

Preparing Your Home For Sale

5 Tips to Ensure Your Home's Showing Is a Success

The purpose of showing your home is to hook a buyer. You want the buyers to come through your house and be impressed - so impressed in fact, that they're ready to make an offer.

You'll have one chance to make a first impression on the potential buyers and you want to make it count. Focusing on the outside is the first tip. Make sure that you don't neglect the outside of your home.

Curb appeal can make or break the odds of someone even bothering to get out of the car to come in. If they pull up and see a home with a lawn that obviously needs edging and has an unkempt flower bed, they're going to wonder what else hasn't been cared for properly.

You want the outside of your home to be spotless. Clean the siding, the windows, and the doors. Make sure there are no dirt smudges, no cobwebs and that anything that needs painting has been spiffed up.

The second tip is to take yourself out of the house. That means that you want to take out all the personal stuff. Remove the family photos from the wall or tables. You want the home to look neutral so that the potential buyers can look at your house and picture it as themselves living there.

Everything should be as neutral as possible in terms of personal items. The third tip is to pare down all the extra clutter you see at first glance. If you look around, it'll amaze you at how much stuff you've accumulated over the years.

Some of it might very well be important, but that doesn't mean that your potential buyers should see it. When you have a lot of clutter, it shrinks the living space of the house.

It makes it look and feel cramped and smaller. Many homeowners get something called house blindness. They've lived in the home for so long with the same clutter that they don't even really see it anymore.

But a stranger will always notice. So, clean out your house and make the space as big as possible. The fourth tip is that if you have a pet, no one who walks through your house should be able to notice it exists.

That means no cat litter box, no dog to jump on anyone, no food sitting around in a dish. Your home should not have any pet odors. Having a clean house that's odor free is a big selling point.

You don't want to lose a possible deal just because they can smell your pet's presence or your pet makes a bad impression. The fifth tip is to stage your home. You can hire a professional or you can do it yourself.

Stage your living areas in a way that shows off your home. You can rent furniture to make your home furnishings look good if you don't use a stager. Someone who knows how to stage a house knows how to play up the best features of your home and knows what to bring in or get rid of to make the entire house appeal to a buyer.

Increasing Curb Appeal to Sell Your Home

If you have a real estate agent, one of the first things he'll check is to see how appealing your home looks as he's driving up to it. An attractive home is one that can hook a potential buyer's interest and make him want to know more.

You want to make sure that the outside of your home's exterior is clean. It can be easy for a home that gets shade to have areas where algae can grow. Get your home power washed or do it yourself to remove anything that makes your home look dirty.

A clean exterior can boost the asking price, while a dirty one can detract from it. So, clean the siding, the brick, shutters if you have them, the front door and all the windows.

Don't forget to wash the gutters and drain pipes. Paint whatever needs painting. For some people, this means painting the wood around the windows or the door. Some people paint their garage door.

You'll want to be careful if you do that. Not all paints that say they can be used on a garage door are high quality. The paint will peel or fade in the sun and your garage door will look splotchy.

An agent will always tell sellers to make sure the yard is in good shape. This includes any side yards as well. The lawn should be neatly mowed and remain that way during the entire selling process.

You need to be sure the lawn is edged and no grass is growing in the cracks of any sidewalks that may border your home. If you have landscaping that's not appealing, you need to take it out and replace it.

Potential buyers like to see color when they pull up to a house. That means you should have flowers in the yard or in containers on the porch. Hang ferns from the porch if it would look appropriate.

Or add other splashes of color such as upscale rocking chairs with colorful cushions. You can also build or have someone build flowerboxes and fill those with colorful blooms.

Put a beautiful wreath on the front door. Make sure that any shrubs or trees have fresh mulch. If you have bare spots in your lawn, fix those. You want the lawn to look beautiful and inviting.

Look at the shape of your mailbox. Many people forget to check this, but a rusted mailbox isn't appealing. Replace an old one with an updated version and do the same with any outdoor lighting and house numbers.

Pay attention to how your fence looks. You may need to replace some panels or replace the entire fence. If your driveway has seen better days, you can get it repaired - and that's fairly inexpensive - plus it adds good curb appeal.

A real estate agent can give you a comprehensive checklist of what to make sure you take care of or you can get one yourself. You want to have someone else give their take on your curb appeal because they'll be seeing it with an unbiased point of view.

Pricing Your Home to Sell Quickly But Fairly

A good real estate agent will know how to price your home correctly. If you're selling your home yourself, you'll have to understand how vital setting the right price is.

Sometimes homeowners have the mindset that they'll set the price of the home higher than what the market value is so that they'll have some bargaining room. That's a very poor strategy because you'll be creating a situation where you're listing your home for more than it might be worth.

Potential buyers are looking for a deal. They don't want to make an offer on a \$400,000 home that's only worth \$375,000. Most buyers will move on without even looking at your home.

What you have to understand about how to price your home is that setting a certain price can determine the length of time your home will have to wait before it sells.

Any home that stays on the market for a long time can raise red flags with buyers. It can also lead to a situation where the longer your home is on the market, the more you'll end up being forced to lower the price to an amount you're reluctant to set it at.

You need to know the actual market value of your home. A three bedroom home in a popular California city will sell at a different price than a comparable three bedroom home in a rural area in Tennessee.

A homeowner may want to raise the price of the home beyond what it's worth because they did some remodeling. You'll have to be careful here, because while some upgrades can boost the home value, not all of them do.

An agent will know how to set the true market value with or without upgrades. Certain features have to be figured in when you're considering how to price your home.

Along with the square footage, things like the number of bedrooms and the number of bathrooms the place has make a difference. While it might be tempting to think that you're going to set a top tier price for your home, you have to be realistic.

This is an area that many homeowners fail at, but real estate agents excel at. Just because you think the home is perfect and has high potential to command more doesn't mean it's true.

One helpful thing that you can do to help you price your home to sell quickly at an amount that's fair for you is to look at what the home sold for originally. If the home has changed owners a couple of times over the years, look for the amount that it sold at last time.

You can find this information online using housing marketing tools. Look at the price that the home was listed for, then see how much time it was between when it was listed and when it actually sold. This will help you see what a possible fair price could be that would move the home quickly off the market.

Be Ready to Answer Common Buyer Questions About Your Home

With any type of home sale, potential buyers will always have questions they want to ask. If you're represented by a real estate agent, he or she usually knows ahead of time the kinds of questions that'll be asked because they've heard most of them in the course of their career.

But there are many common questions asked and it will be helpful for you to know the answer to them. Potential buyers usually ask how much you pay for property taxes.

While any home might have a great sale price, the amount of property taxes can add significantly to a mortgage payment. You'll often get questions on whether or not you have a homeowner's association fee.

Many HOA fees are relatively inexpensive, but in some neighborhoods, these fees can be a few hundred dollars a month. Another question that's usually asked is what the cost is to provide electricity to the home and the price of other utilities.

If an electric bill is outrageously high, that can sway a potential buyer's decision. What one family uses won't necessarily be what another family uses. If the utility bill isn't a fixed one, tell the potential buyer an average of what he or she might have to pay.

One of the main questions that buyers want to know the answer to is what the state and age of the roof is. While this information is usually in the listing description, buyers will still ask about it.

That's because replacing a roof can be an expensive endeavor - not to mention it can cause damage if it leaks. You might be asked if your home has a problem with insects like ants, spiders, roaches or if it has a problem with mice.

Even if you don't, but you did have in the past before you had the home treated, you may need to tell the buyer that. You may also get asked about home warranties.

Having a home warranty in place to cover the appliances and the heating and air that can transfer to the buyer is often a helpful selling feature because buyers will often want the appliances included in the sale.

Sometimes buyers will ask why you're selling the home. It's more of a question geared toward protecting themselves than it is a truly nosy one. You might get asked about the neighbors.

If you have a terrible neighbor, you may have to disclose that information. Potential buyers may ask you about the area - such as what the schools are like and what types of amenities are nearby.

Sometimes buyers will ask if you're open for a price negotiation because they look at properties they can't afford at the asking price, but could if it came down some.

If you're someone who wants full asking price and you know you're not going to budge from that, tell buyers there's very little wiggle room in the asking price. That way, they don't waste their time and you don't waste yours.

Highlighting the Best Features of Your House for Prospective Buyers

Your home will have certain features that will interest buyers. Whether you're selling your home yourself or using the service of a real estate agent, you need to make sure those features are showcased.

You'll want to start by ensuring that whatever home listing is used draws attention to those features. While an agent automatically knows what to put in the listing, you might not.

But some things that are considered special features are what you should highlight. You'll need to mention where the home is located and what it's located near.

For example, some young couples with school aged children are looking for homes that are close to good schools, so you'll want to highlight that. Others are looking for homes that are close to other perks like shopping, the downtown area and so on.

You'll want to highlight the amount of square footage that you have. Not only should you or your agent do this in the listing, but you need to highlight it in your home.

That means removing as much furniture as you can feasibly live without while your home sells. Take out anything that takes up space on the floor because then it makes your house look bigger and draws attention to the space.

One feature that buyers look for is the type of flooring that a house has. An agent can give suggestions on what to do, but most people prefer a hard flooring - like hardwood or tile - over carpeting.

If you have real hardwood flooring, you'll want to highlight that. Anything that's a nice upgrade or special about your home can be a best feature. If you have a double oven in the kitchen, highlight that.

This is something that appeals to buyers. They also like things such as a large pantry. Outdoor living spaces are a must among some buyers. If you have a pool, you'll want to mention that.

Feature things like decks and patios as well. If you have an outdoor kitchen, that should be a feature that's highlighted. Features that buyers look at are type and age of the roof, the air and heating unit and the windows.

Unique and spacious laundry rooms are features that appeal to home buyers and so are garages. Other features include things like good outdoor lighting and walkways.

Any feature that you or your real estate agent highlights should be in top shape. If you have a feature in your home that needs to be spruced up or replaced, do it before you list your home. You want to put the home's best foot forward so that the first impression is a good one.

Renovations Worth Making Before You Sell Your Home

When it's time to sell a house, many homeowners start thinking about sprucing up the place or doing some renovations to get the most out of the sale. While renovations are a good idea, some are more important than others.

Kitchen and bathroom renovations help a homeowner recoup the investment more than something like putting in new sod or replacing the home's siding. Some renovations are fairly simple, inexpensive, and are worth doing.

Over time, the walls and baseboards in a home can look dull and have marks where the paint has been dinged. An instant renovation that can make the home look up to date and fresh is to paint the rooms in your house that need it.

If you have an accent wall in an extremely bold color, you might want to paint anyway, because most potential buyers prefer neutral paints. It helps them be able to imagine themselves living there.

The kitchen is one room where you'll really find that making renovations are worth it. If you have old appliances, you'll want to update those. If you have a faded looking backsplash, you'll want to replace it.

If it's not as modern as the ones in newer homes, you'll want to replace it because an older backsplash detracts from a kitchen's appeal. Things like new tile look fresh and really spruce up a kitchen.

Potential buyers also check out the countertops in a kitchen. The most popular of all materials used on countertops is granite. It's long lasting and will stand up to a lot of wear and tear.

If you have old countertops - especially if your home is dated - and you have those old Formica ones, you'll want to replace them. That doesn't mean that you have to tear out the cabinets.

You don't want to do that - especially if they're good ones. You can get granite counter tops from a home improvement store and just have it professionally cut and fitted.

It's a lot less expensive than you might think. If your cabinets are in good shape, then you can just spruce them up with some paint or new hardware. In addition to the kitchen, the bathroom is a strong selling point in a house.

One that has a stained tub or an outdated vanity doesn't have much appeal. This is one renovation that will help you sell your home. Put in a new vanity if it needs it and either refinish a stained tub or put in a surround.

Make sure that you renovate your yard, too. You want plenty of curb appeal so that your home makes a good first impression. This is a renovation that doesn't have to cost much. You can place some new mulch around trees and shrubs and add colorful flowers in planters on the porch.

Staying Safe While Showing Your Home

Showing a home has the potential for all kinds of danger to both real estate agents and those who are selling their homes by owner. You always want to be safety conscious from the moment that you make the decision to sell.

For starters, be careful what you put in your listing. You won't want to advertise that your home can't be seen by neighbors or from the street - even if that's the case.

This acts like an invitation to thieves or people intent on doing harm to others. You have to make sure that you lock up all your valuables and never keep any cash lying around.

You also have to make sure that you don't leave any documents within easy access that thieves can use for the purpose of identity theft. Savvy thieves often work homes in pairs.

One will distract the owner while the other one will look through personal belongings for anything of value. For your safety's sake, you have to know how to protect yourself and by following a few safety guidelines, you can stay safe while you're showing your home.

Always schedule the home showings. You don't want people stopping by your house, saying that they saw the house for sale and asking if they can come in and view the property.

Instead, tell them that your home viewings are by prearranged appointments only. You need to have an email or a phone number set up specifically for people to leave their contact number.

Have a show buddy. Never show your house if it's just you alone. Even if you're a male, you can be robbed or overpowered and put in danger. Someone with malintent will take a chance with one person, but often not with two or three.

Don't arrange to show your home when it's dark outside. If the person who wants to see the house says that's all the time that he has, then he'll have to move on. Someone who's truly interested in the home will make arrangements to show up during the daytime.

When you're showing your home, you're showing it to strangers and you don't want to be caught unprotected - so don't allow people to crowd you or walk behind you. You stay behind them.

Make sure you have a fully charged cell phone in your hand and know ahead of time how you're going to react if something does happen. Plan to be able to dial the police or know how you're going to get out of the house.

If you don't have a home alarm that you can set off, use a car alarm key that will sound if you press the button. Ask questions when someone calls you wanting to see the home.

Ask what they're looking for in a house, if they're working with a real estate agent, and leading questions like what type of financing they're looking for. People who seem cagey can set off red flags.

Remember to always trust your instinct before showing your home. If you get a bad vibe about someone, don't make the appointment or don't let them into your home.

What You Need to Know About Your Duty to Disclose

When you sell a home, your real estate agent will let you know what you have a duty to disclose. If you're selling your home without the assistance of an agent, then you still have to disclose certain issues.

Failing to disclose these issues can lead to a lawsuit and sometimes even find you guilty of violating a federal law. You basically have to let any potential buyers know the problems with the house.

Not problems like a door squeaking when you open it. You have to point out all the major problems that exist or have existed in the past. One big thing is that if you have lead-based paint in your home, you are required to notify possible buyers.

That's a federal law. What you have to disclose for other issues is going to depend on the state where the home is located because these disclosure laws do vary.

If your home is near a fault line, you have to mention that. If it's in what's considered a hazard zone for flooding, then you have to note that. If there's anything coming in the future - like the city is going to take some of the front yard to widen the road in front of the house - you have to share that information.

The issues that you have to disclose pertain to anything that can harm the buyer or can be destructive to the house. If a home has a checkered past, then you have to give the potential buyer that information in some states.

This would be something like a ghost has been rumored to be on the property or there are unexplained happenings. While not all states require this, if someone died in the home, you have to disclose that information.

Many buyers don't want to buy a home where someone was killed or committed suicide in the home. Any big issues - such as the heating and cooling unit leaking - have to be disclosed.

The same thing with the roof. If it leaks in spots, you have to tell the potential buyer that - even if it passed inspection, you still have to share that. If you've had problems with the electrical wiring, you have to share this information.

Damage to the house from termites has to be shared as well. Structural problems like joint cracks, ceiling cracks or foundation cracks have to be shared. Foundation cracks can be extremely expensive to repair as well as be hazardous to the safety of anyone living there.

If you've had a black mold problem in the house in the past or a problem with pests, then you have to share that information. If there is asbestos, you have to disclose that.

If you had a leaky pipe in the walls or a leaky appliance that's staying with the home, you have to tell potential buyers about that. If you ever had a room flood due to a broken pipe, you have to share that.

If you have awful neighbors, a lot of neighborhood noise, or you have sex offenders living near you, then in some states you have to disclose this information. A real estate agent can walk you through the legal maze so that you don't fail to disclose something important.



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