

HOME SALE CHECKLIST

Selling your home is a big step and let's be honest. It can be a stressful time for all concerned. However, there are a few things you can do to minimize the time on the market, increase market appeal, and ensure you get the most value from your home. Review the list below to see what simple steps can be taken to help attract the right buyer and maximize your sales price.

Price your home correctly:

Find out what your home is worth, then shave 15 to 20 percent off the price. You'll be stampeded by buyers with multiple bids—even in the worst markets—and they'll bid up the price over what it's worth. It takes real courage and most sellers just don't want to risk it, but it's the single best strategy to sell a home in today's market.

The first impression is the only impression:

No matter how good the interior of your home looks, buyers have already judged your home before they walk through the door. You never have a second chance to make a first impression. It's important to make people feel warm, welcome and safe as they approach the house. Spruce up your home's exterior with inexpensive shrubs and brightly colored flowers. You can typically get a 100-percent return on the money you put into your home's curb appeal. Entryways are also important. You use it as a utility space for your coat and keys. But, when you're selling, make it welcoming by putting in a small bench, a vase of fresh-cut flowers or even some just baked cookies.

Declutter:

You're moving anyway so best to move out the things that you don't need. While in the process, clear out most of the books in your book shelves, clean out cabinets of all those unneeded items or limit what you have. Clean off counters especially the kitchen and bathroom counters. Storage is something every buyer is looking for and can never have enough of. Take half the stuff out of your closets then neatly organize what's left in there. Buyers will snoop, so be sure to keep all your closets and cabinets clean, organized and tidy.

Furniture:

Get rid of all the extra furniture you have in order to help open up your rooms. The more furniture you have, the smaller the rooms will look. If you have bulky furniture, consider removing some of the larger pieces. Renting a storage unit can be well worth the expense by helping increase your chances of a faster sale and at a higher price.

Light it up:

Maximize the light in your home. After location, good lighting is the one thing that every buyer cites that they want in a home. Take down the drapes, clean the windows, change the lampshades, increase the wattage of your light bulbs and cut the bushes outside to let in sunshine. Do what you have to do make your house bright and cheery—it will make it more sellable.

Make it sparkle:

Wash your windows, clean your bathrooms, dust and polish your furniture, make sure your light fixtures have all working bulbs, are dusted and look nice. Vacuum, mop floors, clean draperies and blinds, clean out your refrigerator even if it's not included in the sale, hang decorative towels in bathrooms, etc. Make sure your home doesn't smell of animals! Sometimes your nose becomes used to pet smell so ask your close friend for their honest evaluation. Sometimes teenage boys' rooms also have a musty male scent to them so make sure all dirty laundry is picked up. Be careful about what you cook the night before. Fish can linger in the home and become an unpleasant odor.

Don't use the plug-in vanilla scents. It can be very overwhelming especially as they reach the end of their life and just states that you're trying to hide some unappealing smells. Instead, use fresh scents such as lavender or pumpkin spice potpourri or oil sticks.

Conceal the critters:

You might think a cuddly dog would warm the hearts of potential buyers, but you'd be wrong. Not everybody is a dog- or cat-lover. Buyers don't want to walk in your home and see a bowl full of dog food, smell the kitty litter box or have tufts of pet hair stuck to their clothes. It will give buyers the impression that your house is not clean. If you're planning an open house, send the critters to a pet hotel for the day.

The kitchen comes first:

You're not actually selling your house, you're selling your kitchen—that's how important it is. The benefits of remodeling your kitchen are endless, and the best part of it is that you'll probably get 85% of your money back. It may be a few thousand dollars to replace counter tops where a buyer may knock \$10,000 off the asking price if your kitchen looks dated. The fastest, most inexpensive kitchen updates include painting and new cabinet hardware. Use a neutral-color paint (don't use stark white) so you can present buyers with a blank canvas where they can start envisioning their own style. If you have a little money to spend, buy one fancy stainless steel appliance. Why one? Because when people see one high-end appliance they think all the rest are expensive too and it updates the kitchen. Old counters? Replacing them will reap you benefits in helping you achieve a faster sale.

Don't over-upgrade:

Quick fixes before selling always pay off. Mammoth makeovers, not so much. You probably won't get your money back if you do a huge improvement project before you put your house on the market. Instead, do updates that will pay off and get you top dollar. Get a new fresh coat of paint on the walls. Clean the curtains or go buy some inexpensive new ones. Replace door handles, cabinet hardware, make sure closet doors are on track, fix leaky faucets and clean the grout.

Hire someone to 'stage' your home:

If your agent is not qualified to give you ideas on how to stage your home, you might want to consider hiring someone to help you rearrange furniture, placing items in strategic areas to enhance your home appeal, etc. Home stagers can be expensive but it does pay off by helping you maximize the full potential of your home.

Always be ready to show:

Your house needs to be 'show-ready' at all times—you never know when your buyer is going to walk through the door. You have to be available whenever they want to come see the place and it has to be in tip-top shape. Don't leave dishes in the sink, keep the dishwasher cleaned out, the bathrooms sparkling and make sure there are no dust bunnies in the corners. It's a little inconvenient, but it will get your house sold.



Have your home inspected:

Hire a qualified inspector—ASHI certified are one of the best but be prepared to pay between \$300-\$500 but it's well worth the expense. Fix whatever the inspection turns up. In doing so, when the buyer has their own inspection, you won't be paying for their inspector's recommendations. Keep in mind that by the time the buyers inspection rolls around, you're locked in a contract giving the buyer the advantage of asking for your replace instead of repair. Basically, having your home pre-inspected saves you money and is a good advertising tool.

The agent field:

A secret sale killer is hiring the wrong broker. Make sure you have a broker who is totally informed. They must constantly monitor the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), know what properties are going on the market and know the comps in your neighborhood. Find a broker who embraces technology—a tech-savvy one has many tools to get your house sold. A good agent will also walk through your home and give ideas for getting your home ready for sale. Always ask for a Comparable Market Analysis to show you documented validation regarding the approximate value of your home plus a Sellers Net Sheet to show you your expenses and approximate net after those expenses.