

Preparing Your Home For Sale

17 Tips to better showcase your home for a faster sale and achieve optimum price

Selling a home for best the possible price requires that you adopt an objective attitude in thoroughly inspecting your property. To achieve this result, you must not look at it as your home anymore but as a property that will be offered on the market to compete with a number of other properties. The goal is to attract the maximum amount of buyers and therefore get the best possible price for it.

An attractive and well maintained property will sell much faster and because it attracts more potential buyers, it allows you to have those buyers compete for your property rather than you competing with other more desirable properties on the market.

Therefore, take a close look at how your property will be viewed and perceived by potential buyers leaving all memories or emotions aside. This way, you are more likely to take the necessary steps to present your property for optimum sale.

Better yet, invest \$300 to \$400 to have a certified building inspection service thoroughly assess the condition of your property and enable you to identify those areas requiring your attention. This is a well worth investment that can save you hundreds and even thousands of dollars when selling your home because many of the repairs can be done by yourself at this stage. However, if such report is provided by the buyers after a contractual agreement between the parties, then most contracts provide that repairs must be carried out by a certified contractor or specialist.

Warning: Do not mask or try to hide problems such as termite infestation damage or cracks that may indicate a serious problem. If in doubt as to the nature of a problem, consult a certified building inspector. Federal laws exist concerning hidden defects and it could result in penalties to hide defects.

EXTERIOR

- **Is your lawn and landscaping attractive to passerbies?**
- **Is your yard cluttered with unnecessary accumulation?**
- **Is the exterior of your home clean and is the paint or finish deteriorated?**
- **Is your roof in good condition? Is it leaking?**
- **Is your pool clean and clear of debris?**
- **Are there broken windows or cracks on the walls?**
- **Is there any wood rot on the outside?**

Tip #1: Clean the Yard, Mow the Lawn and Trim Edges, Service Pool

A thorough yard clean up, mowing & trimming edges goes a long way to make a property give a first good impression. Remember that you only have one chance to achieve this. Remove excess accumulation of worn out or unnecessary items that only contribute to shoddy appearance. If applicable, clean your pool and pool area and ensure proper chemical balance for optimum water color.

Tip #2: Check Exterior Condition of Your House and Paint if Necessary

If the exterior of your home shows peeling or cracked paint, or has wood rot in some areas due to water exposure, repair the rotted wood and apply a coat of premium quality paint. Again this is a matter of appearance and contributes to making your property more appealing to prospects. This investment will be recuperated through a higher sales price.

Tip #3: Fix Windows & Cracks in Exterior Walls

Replace cracked or broken window panes and fill in cracks in walls providing those cracks do not hide a more major foundation problem. A building inspector can provide that information for you.



Tip #4: Check & Clean the Roof

While your roof may be in good or acceptable condition and leak free, it may show signs of mildew accumulation in certain areas. We suggest you hire cleaning experts to give your roof a facelift. Tile roofs should be repainted with recommended products if necessary. However, if your roof leaks or has reached its total life expectancy, it is recommended that you start immediately to get estimates from at least three roofers and perhaps have the roof replaced immediately. Most home buyers will mortgage a home purchase. Mortgage lenders in turn require a roof inspection by a certified roofer and expect the roof to have 2 to 4 years of life expectancy left. In the negative, the mortgage lender will require that the roof be replaced prior to closing taking place. As well, in most sale contracts, it is expected that the seller pay for such repairs or replacements. Therefore, it may be advisable to get a head start and carry out the necessary repairs prior to the sale of your home.

INTERIOR

General:

- **Are your carpets and tiles in need of cleaning, repair or replacement?**
- **Does the inside of your home need fresh painting?**
- **Are doorknobs, hinges and locking systems in good condition?**
- **Are ceilings cracked or show signs of water stains?**
- **Can a visitor to your home detect pet or smoker's odors?**



Tip #5: Give The Interior Of Your House A Facelift... Paint!

Paint can do miracles inside a home to give it a facelift. If you do repaint rooms or the entire inside of your home, it is recommended that you chose neutral colors which are more likely to be acceptable to potential buyers. Some rooms may only need to be cleaned up. If you don't feel up to the task, a cleaning service company can carry this out in one day. Likewise, you can find many small home painting & improvement individuals who can repaint rooms or the entire house.



Tip #6: Check Floor Condition

If your carpets need cleaning, by all means either rent the necessary equipment to do it or hire a carpet cleaning contractor. This is especially important if you have pets and smokers in your house. If your carpets need replacement, consider allowing a certain amount to potential buyers, leaving them the choice of color & quality. In other words, if all carpets would need replacement, get an estimate for a regular quality of carpet and indicate to potential buyers that you will contribute up to a certain amount for carpet replacement. While this will not bring added value to your home, it will help you compete with other properties offering flooring in good condition.



Tip #7: Check Doors & Windows

Inspect all doors and windows for proper alignment and operation. Loose hinges or improperly aligned deadbolts may cause a potential buyer to think that you have a foundation problem. Most minor problems can be solved with a little lubrication.



Tip #8: Paint Stained Ceilings

While your roof may have leaked in the past and was replaced or repaired, there may still be ceilings showing signs of water infiltration. If that is the case, it is recommended that you repair and/or repaint stained ceilings. Because stained ceilings are very obvious to potential buyers, they will suspect that a leaking problem still exist and will likely move on to other properties.



Tip #9: Eliminate Unpleasant Odors

Many families keep pets indoor and while owners may not notice it, visitors may be able to detect an odor that they may find offensive. In addition, if someone smokes inside the house, it definitely leaves an odor and may even stain ceilings, draperies and more. Because potential buyers may be inconvenienced by it, it is recommended that in addition to cleaning and/or painting the inside of your house, you use odor absorbing powders for your carpets and that prior to showings, you use conventional sprays to freshen up your home. Additionally, you may want to use plug-in types of odor control on a regular basis. If you must be present during showings, please ensure that smokers refrain from smoking inside immediately prior to and during the showing.

Plumbing & Electrical:

- **Do you have dripping faucets in kitchen or bathrooms?**
- **Do you have overloaded circuits causing regular tripping of breakers?**
- **Do you have defective electrical outlets or light switches?**



Tip #10: Check Electrical Outlets – Plumbing Leaks

Did you know that a home inspection company hired by a potential buyer will check each and every electrical outlet and switch? Additionally, if one or more are found defective, the seller must hire an electrician to fix the problem. As well, leaking faucets can be easily fixed by changing washers rather than having to hire a plumber to do the work. Many times, these costs can be avoided if the seller carries out preventative maintenance and fixes problems prior to inspection. While you may still wish to hire an electrician or plumber to do this work, you will save time and possibly money by taking care of the problems prior to inspection.



Tip #11: Check for Overloaded Circuits

If your panel breakers trip on occasion, it is because of overloaded circuits or defective wiring. If that is the case, it is recommended that you call an electrician immediately. You should not attempt to fix the problem yourself unless you are qualified to do so. These problems must always be fixed immediately to avoid accidents and/or fire.

Appliances & Equipment:

- **Are your appliances included in the sale in good working condition?**
- **Is your air conditioning/heating system working properly?**
- **Are your smoke alarms operating properly?**
- **Are ceiling fans in good working order?**



Tip #12: Make sure Appliances Are In Working Condition

Most sale contracts require that appliances included in the sale be in good working condition. This does not mean that they must be new. Rather, they should operate in the way they were meant to. For example, your electric range's burners must heat properly, the oven thermostat work and pilot lights be operative. While you may be satisfied that three out of four burners work, most sale contracts will require you to fix the problem for the buyer. Replacing a burner is inexpensive if you do it yourself but can add substantial amounts if done by a contractor. That's why preventative maintenance can save you hundreds of dollars when selling a home. An additional option that you have, if one or more of your appliances are defective, is to either purchase good working used appliances or indicate prior to the sales agreement that all appliances included are to be accepted in an "as is" condition.



Tip #13: Check Heating – Air Conditioning System

Heating and air conditioning systems are an important part of a home and can be costly to repair or replace if they are defective or simply not operating properly. For this reason, it is recommended that

you have such systems inspected prior to selling your property. This way, you will know immediately if repairs are necessary and you can avoid extra costs associated with last minute repairs. As suggested originally, a complete home inspection report prepared by a licensed inspector or certified contractor before listing your home for sale will allow you to determine the exact condition of your home, its systems, equipment and appliances. In addition, it will enable you to save hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars in the process.



Tip #14: Check Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are essential safety elements of a house and we must ensure that they operate at all times. Many lives could have been saved in the past if people had taken care of making sure that they operated efficiently. For this reason, it is recommended that batteries in smoke alarms be replaced twice a year. To make it easier to remember, many fire departments recommend that batteries be changed in Spring and Fall when it is time to advance or back our clocks. This is true whether you have combination electrical/battery alarms or simply battery operated ones. You can also test for proper operation by pressing built-in test buttons.



Tip #15: Check Ceiling Fans For Proper Operation

Most ceiling fans provide a multi-speed feature and should be tested to ensure that they operate properly at every speed. In addition, ensure that the fan blades do not wobble. If the problem exists, you can add weights on blades to ensure smooth operation.

Garage:

- **Does your garage door open and close properly?**
- **Is your garage cluttered with accumulated items?**
- **Is the concrete floor stained with oil or other materials such as paint?**



Tip # 16: Remove Excess Accumulation

Because of space limitations, many people use their garage as a storage area. In the process, they allow unnecessary accumulation over the years. Remember that you intend to sell your house and will have to either move the accumulation to your new home or get rid of it. At least one month prior to listing your house for sale, go through all storage, discard useless accumulation, hold a garage sale or call your local charity and donate all items that you don't want to move to your new home. This way your garage will look inviting and will also seem much spacious.



Tip # 17: Remove Floor Stains

If your garage floor has stains, whether from oil leaks or other materials, you may want to correct this problem by first cleaning the floor with a material capable of removing those stains. You should however be conscious that certain solvents or acids can be hazardous. If you decide to do the work yourself, follow manufacturer's recommendations and wear safety equipment to protect yourself. If stains cannot be hidden, you may consider using concrete paint to cover the entire floor.