

Planning to sell... *a homeowner's checklist*

How to Prepare your Home:

So you're planning to sell your home. You and your real estate broker have decided on a price, based on current market values, but your home will sell faster, and bring a higher price, if it shows well. Potential buyers will get the best impression if your home is clean, neat, uncluttered, in good repair, light, airy, fragrant, and quiet. This checklist will help you get your home ready to show.

Here are a few general guidelines:

CLEAN EVERYTHING. Cleanliness signals to a buyer that the home has been well cared for and is most likely in good repair. A messy or dirty home will cause prospective buyers to notice every flaw.

UNCLUTTER YOUR HOME BEFORE YOU SHOW IT. Have a garage sale. Empty closets. Throw away what you can't sell. The less "stuff" in and around a home, the roomier it will seem.

LET THE LIGHT IN. Raise the shades. Open the blinds. Pull back the curtains. Put brighter bulbs in all the lamps (but not bright enough to cause a glare). Bright, open rooms feel larger and more inviting. Dark rooms feel small and gloomy.

LET FRESH AIR IN. Get rid of odors that may be unfamiliar or unpleasant. People are most often offended by odors from tobacco, pets, cooking, and musty or sour laundry. Fresh flowers and potpourri can be used to your advantage. Other smells that attract positive attention include fresh baked bread and cinnamon.

FIX ANYTHING THAT IS BROKEN. This includes plumbing, electrical systems, and switches, windows, TV antennas, screens, doors, and fences; if it can't be fixed, replace it or get rid of it (no window screens are better than broken ones).

A buyer will make a much lower offer if your house is in disrepair and will probably still insist that everything be fixed before taking occupancy. You're better off if you leave potential buyers no reason to offer less than you are asking.

SEND PETS AWAY or secure them away from the house when prospective buyers are coming. You never know if people will be annoyed or intimidated by your pets or even allergic to them. And you never want a prospective buyer to have to avoid animal droppings.

SEND THE KID'S TO GRANDMA'S or take them on a walk around the block. Children can be noisy and distracting to someone interested in looking at a home.

PAINT. There's nothing that improves the value of a home for a lower cost than a fresh coat of paint. And it's so often easier to paint a room than it is to scrub it. Stick with neutral colors - off-white is the safest. Be sure to avoid black, violet, and pink.

KEEP NOISE DOWN. Silence is a restful sound that offends no one. Turn off the TV and radio. Soft instrumental music is fine but avoid vocals. If necessary, close the windows to eliminate any street noise.

FIX SQUEAKY FLOORBOARDS. Don't run any noisy equipment like a vacuum cleaner or table saw while people are looking at your home, and if possible, ask your neighbors to avoid irksome noises.

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This **checklist** will help you get your home ready to show

✓ EXTERIOR, Replace, repair, and/or paint any damages:
Plaster
Wood siding
Trim
Rain gutters
Shutters
Doors
Window frames
Glazing
Screens
Hardware
Fences/gates
Outdoor lighting
✓ CLEAN/WASH
Siding
Windows
Screen
Outdoor BBQ
AC unit
Pool/Spa
✓ PUT 100-WATT LIGHT BULBS IN:
Porch Lights
Carport
Garage
Clean around service areas/trash cans
Haul away rubbish
Straighten woodpile
Repair leaky faucets
Clean up pet droppings
Paint or varnish doors
Polish door hardware
Make sure doorbell/knocker works
Paint or replace street numbers on house
Make sure septic tank is odor free
Clean oil stains from driveway/street
Patch/reseal driveway if necessary
✓ CLOSETS
Keep closets clean and free of clutter
Throw out or pack away nonessentials
Adjust/repair sliding doors
Lubricate sliding door hardware
Paint, if needed

✓ LANDSCAPING
Mow/edge lawn regularly
Aerate/feed lawn
Overseed bare spots in lawn
Water lawn regularly
Remove/replace dead plants
Prune overgrown/diseased/damaged shrubs
Prune or remove shrubs/trees blocking view from windows (unless view is undesirable)
Stake up any sagging trees/shrubs
Keep flower beds free of weeds
Trim around base of trees/walls/fences
Repair or remove any broken or damaged landscape accessories such as:
Fences
Walls Gazebos
Fountains
Trellises
Planters
Other
Replace any broken stepping stones
Adjust any sprinkler system; repair any broken/leaky heads
Install fences or shrubs to hide any unsightly views
✓ ALL ROOMS, Clean especially around:
Doors
Windows
Light switches
Baseboards
Chair rails
Wash lace curtains and have draperies cleaned if necessary
Remove or pull back dark curtains
Lubricate window slides (soap for wood silicon or a candle stump for metal)
Make sure doors open smoothly
Clean ceiling light fixtures
Check for cobwebs in all corners
Fix any scratches in wooden floors
Replace worn/broken flooring
Remove or replace worn carpet
Use area rugs where needed
Empty wastebaskets
Make the beds
Fluff the pillows

✓ KITCHEN
Keep dishes and food out of sight
Clean appliances
Clean range hood, including light bulbs
Clean behind appliances
Keep floor clean
Clean light fixture
Make sure all electrical outlets work
Eliminate cooking odors
Deodorize garbage disposal, dishwasher, and refrigerator
Repair faucets
Put fresh shelf paper in cabinets
Organize cupboards
Clean out under sink
Replace garbage disposal gasket to reduce noise
✓ BATHROOMS, Keep them spotlessly clean:
Shine mirrors
Keep wastebaskets empty and clean
Clean out cabinets and remove nonessentials
Keep fresh, clean towels on towel racks
Clean shower door – if sliding door, keep track well lubricated
Remove soap residue, mildew and mold from sink/tub/shower
Remove stains from porcelain sink tub toilet
Replace torn/moldy shower curtain
Clean tile grout
Make sure toilet flushes properly – replace mechanism if necessary
Clean exhaust fan/heater – replace if broken or noisy
✓ GARAGE/CARPORT/SHED
Install 100-watt light bulb
Keep area clean/uncluttered
Hang up/put away tools
Clear away any cobwebs
Remove oil/paint stains from floor
Adjust tension rod to eliminate sag from overhead garage door
Lubricate/adjust/repair garage door opener
Paint if needed

✓ LAUNDRY AREA
Clean out area behind washer/dryer
Eliminate any mildew odors
✓ BASEMENT
Eliminate any signs of dampness
Check for and eliminate cracks
✓ HEATING/AIR CONDITIONING UNIT
Vacuum
Replace filter
Clean intake vent
Remove any stored items

If at least 75 percent of the items above have been checked off and your home is realistically priced, expect to make a sale.

- ✓ Make sure the temperature in your home is comfortable – keep it cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. It's cooler outside and you have a fireplace, a nice fire will make your home seem cozy and inviting.
- ✓ Be available in case prospective buyers have questions, but don't crowd them.
- ✓ Provide an exhaustive written list of the features of your home.
- ✓ Answer questions professionally and truthfully, but don't volunteer information.
- ✓ Know the distance to schools and shopping centers.
- ✓ Let the home and the salesperson do most of the selling.
- ✓ Refer any prospect that calls or comes by to your broker for pre-screening and pre-qualification as well as for your own safety.
- ✓ Provide a home warranty and promote it. (First American has home warranty policies available in Arizona, California, Nevada, Washington and Texas.)
- ✓ Tell your real estate agent all about the home-good and bad. Let the professional decide how to handle negatives and features or highlight the positives.