
DWELLING ON DWELLINGS



Nine Ways to Make a Great First Impression

By **Brad Boisvert**

It's safe to say your house will not sell sight unseen. So now that you have decided to put your home up for sale, let's discuss how you can put its best face forward.

Change your perspective

Your first - and most difficult - task is to think like a buyer. Take a critical look at your home and ask what bugs you about it. If it bugs you, it will bug a buyer. Then decide what repairs are worth making.

For example, is painting necessary? If it appeals to a buyer, it may be worth the effort. Other items you should look at are leaky roofs (often a deal breaker), broken windows, stained carpets, cracked walls, chipped tiles, and broken appliances.

Make it love at first sight

To make a great first impression, give your house "curb appeal." Keep your lawn mowed and raked. Trim your hedges. Plant flowers. If paint is an issue, paint the front. And make doubly sure your home retains its appeal when buyers get out of their cars. Sweep your walkways. Patch cracks. Put out a clean doormat. Polish your entry door's knobs and knockers. Let everything about your home say, "Welcome."

Let there be light

Bright houses appeal more to buyers. So let the sun shine in. Open drapes. Raise shades and blinds. And clean windows. Even during the day, turn on lights; it will help eliminate shadows. Make sure all your lights work. Buyers will flick switches. It's the real-estate equivalent of kicking tires. To make your home brighter, consider repainting dark walls. (A neutral white or beige is your best choice.)

Store more. Show less

As a seller, you should do more than clean your house. You should eliminate a lot of the stuff you've accumulated over the years. Clutter is an appeal killer. In the kitchen, clear counters by stowing the toaster, blender, and your myriad gadgets. But don't stuff them in cabinets. Buyers will check cabinets and drawers. And they'll be impressed if those are in order, as well. Rather, get a head start on packing and box up all items you can do without. In other rooms, open up floor plans by removing extra furniture. Pack away book stacks, knickknacks, and bric-a-brac. Make sure tables, dressers, desks, shelves,

and cabinets are kept clear. Take pictures off the walls. Organize closets and other storage spaces. Let buyers see a house with ample room to put their junk.

Prepare for "nosy" visitors

Nothing turns off a buyer like bad odors. Do your doggone best to eliminate pet odors. Take out the garbage. Eliminate mildew. Don't leave dirty laundry in baskets. And rather than using perfumes or sprays to freshen up your house (it will seem like you're covering up something), use fresh flowers, potpourri, and cedar chips to keep your home smelling like a winner.

Don't be a drip

Good plumbing is plum important. Buyers will flush your toilets, turn on faucets, and they will look for leaks. So replace washers. Caulk tubs and sinks. If you have water stains, seal and repaint them. Having sparkling fixtures that work well will help ensure that offers trickle in.

Give them the facts

Have your agent prepare a fact sheet about your home and place it in a prominent location. The info covered should include price, square footage, room dimensions, tax and utility costs, and any pertinent disclosures.

Do the little things

Little touches can have big effects. Set your table with the good china. Hang your best towels in the bathroom. Make sure your house is the right temperature. In winter, a fire in the fireplace is a nice touch. Fresh flowers and soft music will also give your home more appeal. On a more practical note, oil your hinges so your door knobs turn easy and your doors and drawers don't stick or squeak.

Make yourself scarce

When a showing is scheduled, you should not only leave the presentation to the agent, you should leave. Period. And when you go, take your pets with you. Potential buyers will be less comfortable inspecting your home with you in it. And ultimately, you want buyers to feel most comfortable. Also, agents are trained professionals. They can most likely answer tough questions better than you.

Perhaps there's one last step. And that's to ask your agent for advice. Professional agents are well experienced in what helps make a house sell quickly ... and for the price set. That house might as well be yours.

