

# Make a Great First Impression

Successful Strategies for Selling your Home



*First American Title™*



# Table of Contents

## First Things First

Unfortunately, very few homes are already picture perfect when the owners make the decision to sell. Most require anywhere from minor repairs to major renovations. How little or how much work you want to do is entirely up to you. But remember, the more attractive the house is, the more appealing it will be to prospective buyers.

So let's get to work and start with first things first.

<b>Introduction</b> .....	04
<b>Ready to Sell</b> .....	05
Getting To Work	
<b>The Exterior</b> .....	06
<b>The Garage</b> .....	08
<b>Inside The House</b> .....	09
<b>The Entryway</b> .....	11
<b>The Living Room</b> .....	13
<b>The Dining Room</b> .....	15
<b>The Kitchen</b> .....	17
<b>The Bathrooms</b> .....	19
<b>The Bedrooms</b> .....	21
<b>The Basement/Laundry</b> .....	23
<b>The Last Minute Checklist</b> .....	25
<b>“Broker with Buyers on the Way” &amp;     Title Insurance Basics</b> .....	26
<b>Your Notes</b> .....	27

# Introduction



## First impressions are extremely powerful.

Potential buyers make an emotional connection with a house from the moment they first see the property from the curb and then again when they step over the threshold.

Sometimes the house will grow on the buyers, but most often the first impression the house makes is the one carried away. Buyers may have looked at five or more houses on the same day they see your house. The house that looks the most spacious has the most curb appeal and is the most cheerful will be remembered but so will the house with the cramped bedrooms, cluttered closets and Christmas lights in May.

According to real estate agents, there are two main reasons a house sits on the market unsold. The first is price. If the house is priced too high even reducing the price later often doesn't revive enthusiasm in either real estate agents or buyers. Trust the professional expertise of your real estate agent to set the best selling price.

The second reason a house flounders on the market is the condition and appearance of the house. You feel confident that your house will sell because it's your home but it is hard to look objectively at your house. It is very important to be aware that prospective buyers don't share your same nostalgia; instead they see what is clearly visible.

Your house, with all its charm, comfort, solid built construction and attractiveness must be obvious from the instant the buyers first see it driving to the door. Don't rely on the buyers to use their imagination to see your home's potential.

Inside the book are successful strategies for selling your home. There are check lists for every area of your home starting from the curb and into the basement. There is also a tip sheet for adding special touches and a personal "To Do" list for your own unique requirements. Also included are easy and inexpensive household hints along with web site addresses... from hardware stores to home décor.

Finally, there is a special "Broker with Buyers on the Way" last minute checklist. This is a helpful list of those last minute details to do just before that front door bell rings.

# Ready to Sell

## Pricing

This process generally begins with a determination of a reasonable asking price. Your REALTOR can give you up-to-date information on what is happening in the marketplace and the price, terms, and condition of competing properties. These are key factors in getting your property sold at the best price, quickly and with minimum hassle.

## Marketing

The next step is a marketing plan. Often, your REALTOR can recommend repairs or cosmetic work that will significantly enhance the salability of the property. Marketing includes the exposure of your property to other REALTORS and the public. In many markets over 50% of real estate sales are cooperative sales; that is, a REALTOR other than yours brings in the buyer. Your agent acts as the marketing coordinator, disbursing information about your property to other REALTORS through a Multiple Listing Service or other cooperative marketing networks, open houses for agents, etc.

Advertising is part of marketing. The choice of media and frequency of advertising depends a lot on the property and specific market. For example, in some areas, newspaper advertising generates phone calls to the real estate office but statistically has minimum effectiveness in selling a specific property. Overexposure of a property in any media may give a buyer the impression the property is distressed or the seller is desperate. Your REALTOR will know when, where and how to advertise your property.

There is a misconception that advertising sells real estate. The National Association of Realtors studies show that 82% of real estate sales are the result of agent contacts through previous clients, referrals, friends and family, and personal contacts.

## Security

When the property is marketed with a REALTOR's help, you do not have to allow strangers into your home. REALTORS will generally pre-screen and accompany qualified prospects through your property.

## Using a REALTOR

You Be the Judge. Real estate transactions involve one of the biggest financial investments most people experience in their lifetime. Transactions today often exceed several hundred thousand dollars. If you had a \$200,000 legal question, would you deal with it without the help of an attorney? Considering the small upside cost and the large downside risk, why consider a deal in real estate without the professional assistance of a REALTOR?

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# When you're ready to think about selling your property,

you need to ask yourself the following questions: Do you have the time, energy, sources of information, and contacts to do the job yourself? If you are one of the "do-it-yourself" people, were the results as good as or better than they would have been if you had professional assistance? Would it have gone smoother? Would it have given you more personal time? Would you have sold for more if a REALTOR was involved? Read the following information and learn how a REALTOR can help you understand everything you need to know about a real estate transaction.



# Real estate agents say that short of painting,

simply making sure the exterior of the house is clean and looks maintained is very important. Making your house appear as attractive and friendly as possible from the street is imperative. “Curb Appeal” gets the buyers to stop and take notice but most importantly, gets them interested in seeing more of your home. It will be hard to get buyers interested in seeing the interior or your home and all its potential if the exterior of your home creates a negative first impression.



## Exterior

### First Things First...

- ✓ Clear away any litter between the street curb and your front door
- ✓ Remove any oil stains from the driveway
- ✓ Repair any cracks or broken bits of driveway paving
- ✓ Clear bikes and toys from the driveway (When showing the house, keep driveway free of cars)
- ✓ Remove weeds and grass growing in walkway
- ✓ Trim back shrubs protruding into the walkway
- ✓ Trim the shrubs away from house windows (for security and to make interior rooms brighter)
- ✓ Weed the flower beds and add a layer of mulch
- ✓ Prune dead branches and pull back anything creeping across the house
- ✓ Cut the grass
- ✓ (Autumn) Rake the leaves
- ✓ (Winter) Shovel snow. Salt/Sand Icy Patches
- ✓ Dispose of any pet debris
- ✓ Wash down vinyl siding, if necessary
- ✓ If house is wood, scrape and paint, if required
- ✓ Clean out the gutters
- ✓ Repair or replace gutters and downspouts
- ✓ Repair any house foundation cracks
- ✓ Clean all windows, including those in the garage
- ✓ Replace any cracked or broken window glass
- ✓ Repair any wood rot
- ✓ Replace any bent or bulging window screens
- ✓ Repair and/or replace caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doors.
- ✓ Clean storm windows – have them available
- ✓ Exterior doors lock properly. Easy to open and shut
- ✓ Oil any squeaky door hinges
- ✓ Doorbells are working properly
- ✓ Remove any seasonal house lights and ornaments
- ✓ There is a working light by the front door
- ✓ Tighten any wobbly porch or deck railings
- ✓ Secure any loose porch or deck floor boards
- ✓ Clean the lawn furniture
- ✓ Clean the barbecue
- ✓ All pool equipment is in perfect working condition
- ✓ Clean pool equipment
- ✓ Place gardening tools in the garage or basement
- ✓ Neatly coil any garden hoses
- ✓ Property is free of clutter, particularly scattered toys
- ✓ Oil gate hinges
- ✓ Gates open and close easily
- ✓ Repair and/or replace any loose gate or fence posts

# Exterior

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ Shutters
- ✓ Shutters and front door painted in a spectacular color which complements the exterior of the house
- ✓ An all-season wreath on the front door
- ✓ A shiny brass door knocker
- ✓ An attractive door mat
- ✓ Flowers clustered around a lamppost or mailbox
- ✓ Window boxes under windows and/or along railings (Winter: drape pine boughs across the empty boxes)
- ✓ Hanging planters
- ✓ Groupings of tubs with flowers on porches and decks (Winter: plant small evergreen trees in tubs)
- ✓ Wood chips around trees and shrubs
- ✓ Brightly colored bird house
- ✓ A porch swing with comfortable cushions
- ✓ A hammock in the trees
- ✓ Filled bird feeders
- ✓ White wicker furniture
- ✓ An open umbrella above your deck furniture
- ✓ A croquet set
- ✓ Children's pool toys neatly arranged by the pool
- ✓ A tray with a pitcher and glass tumblers on the deck table – all ready to be filled with cold lemonade
- ✓ A bird book lying open on a chaise lounge (with a pair of binoculars on the table next to it)
- ✓ A chart outlining the location and names of all trees, shrubs, vines, perennials and bulbs on the property.

### The Exterior

#### Your Personal To Do List

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Eliminate all that stuff that you've been meaning to get rid of.

Your garage should look like there is enough room for the new owner to park a car or truck.



# The Garage

## First Things First...

- ✓ Have a garage sale
- ✓ Clean the trash cans to eliminate any unpleasant smell
- ✓ Make sure the space is brightly lit
- ✓ Sweep the floor
- ✓ Clean any oil and rust stains from the floor
- ✓ Clean the windows
- ✓ Replace any cracked or broken window glass
- ✓ Get rid of cobwebs
- ✓ The garage door is easy to maneuver up and down
- ✓ Pile up cartons together in one corner
- ✓ Recycle old magazines and newspapers
- ✓ Hang bicycles on bicycle hooks
- ✓ Hang tools on peg board
- ✓ Hang rakes, shovels, brooms, hoes, etc. from hooks
- ✓ Clean off the work bench
- ✓ Put up shelving for paint cans, containers of nails and screws, bags of fertilizer, winter tires, etc.
- ✓ Place all sporting balls in bins so are contained
- ✓ Organize gardening equipment
- ✓ All children's toys, strollers, wagons, etc. are organized together
- ✓ Replace outside basketball hoop if net is torn
- ✓ Window boxes filled with flowers
- ✓ Curtains in the windows
- ✓ A weathervane on the roof
- ✓ Ivy growing on outside wall
- ✓ Flowering shrubs around the exterior
- ✓ Colorful hooks to hang implements
- ✓ A large wall clock
- ✓ An intercom into the house
- ✓ A hobby project on the work bench... possibly a piece of furniture being refinished

### The Garage

Your Personal To Do List

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# Clean every room thoroughly.

For most buyers, houses must have that “ready to move into” look. Scuffed and finger-printed walls are a big turn-off for most buyers. Painting is the cheapest and easiest way to fix the problem but remember to choose a color that appeals to everyone. Neutrals like ivory and light gray are an attractive alternative to white.

If you have pets make sure your house doesn't smell like you have pets. Smells, both pleasant and unpleasant, trigger instant and strong responses that are extremely difficult to change.



## Inside the House First Things First...

- ✓ Repair any house foundation cracks
- ✓ Clean all windows, including those in the garage
- ✓ Replace any cracked or broken window glass
- ✓ Repair any wood rot
- ✓ Check window screens. Replace any that are bent or bulging
- ✓ Repair and/or replace caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doors
- ✓ Storm windows are available and clean
- ✓ Exterior doors lock properly and are easy to open and shut
- ✓ Oil any squeaky door hinges
- ✓ Doorbells are working properly
- ✓ Polish any brass door handles
- ✓ Interior doors lock properly
- ✓ All doors and walls are free of fingerprints
- ✓ Illuminate dark corners with brighter light bulbs
- ✓ Consider replacing standard lighting with some track lighting
- ✓ Repair any noisy pipes
- ✓ Repair any cracks in floorboards or floor tiles
- ✓ Replace loose floorboards or floor tiles
- ✓ Repair any woodwork (door frames, baseboards, chair rails, etc.) if chipped or dented
- ✓ Give woodwork a fresh coat of paint, if necessary
- ✓ Smoke & heat detectors are operating
- ✓ Fire extinguishers are in proper locations
- ✓ All electrical outlets are functioning properly. Try not to have extension cords running all around a room
- ✓ All electrical switches are working
- ✓ All electrical wall switches have plate covers
- ✓ All electrical wall plates are free of fingerprints
- ✓ Electrical wiring is up to safety standards
- ✓ Central Vac is functioning properly and the collection bin is cleaned out
- ✓ All telephone jacks function
- ✓ Home insulation is up to standards
- ✓ Fumigate house, if bothered by pests or rodents
- ✓ Eliminate unpleasant odors... cooking, pets, cigarette smoke, damp, musty

# Inside the House

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- ✓ Curtains open (for maximum natural light)
- ✓ Interior lights on to create a warm ambiance
- ✓ No pets or children racing through the house
- ✓ An unobstructed “walking path” through the house.
- ✓ Buyers shouldn’t have to maneuver around too many pieces of furniture
- ✓ A planned spot for the buyers and agent to sit and discuss the house – possibly the kitchen – with tea, coffee and a tray with cups and saucers, cream and sugar, and cookies ready on the counter.
- ✓ A printed sheet for buyer’s describing what you enjoy most about living in your home
- ✓ A home security system
- ✓ A room intercom system
- ✓ House at a comfortable temperature
- ✓ Soft music playing
- ✓ The aroma of coffee brewing, or something baking in the oven

### Inside the House

Your Personal To Do List

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### Household Hints

#### Polishing Chrome:

Dampen chrome with water. Polish with a small sheet of aluminum foil-shiny side out.

#### Polishing Furniture:

Spraying polish directly onto furniture leaves smears. First, spray polish onto a cloth and then polish your furniture.

#### Squeaky Wooden Floors:

Dust talcum powder into the cracks to stop the squeaking.

#### Furniture Scratches:

Scratches can be filled on light wood by rubbing with the meat of a walnut or pecan.

#### Cleaning Windows:

Use vertical strokes on the outside and horizontal strokes on the inside. This makes it easier to see which side has streaks.

#### Sticky Drawers:

Rub a bar of hand soap across the runners. Drawers should then glide easily.

# When the front door swings open

you want to make sure that the buyer's attention is drawn immediately to the.....



## The Entryway

### First Things First...

- ✓ Clean and polish hardwood flooring
- ✓ Professionally clean carpeting
- ✓ Thoroughly clean out the entryway closet. Leave only the coats you are currently wearing.  
To give the illusion of space, hang longer coats to each end and shorter jackets in the center.
- ✓ Add new hangers or colorful hooks
- ✓ Entryway is unobstructed
- ✓ Entryway is brightly lit
- ✓ Add a tri-light lamp to change the mood
- ✓ If entryway is dark, consider painting walls a pale cream color to bounce some light
- ✓ Consider hanging a mirror along one wall to open up the space and give either a sense of depth or width.
- ✓ Be sure mirror is reflecting something interesting.
- ✓ Consider a small table
- ✓ If you have a table, make sure it is uncluttered
- ✓ Hang a favorite painting or framed print in the entryway, where it will be easily viewed.
- ✓ If you have a wall with a collection of interesting objects, consider setting it off with track lighting
- ✓ Repair any loose carpeting or slippery areas on the staircase. Consider removing carpeting and painting the steps
- ✓ Handrail on staircase is secure
- ✓ Staircase is free of clutter
- ✓ Upstairs landing is well lit and free of clutter
- ✓ Clean and polish hardwood flooring on upstairs landing and hallway
- ✓ Professionally clean carpeting on upstairs landing and hallway, or remove if badly stained
- ✓ Paint woodwork and doors a semi-gloss white enamel. This will give a fresh clean look, and will pick up color tones in your wall paint.
- ✓ Clean all dirt and scuff marks from walls and doors
- ✓ Repair any chipped plaster
- ✓ Consider wallpapering or adding a wallpaper border to entry way and upstairs landing

# The Entryway

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ A colorful mat at the front door
- ✓ Space in the closet to hang the buyers' coats
- ✓ A polished table with a bouquet of silk flowers
- ✓ A little wicker basket on the table to hold the mail
- ✓ The overhead light on a dimmer switch
- ✓ Mirrors giving the illusion of more space
- ✓ A hanging piece of stained glass in a sunny window
- ✓ Beautiful wallpaper border that carries color and pattern as far as the eye can see
- ✓ A tall vase of ornamental grasses
- ✓ If an old house, a framed piece of original wallpaper
- ✓ An unusual art object or collection of furniture (e.g.: teapots, a child's dollhouse, old maps, an interesting piece of sculpture, colorful glasses, or bright ceramic flower pots).
- ✓ A set of small, framed botanical prints on the staircase wall
- ✓ A little round or oval rug on the floor of the stairs landing
- ✓ On the upstairs landing.....a staged grouping consisting of a small table with a reading lamp and a selection of interesting books, a rocking chair with a small colorful quilt draped across it's back, and a basket of dried flowers on the floor beside the chair

### The Entryway

#### Your Personal To Do List

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# The Living Room

## First Things First...

As with every aspect of the house,

you want the buyers to see the comfort, beauty and livability of the living room.



- ✓ Refinish or polish hardwood floors
- ✓ Professionally clean the carpeting or area rugs
- ✓ Repair any worn spots on carpeting, or replace with area rugs
- ✓ Professionally clean window treatments
- ✓ Clean any window blinds
- ✓ Be consistent with window treatments on all the windows in the room
- ✓ Clean ceiling fans and make sure they are operational
- ✓ Remove any "extra" furniture that crowds the room
- ✓ Pull furniture away from the walls and group pieces together in more intimate settings (i.e.: around a coffee table, an area rug, or in front of a fireplace)
- ✓ Recover throw pillows to complement the material in curtains, or the colors in the window shades and blinds
- ✓ Keep the television hidden behind closed doors of the TV unit.
- ✓ If television is open in the room, keep it dusted and secure any loose wires with Velcro strips
- ✓ Clear away into boxes any tapes, videos or CD's that cannot be stored out of sight
- ✓ Remove newspapers at the end of the day, and only keep the most current magazines
- ✓ Keep magazines in a magazine rack
- ✓ Immediately clear away any food or beverages as soon as they have been consumed
- ✓ Remove any and all plants that are not in the optimum of good health
- ✓ Lower hanging planters so that buyers are looking into them and not up at the bottom of dirty pots
- ✓ Clean all the light fixtures
- ✓ Use tri-light bulbs in table lamps, to control the degree of lighting you wish to display
- ✓ Clean the fireplace. Remove any build-up of ashes or charred bits of wood from the grate
- ✓ Polish fireplace tools
- ✓ Dust the furniture, windows and lights
- ✓ Vacuum the carpet/rugs and sweep the floor

# The Living Room

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- ✓ In a sparse room, furniture that is all covered with one fabric for a really dynamic look
- ✓ Patterned curtains and clusters of pillows around the room in complementary & contrasting colors
- ✓ (Winter) A fire crackling in the hearth but only if someone will be present in the house!
- ✓ (Summer) A fire laid with pretty logs, or a basket of dried flowers, or ferns, in front of the fire screen
- ✓ A grouping of small ornaments, or a large painting (with picture light) over the mantle
- ✓ A comfortable chair by window, with soft pillows
- ✓ Next to the chair, a little table with bright reading lamp, a candy dish, a mystery novel and a footstool.
- ✓ Two chairs grouped together around a small table with a jigsaw puzzle underway – and a colorful dish filled with pretzels
- ✓ A coffee table with a bouquet of flowers and a sumptuous “coffee-table book”
- ✓ Music sheets on a piano
- ✓ Potted palm trees and hanging ferns drawing your eye away from bare corners
- ✓ A sofa table behind the sofa, perhaps displaying an embroidered runner, a lamp, a cherished photograph in a lovely frame and an unusual little clock
- ✓ Indoor shutters on windows that overlook a garden
- ✓ The use of chair rail molding and/or wallpaper border within the room

## The Living Room

### Your Personal To Do List

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The seller's goal is to create an atmosphere so inviting

that the buyers are already thinking of where to place their furniture.

## The Dining Room

### First Things First...

- ✓ Refinish or polish hardwood floors
- ✓ Professionally clean the carpeting or area rugs
- ✓ Repair any worn spots on carpeting, or replace with area rugs
- ✓ Professionally clean window treatments
- ✓ Be consistent with window treatments on all the windows in the room
- ✓ Clean ceiling fans and make sure they are operational
- ✓ Remove any "extra" furniture that crowds the room
- ✓ Remove and box any unnecessary dishes from your china cabinet
- ✓ Clean the lighting fixtures
- ✓ Repair and stain any nicks or scratches in the furniture
- ✓ Vacuum the carpet/rugs and sweep the floor
- ✓ Dust the furniture, windows and lights
- ✓ Polish any wooden pieces
- ✓ Polish and shine any brass hardware



# The Dining Room

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- ✓ An elegantly set table for four – with china, crystal and silverware
- ✓ A low centerpiece of either silk flowers or candles
- ✓ A lace or embroidered runner on a side table
- ✓ A side table arranged with a tea set, cups, and saucers, and a couple of ceramic bowls of fruit
- ✓ The interior light on in the china buffet
- ✓ A grouping of pretty painted dishes on the wall
- ✓ The overhead chandelier on a dimmer switch
- ✓ A small decorator lamp for accent lighting
- ✓ A large, framed mirror across one wall to add a sense of depth
- ✓ A dramatic curtain swag across the tops of windows (and sliding door)
- ✓ Potted palm trees and hanging ferns drawing your eye away from bare corners
- ✓ A large accent rug on the floor in the center of the room
- ✓ The use of chair rail molding, wallpaper and/or wallpaper border within the room.

### The Dining Room

Your Personal To Do List

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### Household Hints

**Polishing Chrome:**  
Dampen chrome with water. Polish with a small sheet of aluminum foil-shiny side out.

**Wax Crayon on Painted Walls**  
Spray with WD40 and then wipe clean. Dish soap will remove any traces of WD40 left on the walls.

**Avoid Painting Fixtures**  
Cover hinges and door handles with petroleum jelly. Paint will not stick to this.

**Visualize Your Room Color**  
Before Painting a room, purchase the smallest amount of the new color and paint a piece of poster board. Place this in the room and see how the color reacts to the day and evening light.

# The kitchen must be spotlessly clean and bright.

Real estate agents say many buyers judge overall housekeeping by how clean the oven and range are.



## The Kitchen First Things First...

- ✓ Refinish or polish hardwood floors
- ✓ Clear off counter tops of practically everything.
- ✓ Buyers don't want to see a clutter of small appliances, gadgets, mixing bowls, etc.
- ✓ Clean refrigerator, stove and microwave
- ✓ Clean vents and exhaust hoods
- ✓ Check lights and timers on appliances
- ✓ Wipe down surface of cupboards and drawers
- ✓ If cupboards are old, consider giving them a fresh coat of paint, new handles and perhaps some interesting molding on the outside of the doors
- ✓ Cupboard doors close tightly
- ✓ Replace any broken handles
- ✓ Drawers open and shut without sticking
- ✓ Silverware and cooking utensil drawers are organized
- ✓ Wash the inside of the refrigerator (including shelves and food crispers)
- ✓ Add a box of baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb odors
- ✓ Throw out any expired food or old left-overs
- ✓ Kitchen sink is spotless
- ✓ Use grout cleaner around sink and recaulk if necessary
- ✓ Repair/replace chips in countertops
- ✓ Clean any stains on countertop
- ✓ Scrub the cupboard under the kitchen sink
- ✓ Organize cleaning items into either a pail or on a special cleaning rack
- ✓ Repair any leaky faucets or under-the-sink pipes
- ✓ Wash and wax floor. Remove old wax build-up
- ✓ If linoleum is worn, replace or cover with an area rug
- ✓ Clean curtains and window blinds and keep them open to let the sunlight shine through
- ✓ Clean ceiling fan
- ✓ Clean light fixtures
- ✓ Copper pot display is shining
- ✓ Organize pantry with boxes, cans, and jars placed neatly on the shelves
- ✓ Get rid of any unhealthy plants
- ✓ Clean pet's "dining area"
- ✓ Kitchen is well lit
- ✓ Dust the furniture
- ✓ Vacuum rugs and sweep the floor

# The Kitchen

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- ✓ Colored glass bottles in the window
- ✓ A countertop arrangement of an open cookbook, a cheery bowl of fruit and a vase of garden flowers
- ✓ New dish towels and matching pot holders (bring them out if buyers are coming)
- ✓ Colorful burner covers on the stovetop
- ✓ A new area rug at the sink (bring it out if buyers are coming)
- ✓ Mini-blinds, café curtains or a dramatic valance in the windows
- ✓ The overhead light on a dimmer switch
- ✓ The table set with bright place mats and napkins
- ✓ Wallpaper, and/or wallpaper border
- ✓ Strip lighting under the cupboards
- ✓ Window ledge with tiny terra-cotta pots of herbs
- ✓ Small basket with scented soaps
- ✓ Decorative tiles in splash area behind sink
- ✓ One cupboard with clear door to display glassware
- ✓ A hanging rack to display your kitchen dishes
- ✓ A mug rack with unusual mugs
- ✓ Sponges and dish mops in a porcelain bowl by the sink
- ✓ Cooking utensils hanging from a rack near the stove, or in a pottery container beside the stove.

## The Kitchen

### Your Personal To Do List

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# The Bathrooms

## First Things First...

This room  
must be  
spotless.



- ✓ Refinish or polish hardwood floors
- ✓ Remove any personal items (shampoo, medicine, cosmetics, hair blowers, etc.)
- ✓ Clean all glass and mirrors
- ✓ Remove any mildew
- ✓ Re-caulk if necessary
- ✓ Repair grouting if necessary
- ✓ Remove rust stains from toilet, sink, tub and shower
- ✓ Repair any chipped porcelain
- ✓ Scour the bathtub and shower
- ✓ Wash shower curtain
- ✓ Replace any discolored shower curtain or shower door
- ✓ Clean soap build-up from shower door
- ✓ Shower door is easy to open and shuts tightly
- ✓ Clean and wax the floor. Remove any wax build-up
- ✓ Replace any stained, cracked or loose tiles
- ✓ Tighten loose toilet
- ✓ Replace old toilet seat
- ✓ Toilet flushes properly
- ✓ Wash toilet seat cover and bath mats
- ✓ Toilet freshener in toilet
- ✓ Check water pressure
- ✓ Clean vanity, sink, and polish all faucets
- ✓ Soap and soap dish are clean
- ✓ Repair dripping faucets
- ✓ Area under sink is organized
- ✓ Pipes under the sink are clean and not leaking
- ✓ Linen closet is organized
- ✓ Use shelf paper as liners in drawers which are stained, or on linen closet shelves
- ✓ Clean the lighting fixtures
- ✓ Launder the curtains
- ✓ Arrange towels neatly on towel racks
- ✓ Laundry basket is out-of-sight
- ✓ Vacuum/Sweep Floor

# The Bathrooms

## Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- ✓ Thick new towels in vibrant colors (bring out when buyers are coming)
- ✓ Toilet seat cover and bath mat co-ordinate with towels
- ✓ Colorful guest towels laid out on the vanity
- ✓ A full length mirror
- ✓ A lock on the door
- ✓ Dishes of tiny ivy plants
- ✓ A collection of scented (but unlit) candles
- ✓ A glass bowl of potpourri
- ✓ A mirrored tray with a collection of fancy perfume bottles
- ✓ An antique water pitcher filled with dried, silk, or fresh flowers
- ✓ Window ledge with tiny terra-cotta pots of herbs
- ✓ A pretty plate of little guest soaps
- ✓ Towel racks, which match bathroom fixtures
- ✓ A grouping of framed prints on the wall
- ✓ A rod of hanging lace in a high window, instead of blinds
- ✓ A room done in one color with one bright accent color (all white with a wall paper border of sky and clouds and sky blue towels)
- ✓ For a master bathroom, wallpaper and towels to co-ordinate with the bed linen and curtains in the master bedroom
- ✓ A hand painted sink

## The Bathrooms

Your Personal To Do List

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## Household Hints

### Refrigerator Odors:

While baking soda does absorb odors, try this for a nice effect. Pour a little pure vanilla extract on a cotton ball, put it in a small saucer and place the dish in the refrigerator to remove odors and leave a nice natural scent.

### Broken Light Bulbs in Sockets:

Turn off power to a ceiling/wall fixture, or unplug the lamp. Insert a potato into the socket and turn counterclockwise to loosen the remnants of the broken light bulb.

### Washing Knick-Knacks

Gather them into a tray for safe transport. Wash in a dishpan with a little liquid detergent. Rinse, then blow-dry with a hair dryer.

### Cleaning the Fireplace:

Mist the ashes with water from a spray bottle. This will keep the ashes from scattering when you go to clean them from the grate.

Dirty carpet can be cleaned but worn out or dated carpet needs to be replaced.

Shag carpet or a carpet color so unusual won't help sell a house. People look more favorably on a house that has carpets they don't have to replace right away. You don't have to buy the best carpet available but do buy a grade in neutral colors that will suit most people. You will get your money back on this one.

## The Bedrooms

### First Things First...

- ✓ Refinish or polish hardwood floors
- ✓ Professionally clean or replace carpeting
- ✓ Polish hardwood flooring
- ✓ Clean the curtains
- ✓ Remove excess furniture to create a feeling of space
- ✓ Clear personal items from the dresser
- ✓ Valuables are hidden from view
- ✓ Sliding closet doors open easily and are not obstructed
- ✓ Closet doors open and close tightly
- ✓ Organize closets and keep only what is totally necessary. Box and label the rest for moving
- ✓ Keep shoes on a shoe rack in closet
- ✓ Use closet organizers
- ✓ Make the beds
- ✓ Hang-up and put away clothes
- ✓ Dry clean comforters and bedspreads
- ✓ Clean light fixtures
- ✓ Use tri-light bulbs in table lamps
- ✓ Clean ceiling fan
- ✓ Dust furniture
- ✓ Vacuum the carpet/rugs and sweep the floor
- ✓ Use boxes under the bed for hidden storage



# The Bedrooms

## Lasting Impressions...



### Master Bedroom:

- ✓ Pretty sheets, matching comforter and a cloud of pillows on the bed
- ✓ Window treatment co-coordinated with comforter and bed linen
- ✓ Small, colorful scatter rugs
- ✓ A “thinking corner” with a comfortable chair, little table with a lamp, a plate of cookies and a magazine
- ✓ A ceiling fan above the bed
- ✓ A mirror on the wall, reflecting the view from the window
- ✓ A night table with a table runner, a framed photo, a reading lamp, a book and a single flower in a vase
- ✓ A writing desk by the window
- ✓ Lovely framed prints on the walls
- ✓ Wallpaper/wallpaper border/chair rail

### Child's Bedroom:

- ✓ Colorful wallpaper border... a child's theme (sky and stars, nursery rhymes, a secret garden....)
- ✓ Large, brightly colored baskets for toys
- ✓ Hanging net hammocks filled with stuffed animals
- ✓ A child's table set for tea
- ✓ An easel displaying the latest piece of artwork
- ✓ Pastel painted walls
- ✓ The bed turned down with a small doll or animal waiting on the pillow

## Household Hints

### Stale Carpet Odor:

Put baking soda into a flour sifter and then sprinkle over the carpet with the sifter. Leave the baking soda on overnight and then vacuum.

### Cleaning Mini-Blinds:

Use dishwashing liquid to make a solution of warm, soapy water. Cover each hand with a clean sock, one for washing and the other for drying. Dip one sock into the cleaning solution and rub each blind slat until the whole surface is clean. Dry the blind slats with the dry sock on the other hand.

### Curtains and Curtain Rods:

In order to prevent snags when you use metal curtain rods, place the end of the rod inside a plastic freezer bag before putting the curtains on the curtain rod. Your curtains will slip right through!

## The Bedrooms

### Your Personal To Do List

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# The Basement/ Laundry

First Things First...

Here is  
where all the  
clutter seems  
to grow on  
its own!

This is a good time to get rid of all that stuff you've been meaning to throw away, donate, sell, and even return. As for the rest, make sure your stuff is neatly stacked or hung up. People don't expect too much from the basement, only that it is dry.

- ✓ Refinish or polish hardwood floors
- ✓ Make sure all of the basement is brightly lit
- ✓ Clean the furnace, humidifier, hot water heater and circuit breaker box
- ✓ Change any filters
- ✓ Cover water heater with insulated jacket
- ✓ All light switches work
- ✓ Pull chain lights have chains, and are easy to reach
- ✓ Arrange basement contents so it is easy to walk around
- ✓ Handrail on basement stairs is secure
- ✓ Arrange for an exterminator, if necessary
- ✓ Clean and deodorize any pet areas
- ✓ Fix any water leakage and repair damage
- ✓ Electrical system is up-to-date and fuse and box is not overloaded
- ✓ Clean laundry appliances
- ✓ Appliances are in working order
- ✓ Keep dirty clothes out of sight
- ✓ Floor and walls around washer and dryer are clean
- ✓ Laundry area is brightly lit
- ✓ All pipes and connections are in working order
- ✓ Vacuum, sweep, and dust basement



# The Basement/ Laundry

Lasting Impressions...



- ✓ All interior doors wide open to create a sense of spaciousness
- ✓ Unfinished basement has freshly painted walls
- ✓ Colorful area rugs in basement and in laundry area
- ✓ Plants, even artificial greenery, in laundry area
- ✓ Laundry has a “drying rack”
- ✓ Owner’s manuals for appliances conveniently placed so buyer can check them
- ✓ An “interrupted” board game laid out on a table in a “Recreation Room”
- ✓ A sofa, two comfortable chairs and a coffee table arranged in front of a television. A warm blanket or throw folded in the corner of the sofa. A bowl of popcorn and a DVD or video placed on the table

## Basement/Laundry Room

Your Personal To Do List

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# The Last Minute Checklist

- ✓ Clear away any litter from in front of your house
- ✓ Make sure all outside bikes, toys, and gardening implements are in their proper places
- ✓ Remove any pet debris
- ✓ Garage is empty of vehicles and garage door is shut
- ✓ (Winter) Snow and ice removed from sidewalks
- ✓ Trash cans are not causing the garage to smell
- ✓ Garage floor is swept
- ✓ All lights are on in each room and in the basement
- ✓ Start a fire in the fireplace, only if someone is home
- ✓ No lingering odors in the house
- ✓ Start coffee brewing in the kitchen
- ✓ Turn on soft music in the living room
- ✓ There is an unobstructed path through the house
- ✓ Open all interior doors
- ✓ Open the curtains and roll-up any blinds
- ✓ The house is at a comfortable temperature
- ✓ Vacuum and dust, if there is time.
- ✓ Close TV cabinet doors in the living room
- ✓ Remove any glasses and plates of food from rooms
- ✓ Put away any clutter in hallways, or on staircases
- ✓ Make sure there is space in entry closet to hang coats
- ✓ Remove any dead flowers from floral arrangements
- ✓ If china buffet has interior lights, turn them on

- ✓ Make sure kitchen appliances are spotless
- ✓ Take out any kitchen garbage
- ✓ Check that the pet "eating area" is clean
- ✓ Clear the countertops
- ✓ Put out new dish towels and tea towels and placemats on the kitchen table
- ✓ Clear all dirty dishes into the dishwasher
- ✓ Personal items are hidden from view in the bathrooms
- ✓ Put out new bathroom towels
- ✓ Tubs and sinks are clean
- ✓ Shower curtains are pulled back
- ✓ Toilet seats are down
- ✓ Beds are made
- ✓ Clothing is put away
- ✓ Personal items are put away off the bedroom dressers
- ✓ Toys are picked up in children's bedrooms
- ✓ Turn off any televisions
- ✓ Turn off any radios
- ✓ Turn off dishwasher
- ✓ Turn off washing machine and/or dryer
- ✓ All "Lasting Impressions" are in place
- ✓ Don't forget the pets
- ✓ Don't forget the children
- ✓ **Relax. Go somewhere and have fun!!**

## **Broker with Buyers on the way!**

If you can't vacate the house while your agent is showing it, stay unobtrusively in the background or better yet, out of sight. Your presence may make the buyer uncomfortable and keep them from making honest comments about the house. If possible, make arrangements for pets to be completely out of the house during showings too. Your dog may not like strangers in the house and not all buyers are pet friendly either. You don't want nervous buyers rushing through the house because your pet makes them uncomfortable.

# Title Insurance **Basics**

## **What is Title Insurance?**

It is protection against loss if a defect is found in the title to the real estate property you own.

## **Why do you need Title Insurance?**

Having title insurance can save you money, time, and trouble... even your home. It is like a safety net for your property.

## **Who is covered?**

When you buy property, you are commonly required to buy a Lender's Title Insurance Policy. This covers the outstanding balance of the mortgage for the lender, but does not protect you.

As a buyer, you have the option of purchasing an Owner's Title Insurance Policy to protect your interest in the property. It will give you peace of mind and maximum protection in case there is a claim against your home.

## **How much does title insurance cost?**

You pay a one-time premium for an Owner's Title Insurance Policy. Most Lenders require a new Lenders Title Insurance Policy at the time of a new mortgage.

Costs vary from state to state. Ask about simultaneous issue on the purchase of an Owners policy – it can usually get you a discounted rate.

## **A First American Title Insurance Company Eagle Owner's Policy protects you and your home.**

You get a lot of security and  
Peace of mind for a small price.

For more information, please contact your closing agent.





*First American Title*<sup>TM</sup>