



How to Sell Your Home

▶ Perform routine maintenance

Exceed a buyer's expectations from the beginning. Change your furnace filter. Replace burnt out light bulbs. Make sure hand and guardrails are securely mounted to prevent falls. Trim bushes and rake up leaves. Cut out dead foliage. All of these things will help reinforce the value of your home.

▶ Research a Realtor or agent

Interview more than one real estate agent. Consider the cost of services, length of contract and services offered to help you sell your home. Check references and associations if possible. Remember, if the deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

▶ Envision your property objectively

You've worked hard to make your house your home, but now you want someone else to see your house as their home. Chances are, their opinions regarding decorating, furnishings and the amazing beauty of your 3-year-old's art on the refrigerator don't run parallel to yours. To show off your home to its best advantage, buyers must be able to see themselves in your home. Make it easy for them by taking your Realtor's suggestion regarding clutter, paint colors and cleanliness to provide a clean slate for the next owners.

▶ Limit clutter

Stacks of papers, 40 pieces of a pottery collection stacked on a shelf, walls of family pictures and clothes baskets on the floor make rooms feel smaller. Of course clutter is part of everyday life, but it usually isn't part of "selling." Enter a retail store and certain items are highlighted. Clothes are stacked with like items and in order of size. All of this is an attempt to attract a buyer. To prepare your house for sale, remove all but a few pieces of a collection. Group odd numbers of decorative items. Vary the height of objects to add interest. Leave space on walls and refrigerators for potential buyers to imagine their own pictures in place.

▶ Inspection

Home inspections aren't just for buyers. A pre-listing inspection gives the seller nuts and bolts details about the condition and functionality of hundreds of components within your home. The written report is a manual for you to use in completing inexpensive maintenance repairs and evidence of the efforts you've made to keep your home well-maintained to help build buyer confidence and trust. This can be the edge your home needs to sell quickly.

▶ Scent of cookies

Our sense of smell is directly related to the emotions we feel. That's why the scent of fresh baked cookies can make a house feel like a home. To save some time and money, you might try freezing a batch of your favorite drop cookies. Make the batter and drop cookies on a cookie sheet as usual and freeze solid. Once the dough is frozen, transfer the cookie dough to freezer safe containers. Thaw for about 25-35 minutes and bake on parchment-lined baking sheets right before potential buyers arrive. Throw the parchment away to prevent a mess on your pans or in the sink.

▶ **Touch up paint**

Fresh paint is a fast easy way to update your home at any time. Consider toning down bright colors with neutrals and touching up trim and garage doors.

▶ **Increase curb appeal**

First impressions are essential. Brighten up the exterior of the home with seasonal plants or decorations. Keep walkways and driveways clean and clear of trip hazards. Trim back bushes and other foliage that blocks the front door or porch.

▶ **Network**

Of course your real estate agent will advertise your home. It's all in their job. Still, it doesn't hurt to use your own network as well. Tell family, friends and co-workers you will be moving. You never know when someone you know might be in touch with the perfect buyer.

▶ **Get it clean**

If you do nothing else to prepare your home for sale – clean from top to bottom. Keep the lawn tidy and mowed if necessary, shovel walks in the winter and wash your windows to allow natural light to show off your home to its best advantage. Keep bathrooms and showers sparkling. If you have small children, consider investing in some baskets with lids. Place one in each room for quick pickup of the day's toys.