

Carol's Tips for Getting Your Home Ready for Market!



Start with the outside

The first impression people have of your home is what it looks like from the outside. Believe it or not, some buyers make a decision to keep on driving to the next property just by looking at the outside of the house. Here are some tips to make them want to come inside:

- Spruce up the lawn by cutting, trimming, weeding and removing all yard clutter. A great-looking lawn makes a great first impression.
- Weed and apply fresh mulch to flower beds – it gives a fresh and maintained look for a low cost.
- Trim your trees and bushes.
- Apply fresh paint to wooden fences.
- Power wash home's exterior, driveway, walkway, patio and deck.
- Consider painting if the house needs it, or if the color is “dated” – a fresh coat of paint on the outside can make the house look completely updated.
- Ensure all gutters and downspouts are firmly attached and functioning.
- Paint the front door.
- Buy a new welcome mat.
- Place potted flowers near the front door.
- Plant some bright flowers in places that could use some brightening.
- Tighten and clean all door handles.
- Clean windows inside and out – make them sparkle.
- Make sure your house numbers are easy to see, and consider getting new ones if it would improve the look from the street.

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Now let's go inside

The way you live in a home and the way you sell a home are two different things. Once your home is on the market it's in competition with other properties – it needs to always look like a model home. Even if you aren't Mr. or Ms. Perfect, your home needs to look like you are. Here are tips on keeping the inside of your home looking its best.

The entryway sets the stage:

- Replace the entrance light bulbs to brighten up the entry, and make sure the light is on if people are coming at dusk or after dark.
- Make sure the doorbell works.
- Make sure the door is in perfect working order. No squeaking, jamming or sticking locks. Make it effortless to get in the house.
- Once inside, make sure the entryway is free of clutter: shoes, coats, umbrellas and anything that takes up space.
- If you have an entry table or shelves keep them clutter free.
- Make the front closet look spacious and uncluttered by removing any extra coats, shoes, hats, gloves, etc.

Tips for every room in the house:

- Go through your home room by room and pack up 30% of your stuff. You want it as clutter free as possible.
- Evaluate the furniture in each room and remove anything that interrupts "the flow" or makes the room appear smaller. Consider renting a storage unit to move items off-site.
- Clean or paint walls and ceilings. Use a neutral color. You don't want buyers to remember your home as "the house with the purple bedroom."
- If carpeting is in good condition and neutral in color, have it cleaned. If not, replace it. Off-white carpet is best; this makes the rooms look larger and cleaner.

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- If replacing the carpet pad, select a very thick one then install just a modest grade of carpeting. The feel will be plush and expensive, but it's not.
- Clean or refinish wood floors.
- Pack everything from all closets that you don't need. You want to create the perception of roominess.
- Remove everything but a week's worth of linens from the linen closet. Fold them neatly and color-coordinate them. I'm not kidding.
- Remove out-of-season clothes from clothes closets.
- During the day, have all your curtains and blinds open. If the day is cloudy, turn on all lights as well.
- Make sure blinds, shades and window coverings hang level.
- Brighter is better. Upgrade all your light bulbs to at least 100 watts to make your house appear bigger more inviting.
- Replace all burned out light bulbs.
- Clean all light fixtures and ceiling fans.
- Remove any family photos you have displayed. Too much of your personality in evidence does not allow for the potential buyer to "mentally" move in.
- Repair all plumbing leaks, including faucets and drain traps.
- Make minor repairs (torn screens, sticking doors, cracked caulking).
- Replace worn door knobs.
- Fix or replace discolored grout.
- Replace broken tiles.
- If you have pets, get rid of pet odors.

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Make the most of your kitchen and dining room:

- Make your kitchen look more spacious by removing everything from the counter like the coffeemaker, toaster, flour container, etc.
- Your eat-in kitchen and dining room should have a table and chairs in it to showcase the rooms' purpose.
- Remove extra leaves from your dining room table to make the room look larger.
- Set the dinner table or counter bar to help buyers envision the room.
- Make sure the inside of your cabinets are organized and clean. Store non-essential items elsewhere to make the cabinets look more spacious.
- If your cabinets show wear and tear, you might want to paint them. A simple trick to update the look of your cabinet doors is to replace your current knobs with new ones.
- Make sure that your counter is spotless and shiny.
- Remove notes, pictures and coupons from the refrigerator door.
- Keep garbage and recycling bins out of sight.
- Keep the exotic spices and fish to a minimum when cooking the night before a showing. Work towards achieving a "clean" smell.
- Get rid of kitchen odors by pouring hot salt water down the drain twice a week. Also, grind some lemon rind in the disposal.

Help buyers see themselves in the living room:

- Take down personal photographs and family items that create the sense that this is your home. You don't want the buyer wondering, "Who lives here?" You want the buyer to see themselves living there.
- If you have a favorite "old" chair that doesn't go with the rest of the furniture, remove it. Big furniture can weigh down a space.
- Clean your fireplace.

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- During “showings” turn on all lights and lamps.
- If your furniture shows the effect of raising kids or if pets have ruined the rugs and upholstery, think about storing or removing your existing furniture. Buy, borrow or rent what you need.
- Have your DVD collection, CDs and video games out of sight.
- Open the drapes and blinds. Nothing is more depressing than walking into a home where shades, curtains and drapes are closed.
- Remove all knick-knacks under 10 inches tall.

Make the bathrooms sparkle:

- Put the trash can under the vanity to clear floor space to make the bathroom appear as big as possible. Always empty bathroom trash cans before showings.
- A new shower curtain is a great investment – very little money for a big impact.
- Things like toilet cleaners, plungers, and hampers add clutter; put them away while you're selling your house.
- Keep all reading material out of sight in the bathroom.
- Place personal items (such as hairdryers, makeup kits, and hairbrushes) in cupboards or drawers.
- Hang matching new towels; go for the best-looking towels you can. Like shower curtains, they add a nice impact.
- Remove everything from the countertop, except pretty soap sets, candles or fresh flowers.
- Check the faucets for leaks, drips or disrepair. Repair or buy new faucets if they are leaky or worn out.
- New silicone beading can do wonders for your shower, tub and sink area...especially if the caulking is stained or cracking.
- Shine your faucets and knobs and use cleaner to prevent water spots.
- Keep your shower and tub spotless. Buyers will often look behind the curtain. Keep shampoos and soaps to a minimum.

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- Scrub tiles and bleach - or replace - the grout so it all sparkles.
- Replace or paint the vanity if it shows excessive wear and tear. Replacing knobs can give an updated look to an older vanity.

Make the bedrooms look big:

- Remember that buyers love to snoop and are likely to look in your closets. Make sure the closets are as spacious looking as they can be. Remove all the clothes, shoes, and items that you won't be using right away.
- Candles and fresh flowers are excellent accessories on bedroom furniture.
- New bedspreads or quilts make a bedroom look inviting.
- Make your bed look pretty and make sure the bedspread or quilt fits the bed properly and hangs low enough to cover the view under the bed. Buyers won't look under the bed, so you can store other non-essential items there.
- Put away the stacks of reading material on night stands and leave room for one good book.
- In kids' rooms, posters, photos, drawings and awards are all personal items that should be taken down for showing the house. You want the buyers to imagine the rooms as their own.
- Put away all items that are hanging off the backs of doors. Cluttered and clanking doors often make the room feel smaller – especially if they don't allow the door to open all the way.
- Hang your clothes by category: all blouses together, all shirts together, buttoned and facing the same direction.
- In kids' bedrooms, be sure to put the toys in boxes or bins, and slide them under the bed.
- Items that you don't need should be taken out of the closet to make them more spacious. If you need to, get a storage space for them.
- Coordinate your clothing in your closets and line shoes up neatly so it looks as organized as possible.

Create a clutter-free home office:

- Store all the files and paperwork you don't need for everyday function.

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- Remove big, bulky filing cabinets that take up a lot of space and store them somewhere else to make the office look bigger.
- Clean everything off the desk surface, leaving only your computer and desk lamp. A neat desktop makes the work space look more functional.
- Store all personal and confidential or client information out of sight. Set up a password protected screensaver on your desktop.
- Weed out the postings on bulletin boards or wall organizers. A few things are okay to make the office look organized and functional, but an overcrowded bulletin board looks crowded.
- If your office is a part of another room, make sure it doesn't overpower the main function of the room. If it's in the dining room, consider setting up temporary space elsewhere.

Make the most of the basement/laundry spaces:

- Tidy up and organize your basement. Discard, donate or recycle items you can give away.
- If you have unfinished concrete floors, paint the concrete to give it a cleaner look.
- Be sure to clean and polish the washer and dryer to give them a bright and shiny look.
- Put all detergents, laundry items and irons out of sight. Remove any residue that may have accumulated in the laundry sink.
- A bright throw rug in front of the washer and dryer will often help cheer up unfinished laundry rooms.

Finally, tackle the garage

The garage is usually the catch-all area where everything goes that has no other place to go, so it's usually a mess. If your garage isn't neat, no buyer would surmise that you take good care of the whole house. You're going to say I'm going to extremes but believe me, this works every time.

- Empty everything out of the garage. Hose down the floor, and if there are stains remaining, paint it porch gray.
- Paint the garage walls off-white using a flat latex paint.

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- After the paint is dry – put everything back in the garage piece by piece and throw out what you won't be taking with you. Then organize what's left.
- If you have a storage shed, organize it the same way and if it needs a coat of paint or stain, do it.
- Use an open bag of charcoal to absorb moisture in the storage shed.
- If you have too much "stuff," rent a storage unit and store it there.