



Getting your home ready to sell

If you are planning to put your house on the market, you will want your property to look its best. By increasing the "show ability" of your home, you may increase its sale ability and profitability. Nothing attracts potential buyers to a house quite like spaciousness, good housekeeping and a home in good condition.

Conversely dirt, lack of light and space or a home that requires a lot of repairs can deter a prospect. There are many things you can do to enhance the sale ability of your house.

Your Home's Exterior

Concentrate on the exterior first. A fresh coat of paint will make the house cleaner looking. Before painting, scrape any blistered or peeling paint, repair gutters and down spouts and replace wood showing dry rot. If the entire house doesn't need a paint job, paint only the front shutters and windows.

Make sure the lawn is well manicured. For weeds and flower beds remove and replace dead plants and trees. Water the garden regularly during growing season. With desert landscaping, make sure that no underlying plastic is exposed, that rocks and sand are tidy and that weeds and grass are removed.

Check the patio and walkway for broken paving stones. Remove overflowing trash cans and children's toys from the driveway. See that the garage door opens freely and if you have an automatic door opener, make sure it is in good working order.

A nice display of outdoor furniture on a patio looks appealing. If necessary, borrow some furniture from a friend to enhance the "show ability" of your property. If you have a swimming pool, keep the water clean, hose dust and cobwebs from filtration equipment and store chemicals and tools neatly away.

Clean windows until they sparkle. For extra dirty windows, try vinegar or ammonia. Repair or replace torn or bent screens or any cracked or broken panes. Pay attention to foliage near a window. A window framed in ivy can give a warm, homey feeling but cut it back if the foliage is restricting the light coming into the room.

Paint the front door if needed. You may wish to use a colour different from that of your house so that the entrance stands out. All doors with holes should be repaired. One method of repair short of replacement is to cover a hole with a mirror or piece of paneling. Check to see that all doors open and close freely including closet doors and patio or sliding glass doors.

Inside your home

With just a few minor repairs and decorative ideas you can spruce up the interior of a home. A cluttered look in the living room implies lack of organization. Too much furniture or too much stuff can prevent a prospect from appreciating the room's true features. The least expensive way to improve "show ability" of your home is to open up as much space as possible. Overstuffed rooms and closets give the impression of being smaller than they really are.

Open up storage areas by getting rid of items you're not using. With counters and cabinets, overcrowding gives the impression of inadequate space in the bathroom and kitchen.

As with exterior painting, nothing freshens up a room like a new coat of paint. Patch all major holes in wallboard and plaster before you paint. Patch all major holes in wallboard and plaster before you paint. Outlandish colours may overwhelm a prospect.

White, beige, cream and bone are safe, conventional colours. Pastels also coordinate easily with most furniture. If you have a fireplace, make it the focal point of the room. Add a wood or marble mantel, or enclose the opening with a glass door.

Loose floor tiles should be cemented firmly in place: missing or damaged pieces of tile should be replaced. Don't forget to polish and wax your floors if needed. Steam cleaning is the best solution for soiled carpets; shampooing seldom does the job. If pet odors are present, clean the carpet some time before your home is placed on the market to be sure odors have been eliminated.

The atmosphere of a house should be airy and bright. Raise the blinds and pull back the drapes. If showing in the evening, leave on the porch light and any outdoor or garden lighting, plus room lighting.

Every light socket in and around the house should have a good bulb of adequate wattage. Repair or replace wall switches, outlets, and light fixtures that don't work. If you are not fully competent to handle these repairs, call in a professional electrician.

Fewer places in the home can get dirty as fast as the bathroom. Vanity, sink, faucet hardware and mirrors are the focal points. But don't forget to clean up soap residue in a shower, a moldy shower curtain, accumulated dirt in the track of a sliding shower door, stained toilet bowls and dirt on a battered bathmat. Badly chipped or irreversibly stained sinks and tubs should be re-enameled, patched or replaced.

Like bathrooms, kitchens are a constant battle to keep clean. Most buyers will inspect this area carefully so extra time invested here is well spent. Clean the stove inside and out, replace badly stained or corroded reflector plates under the heating elements on the electric range tops.

Try to eliminate all potential sources of bad odors. Flowers add colour and a pleasing scent to a room. Replace all used towels with fresh ones before a showing. When the house is being shown, keep dirty laundry in the utility room, garage or storage area; this applies especially to a diaper pail. As a first step, move the cat's litter box out of the house. You may want to remove your pets entirely when showing your home. Some people are allergic to animals and nobody likes muddy paw prints on a clean suit or dress. Dirty ashtrays are both unsightly and a source of objectionable odor to non-smokers. Keep them clean.

Finally, remember most people will not relax and inspect a house closely if the owners are present. So try to arrange to turn your house over to a real estate salesperson and be absent during the showing.