

4 Guidelines For Every Homeowner Trying To Fix-Up Their Property To Sell

- 1. Cost doesn't equal value.** If you finished off your basement six months ago for twelve thousand dollars, said improvement doesn't necessarily add twelve thousand dollars of value in the eyes of the buyer.

- 2. Put your money where buyers will see it.** Examples of good returns might be a fresh coat of paint and sprucing up your front door and entry way. Don't expect to get as good a return on insulation or new wiring.

- 3. Don't over improve!** The addition of a fifth bedroom to a house in a subdivision of 3-4 bedroom homes may not give you the return you would like. Use typical improvements for your area as a guide.

- 4. Most quality home improvements cause a property to sell quicker but not necessarily for more money.** A timely sale will lessen the carrying costs and stress. Don't underestimate the overall value of "smart" improvements.



5 Important Guidelines To Follow When Your Home Is Being Shown

- 1. Leave the property at least ten to fifteen minutes before it is shown and return after the agent and buyers have left. You want the agent and the buyers to feel relaxed and to take their time when looking at your home.

- 2. Keep pets outdoors and caged/chained when the house is being shown. It would actually be BEST if all pets could find a new home while the house is on the market.

- 3. Leave a welcome note for the agent and the buyers in a highly visible place (taped to the front door). The note should welcome them and tell them where the "Home Book", "Home Feature Sheet" and other information about the home can be found. See "**16 Key Items To Include In A Home Book That Will Catch A Buyer's Eye**".

- 4. Before vacating the house for showing, do a quick check, to make sure items one, two and three of "**The 6 C's Of Merchandising**" have been followed.

- 5. Open drapes, turn on lights and play soft music. Remember, you are trying to make the buyer FEEL at HOME!



The 6 C's Of Merchandising...

How To Get Your Home Market-Ready

- 1. **Curb appeal...** how does your property look from the curb? If potential buyers don't like the looks of the house from the curb, they become disappointed and often times won't go in the house.

- 2. **Clutter...** eliminate it everywhere: closets, garage, attic, each room, yard, etc.

- 3. **Clean...** everywhere, everything. People value cleanliness...both in what they see and smell.

- 4. **Character and charm...** what makes your property special - little touches of decorating such as flower arrangements in a room and fire in the fireplace can all contribute to a special feeling.

- 5. **Critique your home objectively...**how does it compare to others in the area? What are your property's strengths and potential weaknesses? Highlight the benefits of your home on a "Home Feature Sheet." See "**16 Key Items To Include In A Home Book That Will Catch A Buyer's Eye**".

- 6. **Cost vs.Value...** spend money in the right places and on the right items to get your home "market ready." See "**Getting Your House Ready For Show Time**".



13 Ways To Prepare Your Home For Showings

- 1. Arrange the furniture and discard unused items so each room appears as spacious as possible.
- 2. No matter what the season, consider it spring and do your "spring cleaning".
- 3. Buy higher intensity light bulbs and put them in every lamp. They'll make the rooms brighter and feel warmer.
- 4. Brighten things with fresh paint. White, off-white or beige walls make a room look bigger and lighter.
- 5. Clean all of your windows and mirrors so they sparkle.
- 6. Check all closets to be sure clothes are neatly arranged. Keep as few items as possible stored in overhead shelves and on floors.
- 7. Keep kitchen countertops clean & free of clutter. Organize kitchen cabinets and cupboards.
- 8. Clean the oven as well as all other appliances. Polish the chrome on the sink.
- 9. Polish the tub, toilet and bathroom sink.
- 10. Go through the basement, attic and garage. Organize them so they appear as spacious, neat and as clean as possible. It's a great time to have a garage sale!
- 11. Launder draperies and curtains if needed.
- 12. Shampoo carpets and wax floors. Consider replacing your carpet if it is worn. You may not recover the costs but your home may sell faster.
- 13. Get out your tool kit: tighten loose doorknobs, pulls on drawers and cabinets, towel racks and switch plates. Repair and clean caulking around tubs and sinks. Fix leaky faucets, remove water stains.



16 Key Items To Include In A "Home Book" That Will Catch A Buyer's Eye

- 1. Plat of survey
- 2. Property description
- 3. Floor plan
- 4. Area facts
- 5. Special features
- 6. Utility costs
- 7. Area schools
- 8. Park district programs/ recreational facilities
- 9. Library facilities
- 10. Community profile
- 11. Photos
- 12. Financing information with current rates and payments on different loan options... also available to all prospective buyers as a take-home piece of information
- 13. Copy of current tax bill
- 14. Commuter schedules
- 15. Home Warranty information
- 16. Map of local area



16 Steps To Get Ready For Your Open House

- 1. The front and back lawn should be freshly cut, trimmed and cleared of all debris.
- 2. Remove any unnecessary items from the front of the house.
- 3. Remove any dirt from sidewalk or driveway.
- 4. The front door should be freshly painted, if needed.
- 5. A colorful container of fresh flowers would be a wise investment for the front entry area.
- 6. If snow exists, be sure to clear the walkway from the parking area to the front door.
- 7. In the colder months, a roaring fire in the fireplace will create great ambiance.
- 8. Take extra time to be sure the kitchen and baths are spotless.
- 9. Be sure all the lights work in your home including closets, basement, garage & attic.
- 10. Turn on all lights...open drapes and curtains.
- 11. Turn on lights in closets.
- 12. Organize your closets and have some opened.
- 13. Doors and windows should be easy to operate.
- 14. Remove valuables from sight.
- 15. Tune in soft music on the same radio station in each room.
- 16. It is very important to leave during the hours of the open house. Most prospective buyers feel more comfortable if the seller is not present.



A Final Checklist Before Buyers Visit Your Home

- 1. Keep drapes and shades open to let in the natural light.
- 2. Keep rooms neat...avoid clutter.
- 3. No dirty dishes in the sink or on countertops.
- 4. Keep toys in an organized fashion.
- 5. Keep bikes, wagons and skateboards out of the way.
- 6. Keep the volume on radio, stereo and television turned down.
- 7. Take the family out of the house during the showing, if possible.
- 8. Keep pets outdoors or caged when your home is being shown.
- 9. Let the real estate professionals show your home to the buyers they are representing. If you happen to be at home during the showing, try to remain in an area of the home that is not being shown by the real estate agent.
- 10. When evening showings occur, have your home well-lighted. Be sure to turn on outside lights, both in the front & back of the house.



Getting Your Home Prepared For "Show Time"

A key to the selling of your home is to be aware of any possible objections a prospective buyer might have. It is valuable to identify any items that may cause a buyer to have second thoughts about purchasing your home. Below are some suggestions to consider.

- Make sure to review and best complete the items included in **Checklists & Systems** for getting your property to show its best.
- Hire a professional home inspector to inspect your property prior to putting it on the market. See "**10 Key Questions To Ask A Home Inspector Before Hiring One**".
- Spend the money necessary to make repairs and cosmetic upgrades for a timely sale.
- Would you consider creative financing to assist your prospective buyer with the home purchase? If so, be knowledgeable about the options available.
- Offer a Home Protection Warranty Program to the purchaser of your home. See "**Home Warranty Policy Checklist . . . For Sellers**".
- Price your home according to the current market indicators. Pay close attention to those properties that have recently closed that are most comparable in amenities and location. See "**How To Read Today's Market**".
- Review the checklist for having your home prepared for a public open house. See "**16 Steps To Get Ready For Your Open House**".
- Pay close attention to the feedback information from showings that your real estate professional has to offer. See "**Updated X-Rays Concerning The Value Of Your Home**".
- It is best not to be at home when your property is being shown. See "**5 Important Guidelines To Follow When Your Home Is Being Shown**".



Preparing Your Home For Sale...

Basement, Attic, Garage

- Dispose of everything you are not going to move.
- Pack all items you won't be needing until after the move and arrange neatly, so the exterior walls can be inspected.
- Basement and attic stairways should be well-lighted & free from clutter.
- Increase bulb wattage on stairways and in basement, attic and garage.
- Basement and attic handrails must be secure.
- If basement is dark & gloomy, consider painting ceilings and walls a light color.
- Sweep floor of garage; remove any stains and dirt.
- Organize tools and garden equipment.
- Wipe off any dust and dirt from water heater and furnace.



Preparing Your Home For Sale

General Interior Items

- Entry area should be spotless.
- Entry area closet should appear roomy. Remove out of season items and add extra hangers.
- Eliminate cooking, smoking and pet odors.
- If there are smoking odors, have furniture, drapes and carpets cleaned.
- If there are pet stains, carpet and padding may need replacement.
- Stick to neutral colors if painting or replacing carpets.
- Wash all windows - take advantage of natural sunlight.
- Window screens should be in good condition and free from holes.
- Make sure all lighting fixtures have working light bulbs.
- Increase bulb wattage in basement area.
- Clean all carpets.
- Clean all wood and tile floors.
- Get rid of cluttered closets . . . leave very few items on the floor of closets.
- Consider moving large pieces of furniture into storage.
- Clean and polish woodwork.
- If the season is appropriate, open windows and let the fresh air into the house.



Preparing Your Home For Sale

Kitchen and Bathrooms

Kitchen

- Clean and organize all storage space.
- Avoid clutter, store small appliances.
- Clean ventilating hood and exhaust fan.
- Sink, cabinets, appliances and counter tops should be clean and fresh.
- Wash & organize cabinets.

Bathrooms

- Check all faucets. Repair any dripping faucets.
- All surfaces should be spotless. Clear off vanity countertops.
- Replace worn shower curtain(s).
- Remove all personal care items from sight and neatly store.
- Clean and organize drawers and linen closet.
- Clean and repair caulking.



Preparing Your Home For Sale

Living Areas

- Have walls and ceilings in top shape.
- Repair any damages that may have caused ceiling or wall stains and re-paint.
- If repainting, stay with neutral off-white colors.
- Replace any burned out light bulbs.
- Add higher wattage light bulbs if rooms are dark.
- Be sure all lighting switches are in working order.
- Wash floors.
- Remove stains from carpeting.
- Clean and organize closet space...remove out of season clothing to make closets appear larger.
- Consider adding fresh or silk flower arrangements throughout the house.
- Sweep and clean fireplace.
- Make sure all doors and windows open and close easily.



The 8 Interior Items That Buyers REALLY Notice

- 1. Buyers take special notice of light & bright homes. Buy high-intensity light bulbs and be sure to clean all light shades and covers.
- 2. Buyers notice especially clean homes. Do a “spring cleaning” throughout... no matter what the season is. Give special attention to the following: windows and screens, counter and appliance tops, mirrors, ovens, sinks, toilets and tub/shower areas.
- 3. Buyers notice clean windows, freshly laundered drapes & curtains.
- 4. Buyers notice freshly cleaned carpets and waxed floors. Replace or repair damaged areas of the floor or floor covering.
- 5. Buyers notice spacious rooms; arrange furniture and decorations to improve each room. Remove unnecessary items that don't fit in.
- 6. Buyers notice colors that will blend with their decor and furnishings. Consider brightening things up with a fresh coat of paint. Think white, off-white or beige. Such colors make a room look bigger and brighter, and these colors are most likely to go with the new buyer's furnishings.
- 7. Buyers notice closet & cabinet space. Neatly arrange everything in your closets, cabinets and other storage areas including the basement and garage. Get rid of all unnecessary items.
- 8. Buyers pay attention to tiny details. Fix all of the “little things”... loose door knobs, leaky faucets, towel racks, clean and repair caulk areas.



The Top 10 Exterior Items That Make Your Home Look Its Best

- 1. Keep your lawn cut and edged. Trim trees and shrubs, removing all dead limbs and debris.
- 2. Add color to your yard and front porch with flowers and/or hanging plants.
- 3. Arrange outdoor furniture and firewood neatly. Put away all lawn equipment, bikes and other toys.
- 4. Repair any broken areas of your fence, deck, patio, etc. Make sure these areas are clean and in good shape.
- 5. Check the exterior of items like siding, window sashes, trim and shutters. Clean these areas and/or paint as needed. Give special attention to the front door area.
- 6. Make sure your gutters are clean of debris. Wash or paint as needed. Re-align the gutters if they look crooked.
- 7. Check the roof for shingles or flashing that needs replacing or repair.
- 8. Replace broken windows, doors and screens. Make sure each looks clean and in good condition.
- 9. Wash driveways and sidewalks. Patch holes and try to remove stains.
- 10. Touch up the “little things”... house numbers, mail box, door bell, etc.

