



PLANNING TO SELL THE A homeowner's checklist 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 may 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, 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.

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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