

Homeowner's Checklist



So you're planning to sell your home. You and your real estate broker have decided on a price, based on current market values, but your home will sell faster, and bring a higher price, if it shows well. Potential buyers will get the best impression if your home is clean, neat, uncluttered, in good repair, light, airy, fragrant, and quiet. This checklist will help you get your home ready to show.

Here are a few general guidelines:

CLEAN EVERYTHING. Cleanliness signals to a buyer that the home has been well cared for and is most likely in good repair. A messy or dirty home will cause prospective buyers to notice every flaw.

UNCLUTTER YOUR HOME. Have a garage sale. Empty closets. Throw away what you can't sell. The less "stuff" in and around a home, the roomier it will seem.

LET THE LIGHT IN. Raise the shades. Open the blinds. Pull back the curtains. Put brighter bulbs in all the lamps (but not bright enough to cause a glare). Bright, open rooms feel larger and more inviting. Dark rooms feel small and gloomy.

LET FRESH AIR IN. Get rid of odors that may be unfamiliar or unpleasant. People are most often offended by odors from tobacco, pets, cooking, and musty or sour laundry. Fresh flowers and potpourri can be used to your advantage. Other smells that attract positive attention include fresh baked bread and cinnamon.

FIX ANYTHING THAT IS BROKEN. This includes plumbing, electrical systems, switches, windows, TV antennas, screens, doors, and fences; if it can't be fixed, replace it or get rid of it (no window screens are better than broken ones).

A buyer will make a much lower offer if your house is in disrepair and will probably insist that everything be fixed before taking occupancy. You're better off if you leave potential buyers no reason to offer less than you are asking.

SEND PETS AWAY or secure them away from the house when prospective buyers are coming. You never know if people will be annoyed or intimidated by your pets or even allergic to them. And you never want a prospective buyer to have to avoid animal droppings.

SEND THE KIDS TO GRANDMA'S or take them on a walk around the block. Children can be noisy and distracting to someone interested in looking at a home.

PAINT. There's nothing that improves the value of a home for a lower cost than a fresh coat of paint. And it's so often easier to paint a room than it is to scrub it. Stick with neutral colors—off-white is the safest. Be sure to avoid black, violet, and pink.

KEEP NOISE DOWN. Silence is a restful sound that offends no one. Turn off the TV and radio. Soft instrumental music is fine but avoid vocals. If necessary, close the windows to eliminate any street noise.

FIX SQUEAKY FLOORBOARDS. Don't run any noisy equipment like a vacuum cleaner or table saw while people are looking at your home, and if possible, ask your neighbors to avoid irksome noises.

Exterior - Replace, Repair, or Paint

Plaster
Wood siding
Trim
Rain gutters
Shutters
Doors
Window frames
Screens
Hardware
Fences/Gate
Outdoor lighting

Clean/Wash

Siding
Windows
Screens
Outdoor grill
AC Unit
Pool/Spa
Trash cans

Outdoors

Replace lightbulbs
Haul away trash
Straighten woodpile
Repair leaky faucets
Clean up pet droppings
Paint or varnish doors
Polish door hardware
Repair doorbell/knocker
Paint/Replace street numbers
Clean septic tank
Clean oil stains
Patch/Reseal driveway

Closets

Organize
Throw out/Pack nonessentials
Lubricate sliding doors
Paint

Landscaping

Mow/Edge lawn regularly
Aerate/Feed lawn
Seed bare spots in lawn
Water lawn regularly
Remove/Replace dead plants
Prune shrubs
Clear view from windows
Stake up sagging trees/shrubs
Weed flower beds
Trim around trees/walls/fences
Replace broken stepping stones
Repair/Replace sprinkler heads
Hide unsightly views

Repair/Remove Broken...

Fences
Walls
Fountains
Trellises
Planters

Clean All...

Doors
Windows
Light switches
Baseboards
Chair rails
Curtains

Indoors

Pull back dark curtains
Lubricate window slides
Make sure doors open smoothly
Clean/Replace light fixtures
Check for cobwebs in corners
Fix any scratches in wood floor
Replace broken/worn floor
Use area rugs where necessary
Empty waste baskets
Make the beds

Kitchen

Keep dishes and food out of sight
Clean appliances
Clean range hood
Clean behind appliances
Keep floor clean
Clean on top of refrigerator
Eliminate cooking odors
Deodorize garbage disposal
Repair faucet
Clean inside oven
Organize cabinets
Clean out under sink
Replace garbage disposal gasket

Bathrooms

Shine mirrors
Keep wastebaskets empty
Clean/Organize cabinets
Keep fresh, clean towels on racks
Clean shower door
Remove soap residue
Remove stains from toilet, sink, tub
Replace shower curtain
Clean tile grout
Repair toilet to flush properly
Clean exhaust fan/heater

Garage/Carport/Shed

Keep area clean/uncluttered
Hang up/put away tools
Clear away cobwebs
Remove oil/paint stains
Adjust tension rod on garage door
Repair garage door opener
Paint

Heating/AC Unit

Vacuum
Replace filter
Clean intake vents