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How to Prepare your Home for Sale

Thinking about selling your home? Making the extra effort to prepare it for sale will improve your chances of success. Prepping your home could mean anything from making necessary repairs to performing a deep clean, and while it can be a lot of work, your efforts will be well worth it if they result in more offers and a faster sale.



Follow these tips when preparing your home for sale to attract the most interest — and the best offers.

Identify necessary repairs



If you've lived in your home for several years, normal wear and tear is to be expected. Minor problems, like a chipped shower tile or a dripping kitchen faucet, may not have much of an effect on your day-to-day life — in fact, you may barely even register them. But visible problems are very noticeable to buyers. House-hunters might even see them as a signal that more significant issues may exist beneath the surface.

Creating a plan to figure out which home repairs are necessary, and address them properly, is one of the best things to do to prepare your house for sale. Walk through your home and make a list of all noticeable imperfections, no matter how minor they may seem. Then consult with your real estate agent, who can help you prioritize the list and figure out which issues will be important to prospective buyers — and which will not.

You might also consider a pre-listing inspection, which can identify manageable problems, like a roof leak, before they become massive ones, like the need to replace the entire roof. Buyers commonly include an inspection contingency in their offers, which can lead to the need for concessions or worse if the findings are unfavorable. So getting an inspection prior to listing will help you get a jump on any future problems that could derail your deal. The average cost of a home inspection is \$341, according to HomeAdvisor. A few hundred dollars is money well spent if it saves you thousands down the road.

Declutter, depersonalize and clean



Real estate agents often recommend making your home as clean, open and neutral as possible. The goal is to help the buyer envision the home as their own — not to distract them with personal items that belong to someone else.

Start by decluttering and organizing every room in your house. Pack away excess furniture and things you don't need for everyday living, including any items overstuffing your closets. Not only will this make your home appear cleaner, it'll also give you a head start on packing for your move after you sell your house.

Alyssa Morgan, a Miami Beach real estate agent and founder of the Inside Network, says that "a deep cleaning, especially the air vents and A/C filters," is a task many sellers undervalue and overlook. Hiring a professional to deep clean your house may be your best option to do the job quickly and effectively.

Gather all the documents needed



One of the most essential steps to prep a house for sale is keeping track of important paperwork. Some of the documents you'll need to sell your home include the following:

- **Mortgage payoff statement:** As its name suggests, this document states the exact amount needed to pay off your mortgage loan in full, including interest and fees. Title companies often request the payoff statement from your lender before completing the sale.
- **Homeowners insurance:** Carrying homeowners insurance is a requirement of your mortgage loan, and that coverage is expected to continue until your home closes and the final sale is complete.
- **HOA documents:** If your home is part of a homeowners association, gather all your information regarding its rules and financial standing. HOA disclosures can be complicated, so you may want to consult a real estate attorney if you're not sure what to include and what not to.
- **Property tax records:** You might need to provide receipts to show what taxes on your property are still outstanding. Before closing on the property, buyers must be able to understand and estimate the cost of property taxes on their new home.
- **State disclosure forms:** Most states have standard disclosure forms

that home sellers must fill out, detailing any knowledge they have about problems with the property or structure. Some are very detailed and lengthy — consult with your agent to make sure yours is filled out and filed properly.

- **Records of repairs and maintenance:** Finally, do not underestimate the importance of keeping and disclosing proper home maintenance and repair accounts. You want to be able to prove that important repairs were made, and when.

Home staging, curb appeal and photography



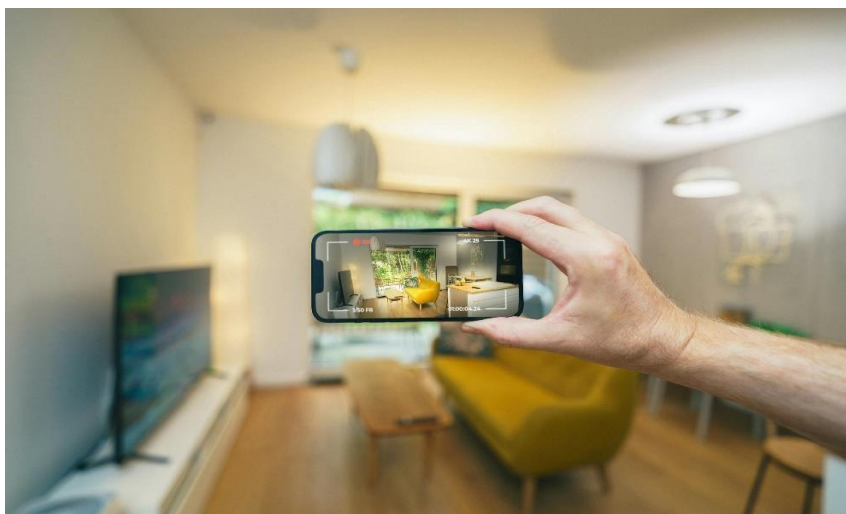
When it comes to impressing house-hunters, first impressions matter. You want to make your home as appealing as possible, to as many people as possible, which is why many sellers hire professional stagers to get the space looking picture-perfect.

“Staging has the most significant impact when preparing a home to come to the market,” says Morgan. “It helps prospective buyers be able to imagine the home as their own.” Staged properties typically sell for about 10 percent more than if they were not staged, she says.



Your real estate agent can help you strategize how to stage your home. “Before our clients list their home, we put together a list of minor and major updates that we suggest to get top dollar,” advises Morgan. “Fresh paint and staging are always at the top of the list.”

And don't forget about your home's exterior, which is also key to making a good first impression. Improve your home's curb appeal by mowing the lawn, trimming all bushes and trees and pressure washing dirty sidewalks and driveways. Adding flowers to your porch or front yard never hurts either.



Ultimately, though, even the most beautiful home on the market could get overlooked if the listing doesn't attract eyeballs. More than 40 percent of buyers look at listings online as their first step, according to the

National Association of Realtors, and good photos make all the difference. Fortunately, most real estate agents understand this and work with professional photographers who can capture appealing images of your property. You may even want to look into aerial photography or video walk-throughs, to help your listing stand out more.

Listing your home

When your preparations are complete, it's finally time for your real estate agent to officially list your home. He or she will add it to the local multiple listing service (MLS) and market it to both potential buyers and other agents. Your agent will take charge of scheduling showings, negotiating with interested parties and helping you get the best offer possible for your home.

