

# YOU NEVER GET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION

## TIPS ON SHOWING YOUR HOME TO PROSPECTIVE BUYERS

### 1. Easily Boost "Curb Appeal" with Lawn Care.

The "curb appeal" that your home offers prospective buyers is *extremely* important because it's the critical first impression. No matter how good the interior of your home looks, buyers have already judged your home before they walk through the door. Often buyers decide on the spot if it is even worth a look inside after doing a quick drive-by. You never have a second chance to make a first impression. If your home's outside is appealing, then it already lures onlookers inside. Begin with your lawn: fertilize and reseed if necessary, then keep it edged, trimmed, and watered well. Prune trees, shrubs and bushes, rake leaves, pick up trash and newspapers, wind up hoses, sweep sidewalks, cut down weeds, and clean up toys and bikes. In the winter, make sure ice and snow are removed from sidewalks and driveways.

### 2. Enhance Appeal with Simple Exterior Improvements.

Make your front door, porch and entryway say "Welcome Home" to prospective buyers. Start by sweeping the entrance area and cleaning the door, and, if necessary, paint or replace it. A seasonal decoration, such as a wreath, adds an inviting touch. A fresh coat of paint/stain can do wonders to your home's exterior. Also, wash windows, power wash exterior walls, and remove cobwebs. Consider adding some simple landscape improvements such as new mulch, beautiful blooming annuals/perennials in the flowerbed, and/or decorative moss rock or flagstone.

### 3. Interior Wear and Tear Makes Buyers Uneasy.

Even minor imperfections that we often overlook in our own homes can tend to turn prospective buyers off because they overestimate the cost of repairs. Patch holes in drywall, replace broken tile, and restore any scratched woodwork with furniture polish. Wax wood and linoleum to add life to old floors. Steam clean carpet to make it look new again. It's amazing what a fresh coat of paint will do to immediately transform any room in your house. Lighter shades generally make a room feel larger; neutral shades will appeal most to potential buyers.

### 4. The Brighter and More Comfortable the Better.

Lighting up your home lets buyers see how inviting, bright, and cheery your home can be. Clean windows on the inside, open draperies, replace light bulbs, increase the wattage of your light bulbs, and cut the bushes outside to let in sunshine. Keep outside lights on to best highlight your home for night showings and potential buyers driving by in the evenings. Turn on lights to brighten rooms when the hour of appointment nears. If it's cold outside, turn on or light the fireplace. Turn up the

heat slightly to make your home feel warm, cozy and friendly. In the summer, turn on air conditioning, open windows, and turn on fans to make it comfortably cool.

### 5. De-Clutter and De-Personalize.

Buyers have a hard time looking past clutter. Put away everything laying on floors, tables, stairs, and furniture, such as newspapers, mail, jackets, and toys. Also, by removing items that you seldom use, you help your home appear more spacious and roomy. Surfaces, floors, counters, cabinets, cupboards and closets that are clean and clear equal more space in the eyes of potential buyers, so purge anything unnecessary or unsightly. Put essential items used daily in a small box that can be stored in a closet when not in use. Pack up those personal photographs and family heirlooms. Buyers can't see past personal artifacts, and you don't want them to be distracted. You want buyers to imagine their own photos on the walls. As for valuables, secure them in a safe, safe deposit box or off site.

### 6. Clean, Clean, Clean.

Buyers are turned off by filth. A clean house is a must. In the kitchen: many buyers judge housekeeping based on the condition of the stove and oven. Make sure both



look as shiny as possible, as well as other appliances. Put away dirty and clean dishes. Clean out the refrigerator and empty the dishwasher. In bedrooms: make beds, put away clean and dirty clothes, dust furniture and window sills, and clean cobwebs from corners. In bathrooms: all tile, grout and linoleum should be free from soap scum. Re-caulk areas around sinks, tubs, and showers if needed. Hang up fresh or new towels. From shining floors and gleaming windows to clean counters and scrubbed grout,

from the bleached toilets to polished fixtures and mirrors, every surface should sparkle. In the garage: hang tools, sweep the floor, and clean off the workbench. In attics/utility spaces: brighten up dull walls with a fresh coat of paint, dust off everything, and tidy up items.

### 7. Make Closets Organized and Appear Larger.

Open-house visitors will peek inside your closets so show yours off to their full advantage. Give excess stuff the heave-ho to improve the appearance of open space and spaciousness. Take half the stuff out of your closets, even if you need to store a few boxes elsewhere, then neatly organize what remains. Hang shirts together, buttoned and facing the same direction. Line up shoes. Make sure closet doors are on track and tighten doorknobs in order to make them more presentable.



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### 8. Get Rid of Odors. Highlight the Home with Scents and Simple Accents.

Odors detract buyer's attention from your home quickly. Pets are a major culprit. If you have pets, get all rugs steam cleaned and be extra vigilant about vacuuming and washing surfaces. Clean around pet areas, including any backyard surprises. Replace cat litter or move it outside. Empty every trash can. Run the garbage disposal. Turn the oven exhaust fan on to remove strong cooking smells like onion and fish. Flush toilets. Empty diaper pails. Damp, musty smells are quickly cured by placing bags of limestone in moist places. Set the mood for your home by lighting scented candles, heating potpourri on the stove, or making some fresh baked goods. Think vases of cut flowers, a basket of fresh farmer's market produce on the kitchen counter or a bowl of lemons beside the sink.

### 9. Make Minor Repairs not Huge Upgrades.

Quick fixes before selling always pay off. Mammoth makeovers, not so much. It's in your best interest to make any necessary minor repairs yourself rather than leave them, since buyers tend to overestimate their cost. If appliances appear old, dirty and abused, buyers often consider the cost of either having to repair or replace them. 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. "Update" appliances by covering scratches and chips with matching appliance paint and replacing drip pans. Drain a pail of water from the water heater in order to remove rust particles. Drain or clean hot tubs. Have the appliances serviced if need be, including changing filters and oiling noisy fans. By fixing dripping faucets, running toilets, broken sprinkler heads, cracked windows, torn screens, dented/broken/warped siding and fencing, damaged trim, missing light/electric outlet covers, jamming doors and drawers, or making any other small-scale repair, demonstrates a house well-cared for and enables you to get top dollar for your house.

### 10. Too Many Cooks Spoil the Soup.

Having many people in the house while it is being shown can be very distracting for buyers. Try to have as few people around as possible, putting the buyer at ease to absorb all the advantages your property has to offer. Most people like pets, but they can also distract a buyer who has allergies or a bad experience with an

unfriendly animal. Take your pet on a little vacation away from home and remove any "Beware of Dog" signs.

### 11. Let Your Broker Do the Talking.

If a prospective buyer asks you questions or starts a conversation about your home, be polite, but try to avoid entering an in-depth discussion with them. Your broker is trained to increase the buyer's interest in your property and easily overcome objections they might voice.

### 12. Sell the House First.

Do not attempt to sell the prospective buyer furniture, rugs, or drapes in the house, as this practice will detract from the interest created in your home. If any property is desired by the prospective buyer, discuss this with your broker at a later date.

### 13. Honesty is the Best Policy.

If there is a repair, major problem with the home, or hazard, it's important to be honest about it. When a prospective buyer has your home inspected and/or appraised prior to buying and discovers he or she was given false, omitted, or misleading information, they can immediately lose interest in the house. In addition, they can spread word to other prospective buyers to avoid your home due to integrity issues.

### 14. Tell Your Home's Story.

Every home has distinct selling advantages. Take time to type up a "Top Ten" list of your home's advantages that prospective buyers can take. Examples may include being close to schools, great neighbors, eating delicious fruit from the trees, relaxing in the hot tub under beautiful stars, watching the herd of deer near the house at evening, or the peace and quiet while sitting on the front-porch swing during summer evenings. Further share your home's story with pictures; display a photo album of your home. Put together a simple photo collection highlighting your house in different seasons and holidays. If you have pictures of a remodeling or landscaping project, consider showing the before and after pictures to demonstrate what has been invested in the home. Finally, display your home's history with a binder that consolidates manuals, warranties, landscaping plans or architectural drawings.



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