

Home Listing Prep Guide



WORLD IMPACT
Real Estate



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Home Listing Prep Guide

When you prepare to place your home on the market for sale it becomes a product. Just like any product on the shelves at your local store it has features & benefits, pluses & minuses, and there are other products to compare yours to. To gain an edge in your marketplace you must be priced right and look better than the competition. Sometimes it is difficult to think of your home as a mere product, but it helps to think that way so that you can get top dollar for your property and sell in a reasonable amount of time.

When you sell your home, you are going to have to move. When you move, you are going to have to pack. Most of the principles of staging just mean that you are going to pack up some of your things early. It is a little bit of work, but you are going to have to do it anyway- so let's do it now so that you can get top dollar for your property.

In 15 Seconds...Your home will make its First Impression.

People make snap decisions in new situations. This is especially true during a showing of a home they are considering. In preparing your home for the market, we need to put this trait of human nature to work for us. Your home needs to make an impression such that the snap judgments of potential buyers are favorable. During the showing, the buyer will make judgments about your home as they view it through the "lens" formed in that first 15 seconds.

Remember, people judge what they cannot see by what they can see. There is so much of what a home has to offer that you cannot see. So we need to make sure that what can be seen is presented perfectly. That's the purpose behind this booklet.



4 Factors that Control the Sale of Any Property:

- 1. Price**
- 2. Terms:** This refers to market conditions: Interest rates, employment levels and confidence. We do not control any of these but they impact us as we market your home.
- 3. Marketing:** Our team will be working very hard on the marketing for your property.
- 4. Condition:** This can be as important as price. If condition is not model home perfect, price will have to be adjusted. If you have ever been in a model or show home, you know how great they look. When homes have that kind of appeal, they sell quickly and usually for the highest price possible. Another interesting characteristic of good- looking homes is that, usually, the transaction is remarkably free of problems.

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IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO HAVE PRICE AND CONDITION PERFECTED WHEN YOUR PROPERTY GOES ON THE MARKET.

Implement the suggestions in this guide as soon as possible because just like you cannot duplicate the first kiss, you cannot duplicate the debut of your property on the market. After the initial surge of interest, the only people to look at it will be those buyers new to the marketplace. The initial impression we make with your property is critical.

- ❖ Included in this prep guide are multiple **checklists** for marking items as they are complete.
- ❖ If you have a **repair** list or know of items that need to be addressed in your home, do them up front. Do not let the buyer wonder if you have cared for your home. Fix anything that needs addressed upfront and avoid headaches later.
- ❖ I can help you. With **my experience in the marketing** and sale of homes can guide you in making low costs, high value enhancements to the positioning of your property.



- ❖ **The presence and stature**, i.e. the impression of your home as you drive up the road or the driveway is important. Any agent will tell you that one of the worst things that happens to them in the course of showing property to qualified buyers is to drive up the a home and have them say, "I don't want to look at this house." This impression is nearly impossible to overcome.



Let's Get Started on the checklists...

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THE GENERAL EXTERIOR OF THE HOUSE:

Start by standing in the front of your home with this checklist. Jot down anything that leaps out at you. Then, walk around the outside of your home with this checklist in hand.

THE FRONT YARD:

- ☐ Check your flower beds, lawn areas and driveway for weeds. It is better to pull them than to use chemicals. Chemicals take a long time to work and the dead and dying weeds look awful as they go from yellow to brown. Only use herbicides to maintain these areas once the main weeding has been complete.
- ☐ In the fall, be sure to rake leaves from your lawn and from planting beds. This may need to be done every couple of days.
- ☐ Inspect your property and remove all trash cans, discarded wood scraps, and trash. Re-stack wood piles if necessary and remove all storage containers, children's toys and other unnecessary objects.
- ☐ Make sure windows are spotless. This includes frames around the windows, the sills and shutters.
- ☐ Consider painting or cleaning any ornamental fences, light posts and railings.
- ☐ Vacuum out and clean the glass on all of the exterior light fixtures.
- ☐ If you have a covered entryway, add a bench or attractive set of chairs to help people imagine themselves relaxing here. If these items already exist, make sure they are clean, inviting and some place a person could actually sit.
- ☐ Clean up, rake and check any shoreline or beach areas.
- ☐ Keep driveway swept. If not paved, rake and add more gravel if needed.
- ☐ Clean gutters & wash or paint the trim if needed.
- ☐ Consider an exterior low pressure washing.
- ☐ Shrubs and landscaping should enhance, not hide, the home. Shrubs should be lowered to, at most, the height of the home.
- ☐ As a rule of thumb, all tree limbs should be far enough from the ground so you can walk under them.
- ☐ Flowers add color and beauty to the home. Flowerbeds should be clean, and look good in all seasons. Make sure all beds have a sharp edge and are free of leaves and debris.
- ☐ Keep the lawn mowed and neatly edged. A perfectly mowed lawn does wonders for presence. You may have to mow twice per week during growing season.
- ☐ Aerate and seed any bare or thin spots in your lawn. Consider using sod if necessary.
- ☐ Arrange for a lawn fertilization company to set up an accelerated program to keep your lawn a deep green color and weed free.
- ☐ Mulch will do wonders to boost the presence and stature of your home at any time of the year. Always make sure all beds are freshly mulched. During the winter, at the very least, front yard and approach beds should be mulched.
- ☐ Mow, open up and clear any pathways to water or other Amenities on your property. This includes trimming low hanging branches. It is important to remove these items as they should not line the path. (NOTE : Now is NOT a good time for view enhancement unless you have a valid vista maintenance permit. An enforcement order is like a lien on your property and is not something you want as it goes on the market.)



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THE GENERAL EXTERIOR- FRONT DOOR

- ☐ Consider a fresh coat of paint or varnish on the front door. At the very least, clean the door and hardware.
- ☐ Make sure your doorbell not only functions but is not cracked or broken.
- ☐ Keep your porch swept.
- ☐ Have an attractive welcome mat for people to wipe their feet. A second mat inside is important during bad weather.
- ☐ Make sure the mailbox is clean, consider cost of rust proof paint.
- ☐ Verify house numbers are large and visible. We want to make sure buyers and agents are able to find your home.

INSIDE APPEAL

You see your home through your heart. To get the highest price, you have to appeal to potential buyers who will see your home through cold, calculating eyes. If buyers have the choice between two comparable properties that are similar in price, they will choose the one in the best condition.

- ☐ Get the home aired out. Someone who lives in a place is the last person to notice any peculiar odor that may be obvious to visitors. However, if you do notice any bad odor, search for and destroy its source.
- ☐ Wash all the windows inside and out. Clean the window sills and the bottoms of the window jams. Wash the blinds and vacuum the drapes.
- ☐ If your carpets look dirty or have not been cleaned in over a year, clean them. Buyers only know what they see .. not the way it is going to be. Unless your home is a “fixer”, badly worn or very out of date carpets should be replaced before coming on the market. Offering a buyer a credit to pick their own new carpet or discount off the price is far less effective and usually ends up costing more money and slowing down the selling process. Pick a light colored short plush or Berber carpet. Realtor beige is a safe color.
- ☐ Clean or polish all floors.
- ☐ Clean all the closets, cabinets, and drawers. Get rid of things you have not used in the past 5 years and pack everything that you have not used the past year (this will also give you a head start on moving).
- ☐ Make sure the closets look like they have enough room to hold additional items. Make sure doors do not stick and nothing will fall out when opened. Get everything off the floor (unless very neatly arranged) and do not have the shelves piled to the ceiling. If necessary, box up off-season clothes (this is another head start on moving). All coats should be facing in the same direction.
- ☐ There should not be too much furniture in the rooms. You will be far better off selecting the pieces that look best and putting the others in the garage or in storage.
- ☐ Make sure fireplace mantels are not overloaded with items on display. A couple of well-placed items like a vase or small flower arrangement are all that is needed.



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- ☐ Make the fireplace a focal point. Arrange seating to face the fireplace. Remove the television, if large and in a formal living room.
- ☐ Clear the ashes out of any fireplace if it is not being used.
- ☐ Clear out family photos and all other items that say "You do not live here" to a potential buyer. Fill any holes and touch up paint from taking them down.
- ☐ Put maximum safe wattage of light bulbs in all fixtures.
- ☐ Clean all wall switches and replace broken plates.
- ☐ Make sure that any pull-down staircase is strong enough to be used safely. (Be sure there is a working light in the attic).
- ☐ Consider whether the posters currently in your children's rooms are likely to offend any buyers. If so, store those posters for now.
- ☐ Remove all ashtrays. All smoking must be outside while property is on the market.
- ☐ Invest in some new and luxurious bedding (comforter, sheets, and accent pillows). They will improve the look of the bedrooms and can be taken with you when you move.
- ☐ If your house is the least bit dated, consider changing items that will increase your home's desirability such as dated wallpaper, light fixtures, etc.



KITCHEN:

The kitchen may be the most important room in the home. Clean this room like your sale depends on it because it does!

- ☐ Clean the oven and keep it clean.
- ☐ After cleaning the range, put new drip pans under the burners or foil over the old ones.
- ☐ Clean around the seal of the dishwasher door.
- ☐ Look at the kitchen as if you were a health home inspector. Paying particular attention to: Garbage area, Cracks, and Corners
- ☐ Make certain you get rid of all junk.
- ☐ Remove disorganized items that have accumulated in the kitchen.
- ☐ Keep everything put away that can be put away, especially on counters.
- ☐ Check the cabinet doors and door handles for fingerprints.

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LAUNDRY ROOM:

- ☐ Put soaps and supplies in cabinets or containers.
- ☐ Keep counters and sink clean and empty.
- ☐ Take special care with lighting. Upgrade wattage in light fixtures if safe to do so.

GARAGE:

- ☐ Clean and sweep garage. Consider painting walls flat white and floors light gray.
- ☐ Store any dangerous tools and arrange others neatly. Use containers and tool boxes as necessary.
- ☐ Vacuum pipes around heating system which are visible.
- ☐ Check garage windows and screens. Windows should be clean and screens free of rips and tears. Windows should be checked for cracks and holes. Replace as needed.
- ☐ Remove all “junk” from the attic, basement, closet, garage and tool shed. Large storage areas appeal to buyers. Rent a storage unit and clear out as much as possible to make your home feel open and roomy.

BATHROOMS:

- ☐ Repair all leaky faucets.
- ☐ Caulk bathtubs, showers, and sinks.
- ☐ Coordinate towels in one or two colors. Fold clean towels in thirds and hang onto racks each day. Purchase new towels if necessary.
- ☐ Clear all items out of shower stalls and tubs except for necessities.
- ☐ Clean or replace shower curtains.
- ☐ Clean shower door, if necessary. Use solution of one part muriatic acid to 10 parts water (use goggles when mixing), then scrub with plastic scouring pad and rinse clean.
- ☐ Fresh flower arrangements do wonders for a bathroom, both in appearance and aroma. No plug-in air fresheners or scented candles.
- ☐ If you have pets, be sure to clean around their food areas and empty litter boxes frequently.

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Professional Real Estate Photography Checklist

By now, most will agree that buyers/agents shop for home on the Internet. Making a good impression with photos taken by a professional is as important as ever. A professional shoot will help sell your property faster and at a higher price. This guide will outline the things you need to do before your real estate photographer arrives and you're ready to show your home.

Many of the points listed here may seem like common-sense, but experience has shown that they are worth mentioning.

The Exterior of the Home:

We'll start with the outside of the home first because the image of the front of the house is typically the lead for the listing. This makes it one of the most important photos to get at its best. Most buyers select homes to view by a process of elimination when reviewing online listings. You don't want the property eliminated before the potential buyer sees the rest of the images and read the home description.

The assumption is made that you have prepared the home for sale. That means the trees are pruned, required painting is completed or touched up, the driveway is power washed and major repairs are finished (see the checklists in this guide).

- ☐ Clear the roof and gutters of branches, twigs, leaves and other debris.
- ☐ All windows should be clean and free of excessive dust, dirt, or streaks.
- ☐ The lawn should be freshly mowed the morning of the shoot, or the day before, and well-manicured, rake and bag the clippings. Be sure to edge along driveways, sidewalks, paths, etc.
- ☐ If your lawn is suffering from mole mounds, rake the piles of dirt and reveal as much green grass as possible. At certain times of the year these buggers dig deeper tunnels and leave piles of dirt behind. Stay on top of this daily if the shoot is coming.
- ☐ Clear away all trash or items that would make the property look cluttered and move the trash containers to the garage. The same applies to hoses and winding apparatuses used to store them.
- ☐ Any children's toys that can be moved to the garage should be moved. Swing sets and playground-type structures could be a good selling point if in good working condition.
- ☐ Grass or vegetation growing in the driveway, patio, or sidewalks should be removed. Tend to the weeds in flower beds, garden or mulch areas.
- ☐ The sidewalks, stairs, driveway and patio should be free of stains. This is usually accomplished with a power washer. At a minimum, sweep all flat surfaces free of debris.
- ☐ Pools and hot tubs should be uncovered and freshly skimmed of leaves and debris. Insure all lights are in working order for evening or night shots.
- ☐ Make sure the letters of the mailbox and house are straight and in good condition.
- ☐ When the photographer arrives, be sure all vehicles are removed from the driveway and if possible, away from the front of the house. There are two reasons for this. First, an unobstructed view is needed to get that perfect shot of the front of the house. Second, when shooting inside, if the blinds are open or windows uncovered, the view from the window will be seen in the photos.
- ☐ If it is a rainy, cloudy, or overcast day, I will ask the photographer to reschedule the shoot for a clear day to get the best outdoor shots.



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The Interior:

Moving into the house, it is helpful if the home tends to look like a model home that was decorated by a professional, even if it wasn't. Consider a professional staging company if the home is unfurnished. This can make for a busy time before the shoot. Allow enough time to complete this step prior to the photo shoot.



- ☐ Generally the house should be free of clutter and it is assumed that all repairs to walls and fixtures have been made. The home should be freshly cleaned, making sure to get rid of cobwebs and to clean the light fixtures.



- ☐ Make sure all light fixtures, including lamps are plugged in with working light bulbs.
- ☐ Kitchen counters should be free of all appliances. Add accent porcelain art pieces or plant arrangements for decoration and to add color. Vases or other decorative items work.
- ☐ Items unrelated to the use of a room should be removed.
- ☐ All surfaces should be free of an excessive amount of "stuff." This would include photos of family and friends and paperwork stacked on desks or tables.

Unfurnished portions of the house, garage, and laundry room are typically not shown in listings. Most selling agents can give advice as you prepare the house for shoot day and showing. Remember the photographer does not have time to assist with rearranging or to wait while you make changes. It is best to consult with the agent prior to the shoot

- ☐ Items belonging to pets should be removed (toys, food and water bowls. Friendly pets, while well meaning can get in the way of a photo shoot.
- ☐ Arrange for pets to stay with a friend, neighbor or family member.
- ☐ Small children should be tended to so as not to be in the way of the shoot and all toys should be put away. High chairs should be placed in the garage.
- ☐ Bathrooms are an important part of the presentation. They should be free of clutter. There should be wall decorations and matching towels hung neatly on the racks.



- ☐ Bedrooms look best with just window treatments, bedroom sets, and wall decorations. Too much furniture (or oversized furniture) can make the rooms look small so just stick to the minimums on furniture.
- ☐ Minimum on furniture in the family and living rooms as well. To make these areas look spacious, move extra furniture off site or to an area not being photographed.
- ☐ All surfaces should be freshly dusted or cleaned.

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Showtime

Your property looks great and you have a scheduled showing appointment. Here's how to get ready quickly.

- ☐ Open all drapes and window shades.
- ☐ Open all doors between rooms to give an inviting feeling.
- ☐ Turn on all lights including lamps.
- ☐ Turn off the TV.
- ☐ Look around for clutter, including newspapers and magazines and clear it away. ‘
- ☐ See that the kitchen counters are free of unnecessary items and that any dirty dishes are put away.
- ☐ Remember to take out the trash. If you have pets, get them out of the way and take care of their food and/or litter area.
- ☐ Make sure beds are made and clothes are picked up.
- ☐ Verify that the bathroom is straightened up: toilet lids down, counter tops cleared off, towels hung neatly, etc.
- ☐ If it is fireplace season or you have a gas log, light the fire as buyers arrive.
- ☐ NO air fresheners or scented candles. They can aggravate allergies and create an image of covering up or masking issues.
- ☐ Keep your home well light. Buyers will drive by at odd hours and you want your home to stand out. Keep ample lights on-both inside and out-until at least 9:00p.m. every day.

Whenever you leave the house in the morning or during the day, please leave it as if you are sure it is going to be shown. Yes, it is difficult sometimes and it might even mean you have to get up a little earlier in order to take care of these important items, but you never know when the right people are going to look at your home. This way, you will always be ready for them!

Please try to accommodate all showings. Buyers tend to look at multiple properties during each outing and may find another before you are able to reschedule.

If your electric bill does not go up while your house is on the market- you are doing something wrong! While on the market, your house will have the lights left on in case of a showing and a comfortable temperature should be maintained.

Keep pets out of the way during showings-preferably out of the house. Many people are uncomfortable around animals and may even be allergic to them.

During a showing, leave the premises. Take a short break while your home is being shown. Buyers are intimidated when sellers are present and tend to hurry through the house. Let the buyers be at ease, and let the agents do their jobs.

Agents should leave the home exactly as it was when they arrived. They do not know if you have another showing after they leave. So, if you would like certain lights turned off or blinds closed, please leave a note at your home.

