

## How to Prepare Your Home for Sale

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This report has been prepared to help you avoid common mistakes made every day by well-meaning home sellers. The mistakes we see made most often are those where sellers fail to do simple things that cost almost no money, yet always make homes sell for thousands of dollars more.

### **Buyers Buy on Emotion, Not Logic**

Buying a home is an emotional decision on the part of the buyer. Often the buyer doesn't even consciously know why they like one home more than another... they just do! Decisions are made on a deep subconscious level tied into what makes them feel comfortable, safe and secure.

That's why it's so important to make sure your home looks, feels and smells its best. Remember that you're competing with many other homes for sale. Since buyers buy on emotion, let your home be the cleanest, freshest and cheeriest, and you'll have a much faster sale at a higher price.

If your home is *logically* a good value, but buyers don't feel warm and emotionally attracted to the home, you will receive lower offers. You want lots of people to say or think, "Wow! This is nice! I'd like to live here!"

### **Let's Take a Look at Five Factors That Assure Buyers Experience a *Good Feeling* When They See Your Home**

**First, The Cheer Factor:** For maximum visual effect, turn every light on, even on a sunny day. Light creates a warm, safe feeling. Open all window shades. Clean your draperies and curtains. Make sure your windows are spotlessly clean. Let the sun in and keep those lights on. Leaving all your lights on for two hours costs only about 23 cents, and makes your home look larger and more spacious.

**Second, The Access Factor:** Buyers and real estate agents are busy. They're not looking only at your home, but fitting your home into a schedule that allows them to look at other homes as well. The less flexible you are with your showing schedule, the fewer buyers will look at your home.

**Third, The Distraction Factor:** Do everything you can to minimize distractions for the buyer. Turn the TV and the loud music off. Leave soft music playing. If at all possible, make arrangements with a neighbor to take care of children or pets. If that's not possible, consider taking a walk around the block with kids and

pets while buyers browse, or simply take them outside.

**Fourth, The Décor Factor:** Tasteful and up-to-date décor is your best investment for getting a greater return on your money. Paint and new wall coverings make the whole house smell clean and neat. Faded walls and worn woodwork reduce desire. Don't tell a buyer how your home can be made to look, *show* them by making it look great. A quicker sale at a higher price will result.

Generally, you can expect to receive \$3 to \$5 back for every dollar you invest in tasteful décor. If your wall coverings, light fixtures or floor coverings are dated or an unusual color, consider replacing them with neutral colors and tones. I've seen many houses sell for thousands of dollars under value because the sellers did not want to acknowledge this problem.

Don't think that buyers have more money than you to replace carpet or fixtures. They don't. They simply buy elsewhere or will make you a low offer.

**Fifth, The Front Yard Factor:** A pleasing exterior invites inspection of the interior, since your front yard reflects the inside condition of your house. Make certain that trees are trimmed so the house can be seen from the street.

Have the grass mowed, trimmed and edged. Rake leaves. Plant flowers. Sweep walkways. Clean away debris. Wash windows. Remove parked cars. This all adds to curb appeal. If a buyer doesn't get a warm, cozy feeling when driving by, they won't ask to see the inside.

Here are additional tips:

**Storage:** All clothing, shoes, hats, accessories, tools, papers, magazines, books and personal items not contributing to the décor of the room should be stored in closets or dressers. All closets should be tidy, neat and clean. Basement storage areas should be neatly arranged.

Kitchen counters should be clean and free of any articles not contributing to the décor of the room. All magazines, books, ashtrays, food, bottles, containers, boxes, cans, toys, hobby accessories, tools, dishes, cookware, etc. should be stored in the proper cupboards, closets or storage areas.

**Closets:** The interiors of all closets should present an organized, tidy and uncluttered appearance. All unneeded or unused items should be discarded. Display your storage and utility space by removing all unnecessary accumulations in attic, stairways, basement, closets and garage.

**Basement:** Should be neat, clean, dry and tidy. All materials and tools should be stored on shelves or in cabinets. Discard as much unneeded material as possible prior to showing the house to prospective purchasers.

**Windows:** All windows should be spotlessly clean inside and out. All windowsills, as well as any space between the window and storm window should be spotlessly clean and free of any flaking or loose paint.

All windows should be in good repair with no cracks. Screens should be clean and in good condition, free of rust and holes. Any paint on glass should be removed with a razor blade prior to cleaning.

**Fixtures:** All bathroom and kitchen fixtures and counters should be sparkling clean. Polish chrome faucets and handles in the tub and sinks. All sinks, tubs, toilets and counters should be clean.

**Floors:** All flooring should be clean, and waxed if necessary. All carpeting should be very clean regardless of its age. If the carpeting has not been steam cleaned for more than two years, now is the time to do it. Basement floors should be swept and mopped.

**Doors:** All doors should be free of scotch tape, posters, decals, or stickers. All door handles should be clean and in good repair.

**Ceramic Tile:** All joints between tiles should be clean and white. Use DAP bathroom tile sealer to reseal the joint between bathtub and wall and floor.

**Walls:** All walls should be clean and free of gouges, scratches, smudges, scotch tape, posters, thumbtacks, etc. Walls should have only decorative items. Posters and paper pictures taped to walls should be removed and all evidence of the tape markings removed.

**Odor:** Nothing smells better than fresh air. On warm days, have your windows open and shades up. Make your home feel and smell bright, fresh and clean and you will have a faster sale. Make very sure that there are absolutely no pet odors.

**First Impressions:** Keep your lawn trimmed and edged, flowerbeds cultivated,

the yard clear of refuse. Winter lawn, especially in front, is a big asset.

**Fix that Faucet:** Dripping water discolors the enamel and calls attention to faulty plumbing.

**A Day With the Carpenter:** Loose doorknobs, sticking drawers and warped cabinet doors are noticed by the prospect. Have them fixed.

**The Kitchen:** Tasteful window coverings in harmony with the floor and counter tops add appeal. Keep the oven clean – it often gets inspected.

**The Bathroom:** Bright and clean bathrooms sell many homes. Keep toilet lids down. Make sure the grout/corners in the tub/shower are spotless.

**Be Aware of Odors:** People will linger in a fresh, pleasant-smelling home. Stale air, or bad odors, make them want to get out and can ruin the sale.

Before you set a first appointment for showing your home, ask your Realtor to make a quick visit to spot anything you may have overlooked. Consider writing out a checklist you can quickly refer to when prospective buyers are en route.

If you have further questions or need a referral to a top realtor call us at 713-458-3233