash, dust or replace window treatments.
- Wash/shampoo area rugs and carpets.
- Clean or replace light fixtures, ceiling fans, faucets, or cabinet knobs.
- Scrub cabinets.
- Wash kitchen and laundry appliances.
- Remove all magnets and knick-knacks from the refrigerator.
- Scrub shower, shower door, toilet, and bath tubs.
- Clean all mirrors and windows.
- Mop and wax floors.
- Clean under the beds.
- Clean out the fireplace.
- Replace A/C filters. Clean all A/C vents and intake grids.
- Dust window sills.
- Dust furniture.



## Decluttering - Storage and Organization

Most of our drawers and closets are bursting with "stuff" that we have accumulated. Assume that potential buyers will look in every closet and cabinet. Decluttering will decrease your overall cost to move, give you a head start on your move, and help to win over a buyer with the positive first impression of a well-maintained home with ample storage space. As you sort through items, group into 4 categories: *Put Away, Give Away, Storage, Trash.* Consider renting a POD storage unit and pack up everything that is not needed for everyday use. Use the checklist below as a starting point, and check off each area as it is officially decluttered.

<b>PUT AWAY, GIVE AWAY, STORAGE, TRASH</b>  <u>Detailed Decluttering List for Each Room</u>	Kitchen	Great Room	Dining Room	Office	Mstr Bedroom	Bedroom #1	Bedroom #2	Bedroom #3	Bathroom #1	Bathroom #2	Basement	Garage	Other	Other
Clean and organize: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closets cabinets/drawers</li> <li>• Bookshelves</li> <li>• Pantry</li> <li>• Room</li> </ul> Store or discard items not used in over a year (out-of-season clothing, seasonal decorations and items, videos, CD's, videogames, magazines, books). Minimize food in pantry.														
Put excess furniture in storage to make rooms appear larger.														
Minimize the number of items touching the floor, except for furniture, so that the rooms will appear bigger.														
Minimize family photos, mementos and personalized décor to help buyers visualize the home as theirs.														

## Secure the Home

Lock up valuables, jewelry, guns, medicines, and money. While a real estate salesperson will be on site during the showing or open house, it's impossible to watch everyone all the time.

## Prep and Stage Your Home

After you have made repairs, cleaned, and decluttered, it is time to "stage," or dress your home for sale. A properly staged home will look bigger, brighter, more loved and, best of all, appeal to home buyers. Use staging to accentuate the positives and downplay the negatives. The little, inexpensive things that you do can make your home stand out.

- **Make your kitchen a cook's delight.** Start with an immaculately-cleaned and decluttered kitchen. Next, clear countertops of ALL items; then decide on 3 decorative items to stage the countertops. Here are some ideas:
  - Fresh flowers
  - Bowl of lemons, peppers, or other colorful fruit
  - Colorful cookbook
  - Serving tray with refreshments
  - Decorative hand towel adorned with a napkin ring
  - Houseplant in colorful container
  - Gourmet olive oil
  - Elegant grouping of wine bottles and glasses

Illuminate any dark corners in the kitchen with lighting. Set the table or island for an intimate meal for two. Display a centerpiece of fresh flowers or fruit on your table. In your pantry, minimize the food that you keep on hand to keep it looking spacious. Turn all food labels to face forward. Make sure the kitchen smells like something amazing has been baking!

- **Make the bathrooms feel luxurious.** When buyers enter your bathrooms, they should feel pampered. Add a new shower curtain, new towels, and fancy guest soaps. Add baskets filled with spa treatments such as: Towels tied with ribbons, scented soaps, creamy lotions, moisturizing & facial jars. Make sure your personal toiletry items are out of sight and toilet seats are down.
- **Make the master bedroom a retreat,** appealing to both sexes. Your bed should be the focal point with a striking headboard and inviting linens. Consider investing in a fresh bed-skirt, comforter, pillow shams and decorative pillows. Accessorize each bedside table with a lamp. Place an alarm clock on one of the tables and a book on the other. Accentuate a vaulted ceiling with tall and narrow artwork on the wall. Consider a table runner and fresh flowers for the dresser.
- **Make the family room warm and inviting for spending time as a family and entertaining guests.** Arrange the room in a conversational way. Accentuate the fireplace with fresh logs or a basket of flowers if it's not in use, and jazz up the fireplace mantle with simple and fresh decorations. Add a touch of color with a throw on the couch or new accent pillows. For worn or loud couches or chairs, consider replacing or using a slip cover to enhance the appearance.
- **Decorate your dining room table,** with brightly colored fruit or flowers as a centerpiece. Consider adding place settings, with bright linen napkins and napkin rings.
- **Create usable and inviting entertaining spaces outdoors.** Arrange an outdoor eating area with a table and comfortable chairs. Enhance with color: Cushions, outdoor rugs, colorful potted plants or flowers. Consider adding a water feature to drown out a loud street. Circle chairs around a fire pit. Add deck lighting or candles to create an inviting evening environment.
- **Use houseplants** to add texture, warmth, and color to any room. As a decorative element, group plants of differing heights, fullness, and color.
- **Add organizing tools** to polish your home's look, while preserving utility. Bins or baskets can hold magazines and mail, while hooks and shelves can organize practical items like keys, coats, and hats.