

Your Fast And Thorough Home-Showing Checklist

Getting your home ready to sell is crucial if you hope to sell it fast at the best price. Although you may have been comfortable enough living with your home's little imperfections — and perhaps some big ones — most buyers will see them as problems to be avoided. The goal is to put your home in “model home” condition and keep it that way — at least until a contract is signed!

Effective home-preparation progresses in three phases:

Early Preparation.

Before even listing your home for sale, make sure all needed repairs have been made and all components are in good working order. After decluttering, minor improvements and painting are completed, a whole-house deep-cleaning is in order.

Ongoing Maintenance. Once your home is on the market, you'll want to make sure you maintain it in great shape — keeping lawns mowed, gardens weeded, shrubs trimmed and giving it a good weekly cleaning.

Last-Minute Pick-Ups. Let's face it: Everyday life can be messy — especially where kids are involved! Most home sellers find living in a home while keeping it ready for short-notice showings is a real challenge.

Here we've provided a checklist of critical tasks you can accomplish in just 10 minutes before buyers walk through your door — or before you leave for a day or more during which your home might be shown.

To beat the clock, you'll need to have cleaning supplies readily available in every room and an understand-



ing among family members about who is responsible for each room and task. Make sure everyone has an assignment!

Outside

Since “curb appeal” is so important to first impressions, make sure nothing is in front of your home, or at its entrance, that shouldn't be there.

- Place lawn and garden equipment, tools, water hoses and toys neatly in the garage or storage shed.
- Remove old newspapers, muddy shoes, etc.
- Give walkways, porch (or exterior hallway, if it's a condo), and welcome mat a quick sweep.
- If you have a sprinkler system, set the timer so it won't go off while visitors are there.
- Dog owners should be sure droppings are cleaned off the lawn.

Kitchen

Many buyers make their choice of a home based on their impressions of the kitchen.

- Clean and put away dishes or stash them in the dishwasher and run the short cycle. (While your home is on the market, using paper dinnerware and cooking “one pot” meals can cut down on the dishes chore.)
- Remove as many items as possible from counters — food, small appliances, storage containers, etc. (You'll need to have extra space available in your cupboard or pantry for the quick-stash storage.)
- Wipe up countertops, appliances, table and floor with a damp cloth.

Bathrooms

These are also make-or-break areas for buyers.

- Remove cosmetics, medicines, etc. from counters and place them out of sight.
- Use damp rags, paper towels or a spray bottle and sponge to quickly shine up countertops, fixtures, mirrors, sink, toilet tank, shower stall, tub, floor.
- Make sure soap in the soap dish is clean, preferably new.
- Arrange fresh linens on towel racks.
- Check the toilet bowl and clean if needed; put the lid down!

Bedrooms

- Make beds.
- Hide (preferably lock up) jewelry, valuables.
- Speed-dust furniture with an old sock on each hand, dampened with furniture polish or a dusting product.
- Put clothes away in drawers, closets, laundry hamper — or hide them in the washer or dryer.

Living Areas

- Gather magazines, newspapers, mail and other papers that have accumulated in your “drop zone” and stash them in a basket, box, drawer or cupboard.
- Hide any other articles that are not part of the room's decor.
- Speed-dust furniture, as above.
- Arrange pillows and throws.

Children's Rooms

- Gather toys, games and books, placing them back on bookshelves or in baskets and under-bed bins.
- Wipe up fingerprints and wall marks.

Garage

- Place tools where they belong.
- Remove cars from the garage (driveway, too) to make it look roomy and give visitors a chance to freely walk around.

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