



Get the House Ready

A house that 'sparkles' on the surface will sell faster than its shabby neighbor, even though both are structurally well-maintained.

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From experience, REALTORS® also know that a "well-polished" house appeals to more buyers and will sell faster and for a higher price. Additionally, buyers feel more comfortable purchasing a well-cared for home because if what they can see is maintained, what they can't see has probably also been maintained. In readying your house for sale, consider:

- how much should you spend
- exterior and curb appeal
- preparing the interior

How much should you spend

In preparing your home for the market, spend as little money as possible. Buyers will be impressed by a brand new roof, but they aren't likely to give you enough extra money to pay for it. There is a big difference between making minor and inexpensive "polishes" and "touch-ups" to your house, such as putting new knobs on cabinets and a fresh coat of neutral paint in the living room, and doing extensive and costly renovations, like installing a new kitchen. Your REALTOR®, who is familiar with buyers' expectations in your neighborhood, can advise you specifically on what improvements need to be made. Don't hesitate to ask for advice.

Maximizing exterior and curb appeal

Before putting your house on the market, take as much time as necessary (and as little money as possible) to maximize its exterior and interior appeal. Tips to enhance your home's exterior and curb appeal:

- Keep the lawn edged, cut and watered regularly.
- Trim hedges, weed lawns and flowerbeds, and prune trees regularly.
- Check the foundation, steps, walkways, walls and patios for cracks and crumbling.
- Inspect doors and windows for peeling paint.
- Clean and align gutters.
- Inspect and clean the chimney.
- Repair and replace loose or damaged roof shingles.
- Repair and repaint loose siding and caulking.
- In Northern winters, keep walks neatly cleared of snow and ice.
- During spring and summer months consider adding a few showy annuals, perhaps in pots, near your front entrance.
- Re-seal an asphalt driveway.

- Keep your garage door closed.
- Store RVs or old and beaten up cars elsewhere while the house is on the market.
- Apply a fresh coat of paint to the front door.

Maximizing interior appeal

Enhance your home's interior by:

- Giving every room in the house a thorough cleaning, as well as removing all clutter. This alone will make your house appear bigger and brighter. Some homeowners with crowded rooms have actually rented storage garages and moved half their furniture out, creating a sleeker, more spacious look.
- Hiring a professional cleaning service, once every few weeks while the house is on the market. This may be a good investment for owners who are busy elsewhere.
- Removing the less frequently used, even daily used items from kitchen counters, closets, and attics, making these areas much more inviting. Since you're anticipating a move anyhow, holding a garage sale at this point is a great idea.
- If necessary, repainting dingy, soiled or strongly colored walls with a neutral shade of paint, such as off-white or beige. The same neutral scheme can be applied to carpets and linoleum.
- Checking for cracks, leaks and signs of dampness in the attic and basement.
- Repairing cracks, holes or damage to plaster, wallboard, wallpaper, paint, and tiles.
- Replacing broken or cracked windowpanes, moldings, and other woodwork. Inspecting and repairing the plumbing, heating, cooling, and alarm systems.
- Repairing dripping faucets and showerheads. Buying showy new towels for the bathroom, to be brought out only when prospective buyers are on the way.
- Sprucing up a kitchen in need of more major remodeling by investing in new cabinet knobs, new curtains, or a coat of neutral paint.