

Strategies for Making Your Open Houses Successful and Productive

A. Plan Your Open House

- Schedule open houses for two to four hours on a weekend, preferably both days. If you must choose only one day, make it Sunday.
- Find someone to care for your kids and pets away from your house.
- For safety reasons, always have at least two people showing the house.
- Place open house directional signs in your neighborhood and on well-traveled roads just before the open house.
- Include open house information in your ads.

B. Ready Your Home

- Be sure the exterior of your house makes a great first impression.
- Clean your house thoroughly.
- Create a warm, relaxed atmosphere, so people don't feel pressured into talking with you.
- Pack away all your valuables, breakables, and items that can be stolen.
- Open the shades and turn on all the lights so the interior is cheerful.
- Bake something or put out potpourri so the house smells pleasant.

C. Open Your Doors

- Make your visitors comfortable with a warm greeting, a fire in the fireplace, and pleasant aromas.
- Give everyone a fact sheet with the details of your house, and then leave them alone to browse.
- Ask potential buyers for feedback and request that they sign a guest log with their name, address, cell phone number, and email address. Use this information to confirm that the potential buyers are motivated and to make follow-up calls.
- Be relaxed and have a positive attitude.
- As you answer questions about your home, tailor your responses according to visitors' interests.
- Ask questions about what they're looking for and what types of homes they've seen.
- Present a photo album with pictures of your property taken during the four seasons.

- Don't come on too strong or describe every detail in the house; some deals are lost by sellers talking too much.
- If you hear comments that upset you, don't get angry or into a verbal sparring match. Just take a deep breath and walk away.
- Don't verbally negotiate. If someone offers you less than what you are asking, tell them politely that you consider only written offers from qualified buyers.
- Rehearse your house tour with family and friends, so you feel more comfortable.

Don't discriminate against buyers

Remember, the Civil Rights Act prohibits you from rejecting an offer based on race, religion, color, gender, or national origin. The Fair Housing Amendments Act also says you cannot discriminate due to disability (mental or physical) or familial status (families with children under age 18).

Safety First

- To ensure your security when showing your home, ask interested parties for their names, addresses, and phone numbers when setting up an appointment, so you can determine if they're motivated and qualified potential buyers. Confirm the information they provide by looking them up in your local telephone directory or calling them back to confirm the appointment.
- Instruct children who answer the phone to never discuss details about the house. Women and children shouldn't tell a caller that they're home alone.
- Never show your house after dark. If someone drops by without an appointment, politely ask for his or her name and phone number and say you'll call and schedule a more convenient time to see the house.
- Never show your home alone. Ask a friend or family member to join you.