

Putting your home on the market isn't as simple as placing a FOR SALE sign in your yard.

5 things to do

before you sell your home

There are several steps to take *prior* to listing your home that will make the transaction smoother and quicker.

one Hire a real estate agent.

It may be tempting to list your home on your own to avoid paying a sales commission, but selling your own home is a full-time job itself. A real estate professional represents the best opportunity to earn the maximum amount from your home's sale. An agent will recommend the best listing price, market your home effectively and show your home to buyers. An agent also recognizes what buyers are looking for in a new home.



two Get your home inspected.

You are required to disclose any problems with your property to prospective buyers. Failure to do so will lead to further complications, even if you weren't aware of the flaws ahead of time. Hire a professional inspector to identify and document any problems with your property. Also, make sure your home has a clean bill of health from termites.

three Make repairs ahead of time.

A long list of necessary repairs is a major put-off for most buyers, who may decide to move on rather than deal with the headache of fixing up the home. Do as many repairs yourself as possible, then hire a contractor to complete the rest. If you decide not to make major repairs beforehand, hire a reputable professional to provide cost estimates that you can show to any interested buyers to put their minds at ease.

four Showcase your home.

Curb appeal and first impressions are valuable assets when selling your home. Clear unnecessary items from your yard and maintain the landscape to welcome visitors. Keep the interior of your home clutter-free to maximize your home's livable space.

five Price it right.

The original asking price of your home has a huge impact on the ultimate sales price. If you price it too high, buyers will look for better values and your home will remain on the market longer. The longer your home is on the market, the less desirable it becomes to buyers—even if you eventually lower your asking price—because most buyers will avoid a home that others are avoiding. Conversely, pricing your home too low may result in a quicker transaction but will yield you less money in the end.





Make Your Home

Attractive to Buyers.

Once you have taken care of the prep work to get your home on the market, you'll need to present your home to potential buyers. Even small cosmetic improvements will have a major impact on the sale of your home. The right touches can get a buyer excited about your home, but a few poor decisions may lose their interest completely.

Clean. Clean. Clean.

A tidy home is a loved home. Wipe fingerprints and other smudges from glass, mirrors and other shiny surfaces. Wax and polish your hardwood and tile floors and vacuum your carpets often. Keep your oven, stove and kitchen counters clean and free of clutter.

Clean up the yard.

Make sure your landscape is well maintained to increase curb appeal. A more conservative yard is often a better showcase for your home, so be generous with your trimming and pruning. Pare down bushes and trees that block windows. Pull weeds out of your flowerbeds, lawn and sidewalk cracks. Repair minor asphalt and walkway cracks if necessary. If your home has gutters on the roof, clean and clear them frequently.

Let there be light.

Natural light is the best light to cast your home in. Replace faded and heavy curtains with sheer ones or install blinds. Opening the shades when showing your house will also make your home seem larger. Temporarily replace energy-efficient fluorescent lights with high-wattage incandescent bulbs to give your home a warmer glow. Make sure darker rooms are well lit.

Add a few little touches.

Replace worn or outdated doorknobs, cabinet handles and light switches. Buy fresh new towels for the bathrooms, but don't use them (keep the towels you use out of sight in a cabinet). Place flowers in windows that are walked by often. Display a seasonal decoration, such as a wreath or wood ornament.

Other low-cost ways to update your home

- Install a new mailbox
- Upgrade outdoor lighting
- Replace old doormats
- Plant annual flowers
- Buy new pillows for sofas
- Display lightly scented potpourri or candles
- Replace torn window screens
- Polish or replace your old address plaque
- Fix or replace leaky or outdated faucets
- Buy organizational systems to reduce clutter
- Re-caulk sinks and bathtubs
- Place centerpieces on large counters and tables

