



101 Tips

on presenting your home
to maximise sale price.

General

There are two rules we recommend above anything else.

- 1 No clutter or odours. Your property must be kept clean and clutter-free. Clear and tidy all surfaces. If the property looks clean and smells fresh, prospective buyers will form a positive opinion of your home.
- 2 Whether it's an Open House or a private inspection, it is imperative that you are not there. Buyers find it hard to feel comfortable and picture themselves living in the property if the current owners are present. The prospective buyer is unlikely to voice their true opinion of the property and will often rush through the inspection. Needless to say, it makes selling your home difficult. So go shopping for an hour or visit a friend. Let the agent do their job!

Maintenance

*The Rule of Thumb is –
If something needs repair, fix it!*

- 3 There may be several things in your house that you have simply become accustomed to over time – things that you have been promising yourself to attend to. Well NOW is the time. Buyers will mentally add up their perceived costs of repairing all those minor flaws and end up with an amount that is generally much higher than your actual costs will be. You might be saying to yourself “These repairs aren't any big deal”, but the buyer is thinking, “if the owner didn't take care of these little items, then what about the roof or plumbing or air conditioner?” Necessary, non-critical minor repairs and perceived owner neglect will either lower the price or lengthen the time to sell.
- 4 Check all corners for peeling paint, chipped edges and loose wallpaper and repair accordingly.
- 5 Repair all major problems. In today's climate of open disclosure and vigilant home inspections the “Golden Rule” applies. Treat the buyer as you would treat yourself.

Cleaning

*Every area of the house must sparkle and shine!
Each hour spent will be worth the effort. Make it easy for the buyer to want your house.*

- 6 Clean all of the windows, including the laundry and garage.
- 7 Clean all carpets and rugs. Clean and polish lino, tile and wooden floors. Consider re-finishing a wood floor if necessary.
- 8 Clean and polish all woodwork. Pay particular attention to kitchen and bathroom cabinets.
- 9 Clean all light fixtures. The glass covers of most ceiling fixtures can be made to sparkle by running them through the dishwasher.
- 10 Clean & polish ceiling fans. Take down and clean exhaust fan covers, these are dust magnets.

Set the Scene

This part of preparing your home for sale can be the most fun and involves the use of colour, lighting and accessories to emphasise the best features of your home.

- 11 Study magazine ads & furniture showrooms to see how small details can enhance the appearance of a room. Simple additions like a vase of flowers, an open book on the coffee table, or a basket of logs by the fireplace can make a room more attractive and appealing. Be careful not to create distracting clutter.
- 12 The use of a bright coloured pillow on a chair or a throw rug on a sofa can add dimensions to an otherwise neutral room. Use accent pieces of colour to elevate the space.
- 13 Soften potentially offending views, but always let light into your rooms. Consider replacing heavy curtains with something lighter.
- 14 Take advantage of natural light as much as possible. This means clean windows, open blinds and curtains etc.
- 15 If your kitchen has fluorescent lighting fixtures, use 'warm-white' bulbs for a bright appearance.

Neutralising

- 16 Be cautious about selecting colours when painting the interior walls or replacing the carpet. Your objective is to make your house appeal to the largest possible buying segment. Ask yourself, "How many of the available buyers would feel able to move into your house with their own furniture and not want to replace the carpet or repaint the walls? Position your house on the market to be as livable to as many people as possible. Select a neutral colour scheme that will make it easy for the buyer to mentally picture the house as theirs.
- 17 SORRY – but you will have to put your personal taste on hold. The market is always driven by buyer demand. The average buyer will have a hard time looking beyond the blue carpeting and bold wall-papers. Consider replacing unusual or bold colours with neutral tones. Two coats of off-white paint may be one of the best investments you will ever make.

Space Management

Create the illusion of more space.

- 18 Arrange furniture to give the rooms a spacious feeling. Consider removing some furniture from any room that may seem over crowded. If necessary, put large items in storage.
- 19 Pack up your collectables – both to protect them and to give the room a more spacious feel. Leave out just enough accessories to give the house a personal touch.
- 20 Remove all clutter and make it a habit to pick up clothing, shoes and personal possessions for each and every inspection or open house.
- 21 Empty cupboards of off-season clothing and pack them away for the move. Organise cupboards to demonstrate the most efficient use of space. Cup-boards should look as though there is room to put more. Leave as few a items as possible on floors and shelves.
- 22 Use light to create a sense of space. All drapes should be open. Turn on all lights throughout the house for showing.

Atmosphere

Make the buyer feel invited and comfortable when inspecting all areas of your home.

- 23 When placing yourself in the potential buyer's shoes, you will want to consider the overall atmosphere of your house. Keep in mind your sense of smell as you go through the checklist. Create the atmosphere of your house as shelter; a place that is safe and warm and in good condition.
- 24 A clean smelling house creates a positive image in the buyer's mind. Be aware of any odours from cooking, cigarette smoke, pets etc. These may have adverse effects on potential buyers. Remember that some people are much more sensitive to odours than others. Smokers rarely notice the odour of cigarettes that fills their houses and pet owners may be oblivious to an objectionable dog or cat odours.
- 25 You can use products like carpet deodorisers, air fresheners and room deodorisers, but the best strategy is to remove the source of the aroma rather than cover it up.
- 26 Unfortunately, often the only way to remove the smell of pet soiling from flooring is to rip it up and replace the carpeting and any underlay. If this is preventing the sale of your house, do not hesitate to make this investment.
- 27 If smoking & cooking odours have permeated your house, have your carpets and furniture cleaned and air-out or dry-clean your curtains.
- 28 Mildew odours are another source of problems. Don't allow wet towels to gather in hampers or dirty clothes to pile up in cupboards.
- 29 Another source for odours to collect is the air conditioning filter. Clean the vent covers and change the filters at least once a month. A high accumulation of dust detracts from the presentation and can circulate odours throughout the house. You may want to consider having the air conditioning ducts professionally cleaned.
- 30 Once offensive odours have been eliminated, consider adding delightful scents. Recent studies have shown that humans have strong, positive responses to certain aromas, Cinnamon, fresh-cut flowers, bread baking are all excellent ways to enhance your house.

Exterior

Check your house for any needed maintenance just as a buyer would. Repaint to touch-up as necessary. You can't make a better investment when you're selling your house. Don't let the outside turn off buyers before the inside turns them on.

- 31 Colour has the power to attract. A tub of geraniums, a pot of petunias or a basket of pansies on the front step is a welcoming touch.
- 32 If you have a porch or front deck, set the stage with pots of flowers and attractively arrange outdoor furniture.
- 33 Consider using a wreath of dried flowers or an attractive welcome mat to greet the buyers when they come to your house. It can also encourage them to wipe their feet and keep dirt from tracking through the property.
- 34 Check to see that all doors and windows are in good working order. Give extra attention to your house's exterior doors and front entry. Clean and paint doors if necessary. Remember that you have only one chance at a first impression and it will likely occur at the front door.
- 35 Replace any broken or cracked windowpanes.
- 36 Screens should be free of any tears or holes.
- 37 Inspect all locks to ensure that they are all functioning properly.
- 38 Check for loose or missing tiles and clear out gutters and down pipes. Touch up peeling paint on gutters.
- 39 Check for mildew or stains on outside brick or concrete. Power wash if needed.
- 40 Sweep all dust and leaves away and consider a small water feature in a glazed pot. These can come in all sizes and budgets.

Garden

- 41 Make sure the grass is neatly mowed, raked and edged.
- 42 Prune and shape shrubbery and trees to compliment your house.
- 43 Consider adding seasonal flowers along the walks or in the planting beds. Try a row of sweet-smelling plant to line a short sidewalk or pop in some perky marigolds to form a cheerful oasis of colour in your yard. Such stand-bys as perennials are easy to maintain if you only remember to water them regularly.
- 44 Add an inch or two of bark mulch around your shrubs and trees. This freshens and renews garden beds by an enormous amount.
- 45 If you have room, set up your old badminton or volleyball net – suggest a scene of family fun.
- 46 It is important to devote at least one area of your yard to outdoor living. Buyers will recognise a scene set with picnic table and chairs and respond favourably to it.
- 47 Cover your picnic table with a cloth and set out plates and glasses, bring out the BBQ tools and buyers will almost smell the steak and onions cooking.
- 48 If you have a wooden deck make sure that the wood is not too faded. A quick coat of stain or paint may be best. Check your fence for any loose or broken pickets, and make sure to replace any rotted wood.

The Driveway

The surface of your driveway should be beyond re-approach. After all it's one of the first things a buyer sees.

- 49 Sweep and wash the driveway and walks to remove debris, dirt and stains. Repair and patch any cracks, edge the side and pull up any weeds.
- 50 The driveway is no place for children's toys. They can be both unsightly and dangerous. Remove any oil stains if possible.

The Front Entry

Whether a graciously proportioned centre hall or a small foyer just large enough for a coat rack and tiny table, this part of your house deserves your particular attention.

- 51 Study your entry hall and ask yourself what kind of impression it makes of your house. Dried flowers or a small plant can make a striking focal point on a hall table any time of the year. Virtually any entry hall will benefit from a well-placed mirror to give the illusion of space.
- 52 Your entry hall flooring will be observed carefully by the prospective buyer. Make sure the surface is spotless and add a small rug to protect the area during showing.
- 53 Your entry closet will be the first one inspected, make it appear roomy. Add a few extra hangers and hang an air freshener that will omit when buyers open the cupboard. Remove all off-season clothing.

Stairways

Stairways should act as an attractive transition from one level of your home to another.

- 54 Make sure the stairs are safe! Stair lighting should be more than adequate, and the stairs must be free of clutter. Ensure stair railing are tight and secure and that the runner or carpeting is tacked securely. Check the condition of the walls, re-paint or wallpaper as necessary.
- 55 If the stairs are a main focal point of the living area, carefully choose accents to improve its visual appeal. Consider emphasising your stairway as a feature by hanging a few pictures along the wall. Draw attention to a feature light fitting by cleaning it to make it sparkle.

Living Areas

Think of these areas as furniture show rooms. Your job is to make each room generate a positive response. Add touches that make a room look truly inviting.

- 56 Sweep and clean the fireplace. Place a few logs on the grate to create an attractive appearance. You are welcome to have a fire going for showing during the winter months (if you have gas logs, it is even a good idea during the later part of Spring) – it creates a great atmosphere.
- 57 Place something colourful on the mantle, but don't make it look like a country craft store.
- 58 Improve the traffic flow by removing excess furniture. Have easy traffic flow patterns. Be sure that all doors open fully and easily.
- 59 Remove oversized television sets if they dominate the room. If necessary, substitute for a smaller one until you move.
- 60 Draw attention to exposed beams or a cathedral ceiling with special lighting. Be sure to remove any cobwebs and dust.
- 61 In the heat of the summer, place a bowl of lemons or limes on a counter to provide a fresh pleasant aroma.
- 62 Clean and organise all storage space. If your cabinets, drawers and closets are crowded and overflowing, it makes the buyers assume that your storage space is inadequate. Give away items that you don't use anymore, storing seldom used items elsewhere and re-organise the shelves. Neat, organised shelves and drawers look larger and more adequate for prospective buyer's needs.
- 63 Large kitchen windows are an advantage and should be highlighted as a special feature of your house. Take a critical look at the window treatment – is it clean, sharp and up-to-date? Do the curtains need washing or the blinds need cleaning? Would the window area look better without any treatment?
- 64 Set the table for any informal meal with bright placemats and a generous bowl of fruit as a natural centrepiece.

Dining Room

Avoid going overboard. To be effective, any stage setting that you create should appropriately reflect that character of your entire house.

- 65 Visually enlarge a small dining room. If your dining table has extra leaves, take out one or two. Consider placing your dining table against a wall if you cannot move around it with ease.
- 66 Remove any extra chairs. Consider putting oversized pieces in storage until your house sells.
- 67 Set the scene by setting the table with an attractive arrangement. Add fresh or silk flowers as a centrepiece.

The Kitchen

Pay particular attention to your kitchen. This room continues to be the "heart of the house". A pleasant, working kitchen is near the top of most buyers' list of priorities and is a room that buyers always scrutinise closely.

- 68 Avoid clutter. Clear counters of small appliances and store whenever possible to maximise the appearance of workspaces.
- 69 Check the kitchen bench around your sink and remove any dishes, washing liquid, brushes, etc, which may be cluttering the area.
- 70 Sinks, cabinets & benches should be kept clean.
- 71 All appliances should be absolutely clean, bright, sparkling and shiny.
- 72 Clear off the top of the refrigerator. If you must use it for storage, use baskets and bowls to blend the items kept there.
- 73 Set the scene with an open cookbook, a basket filled with fruit, a basket of silk or fresh flowers, or a ceramic mixing bowl and wire whisk.
- 74 Create the aromas associated with happy houses. Bake some cookies, start baking a loaf of bread or pop a frozen apple pie in the oven.
- 75 If you have a breakfast bar, set two attractive settings and place cushions on the stools.

Bedrooms

Imagine for a moment that you are in the "Bed-n-Breakfast" business. How would you change your house's bedrooms to appeal to a paying lodger? Naturally, you would make the beds with your prettiest sheets and quilt. Maybe you would add a vase of flowers on the dressing table or a cosy armchair in the corner. Every bedroom in your house should invite prospective buyers to settle in.

- 76 Large master bedrooms are particularly popular among today's homebuyers. Make your bedroom larger. Paint the room a light colour, remove some furniture if the room is crowded, minimise clutter to maximise spaciousness. Aim for a restful, subdued look.
- 77 An ensuite off the master bedroom is a real bonus. Decorate the ensuite to coordinate with the colour scheme of your bedroom.
- 78 Virtually all buyers are looking for a house with plenty of cupboard space. Try to make what you have appear generous and well planned. Remove and store all out-of-season clothing. Remove any items from the floor area – this will make a cupboard seem more spacious. Arrange all shelves to maximise the use of space.
- 79 Make sure all articles in the cupboard smell fresh & clean. When prospective buyers open your cupboard door, they should be greeted with a whiff of fresh air. Hang an air freshener in the cupboard for a pleasing fragrance.
- 80 Make sure all cupboard lights have an adequate wattage and are operating. Add battery lights to the cupboards that lack built-in lighting. Lighted cupboards look bigger and more attractive and allow buyers to inspect the interiors easily.
- 81 Take the time to explain the importance of marketing to your children. Encourage them to participate in preparing your home for showing. Ask your children to cooperate by making their beds and picking up their things prior to inspections. Consider promising a special reward if they willingly participate in your house-selling goals.
- 82 Have children pack any items that are not currently in use and dispose of unused items.
- 83 Remove any crowded, unusual or personal wall hangings such as posters and store them until your home is sold.

Bathrooms

Take special pains with preparing your bathrooms for scrutiny by strangers. The bathroom is a room after all and a very personal one. Prospects will inspect yours carefully, so be sure it is immaculate.

- 84 Cleanliness is the key! Make sure that all surfaces are spotless.
- 85 Replace worn or dirty shower curtains, clean and repair grout.
- 86 Clear off counter tops and store all personal items and products out of sight.
- 87 Repair any taps that leak or do not function properly. Clean off mineral deposits with vinegar or commercial products.
- 88 Clean and organise all cabinets and drawers. Don't forget the vanity cabinets; dispose of old items and clean the shelves.
- 89 Remember to appeal to a wide range of buyers. Play down dominant colours with contrasting neutral coloured towels and accessories. If your bathroom is mostly white or neutral, add a few cheerful accents of colour, such as towels in the popular new shades. Don't hesitate to buy a few new towels and a rug. After all, you will be taking these things with you to your new home.
- 90 Scrub and wax an old floor. Cover the largest area you can with a freshly washed rug.
- 91 Decorate and personalise by creating a pleasing, individual look. Consider bringing out your best towels and perfumed guest soaps. Add a plant for colour and freshness.
- 92 A gentle hint of fragrance in the air is fine – but keep it subtle.

Laundry

A separate laundry is a true asset and is one of the most frequent requests that buyers make during a home search. Don't hide this treasure behind doors closed doors. Spruce up the room and open the door proudly for inspection.

- 93 Add a fresh coat of paint.
- 94 Organise all cupboards, shelves & storage.
- 95 Remove all dirty laundry. Keep up to date with your washing or store all dirty laundry in a closed container.
- 96 Ensure the ceiling is clean and free of mildew or mould. This is a common result of clothes dryers.

Garage

- 97 Sweep and wash the floor to remove any dirt and stains. Organise tools, lawn and garden equipment, bicycles, etc. A clean and organised garage appears larger in size.
- 98 If the area is dark, add more light. If it is small and accommodates only one car, remove your car before buyers visit. An empty garage always looks larger. If you have a two-car garage with very little extra room, remove one of the cars so that the buyers can make their inspection in comfort.
- 99 If your garage is appropriate to use as a recreation area set up your ping-pong table (with balls and paddles as props), hang some bright posters and you have transformed the place into a teenagers retreat. Your setting does not need to be complete and should not cost a large amount. It's only meant to suggest further possibilities to buyers.
- 100 Clear off and organise the workbench in your garage. Draw attention to it as a sales feature.
- 101 Make sure the lighting is excellent and stage the area as a comfortable working space.

