

*A prospective buyer's first impression of your home can make — or break — a successful sale. A poorly maintained lawn, blistered paint on a windowsill, even a cluttered basement can cause buyers to move on to the next home on their list.*

*So take a little time to make certain that buyers love what they see at first glance.*

*The rewards might be substantial. After all, your home is usually your most significant asset. Here's a brief checklist of steps to take before that first client arrives at your door.*

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Home's Appeal!



# EXTERIOR

Look at your property from the buyers' vantage point as they approach in their vehicle. If the mailbox is the first thing they see, it should be free of dents, clean, and fresh in appearance. Are trees or shrubs along the drive properly trimmed back? Is the lawn mowed, hedge trimmed, garden pruned? If you are selling your home in the fall, try to keep the leaves raked and the lawn cleared of other debris.

Next, that all-important first critical look at the house itself. Put yourself in the buyers' shoes. Stand in the driveway and imagine you are seeing your home for the first time. Make certain the walkway to the front door is swept, that there are no children's toys scattered about.

See that the roof and gutters are clean, windows washed, doorknobs gleaming and welcome mat in place. If you discover any obvious signs of disrepair — blistered or peeling paint, rusted drain spouts, or missing shingles — ask your Realtor® whether you should have them fixed before showing the home.

# INTERIOR

One word of restraint: do not undertake any major redecorating unless it is absolutely necessary. That beautiful new Berber carpet in the living room and Tyrannosaurus Rex wallpaper in the children's bedroom may not be to the buyers' liking. They may see it as decoration they'll have to replace when the home is theirs. In most instances you are not likely to recoup the added expense of any such work.

- ◆ Repair or replace worn-out and broken accessories. Badly chipped tiles on the kitchen counter, a broken hand railing on the staircase, or noisy hot water heater create a negative impression of the home's overall condition. The rather minimal expense of eliminating these problems is usually worthwhile.

- ◆ Clean up! It doesn't have to be boot camp spotless, but your home should be generally clean and uncluttered. Wash and wax hardwood floors, vacuum carpets thoroughly, remove grease and grime from walls. Clean kitchen and bathroom tiles. Polish and dust your furniture, and vacuum, if necessary.

- ◆ Make certain all faucets, sinks and toilet bowls are cleaned and properly functioning.

- ◆ Thin out closets. If your clothes are packed to the rafters, place enough in temporary storage to give the impression that your home has adequate closet space.

- ◆ Garage and basement: Get rid of the junk! You may think you can't live without your collection of 25 fishing rods, but your buyers will want to see a neat, orderly space with enough room for their favorite odds and ends. Also, put a fresh coat of white paint on the walls. It's a minor expense and it goes a long way toward creating the right feeling of freshness.

- ◆ Furniture: Take an hour to visit an apartment complex model. Note how these typically small rooms are made to appear larger than they are, with very little furniture. Traffic patterns are open and accessible; doors to bathrooms often removed. Apply those lessons at home. Remove two or three chairs, an end table and lamp, or other objects that are not absolutely necessary in a room. Make sure your own traffic patterns within and between rooms are generous.

# TEAM WITH YOUR REALTOR®

Your Realtor® typically has a wealth of experience in every aspect of home selling. Take advantage of his or her knowledge and work together for a quick, successful sale:

- ◆ Ask your Realtor® what else you might do to frame your home in the best light.
- ◆ Be sure to make your home available for showings.

Your Realtor® spends considerable time and effort to advertise, qualify prospects, show the property, and ultimately negotiate the sale. Try to accommodate requested appointments whenever possible.

- ◆ Compile a short packet of information on your neighborhood: local schools, transit systems, parks, libraries, municipal services, etc. Also, be certain to include the cost and availability of day care, as prospective buyers may well have children.

# SHOWING TIPS

When your Realtor® calls to bring a prospective buyer to your home, prompt attention to last-minute details can enhance your home's appeal:

- ◆ Straighten up minor messes — newspapers to the garage, china and silverware in cupboards, ironing board back in the closet.
- ◆ Clear tables. That collection of golf magazines may be handy on the cocktail table, but it creates an unwanted air of clutter.
- ◆ Confine your pets. Some people may tremble in fear at the sight of your pet, even if it is a miniature Schnauzer; so keep dogs or cats in transport kennels in the garage or basement.
- ◆ Leave the lights on! Even your Realtor® won't necessarily remember that the switch for the recessed ceiling lights is hidden inside the foyer closet.
- ◆ Leave home whenever possible. Your Realtor® has been hired because of his or her expertise at home sales. Stay out of the way. Besides, buyers may be uncomfortable if they feel you're watching their every move.
- ◆ If you can't leave, greet your guests politely and retreat to another room. Send the kids and the dog outside. That way your Realtor® will be able to best answer questions and most effectively show your home.