

Preparing Your Home To Sell

When getting your home ready to sell, you need to look at your house in a new way. Think of your house as a product about to go on the market where it is probably competing with brand new housing. It needs to show well which means clutter free and well kept.

Today's homebuyers lead busy lives and may not be interested in taking on major repairs or improvements upon moving in. You need to make your house a "10". This document will help you spot what is right and what isn't about your "product". It will give you the opportunity to take corrective action to ensure your house looks clean and well-maintained when the "For Sale" sign goes up.

Fix it First

If you need to make improvements to your home, do the work before it goes on the market. Potential buyers are not interested in hearing about your good intentions to look after defects before transfer of land takes place. Even if repairs are underway, buyers may not be able to visualize what your home will look like when the work is finished. They will just remember it being in a state of disrepair.

Check Your Home's Curb Appeal

How does your home look from the street? That is where prospective buyers will be when they first see your home; and, that is where they will form that all-important first impression. Stand at the curb in front of your house and note what you see:

- Remove any clutter in your yard.
- Repair cracked or uneven driveway or walkway surfaces.
- If your lawn has bald spots, apply some top dressing and re-seed. Prune trees and shrubs of dead wood. Weed and mulch flower beds, if you have them. If it is the right time of year, consider buying some flower-filled planters to enhance eye appeal of your property.
- Make sure your lawn is mowed regularly.
- Ensure compost area is tidy
- Are your windows and walls clean?
- Does your front door need paint?
- Ensure your eaves and downspouts are clear of debris and in good repair.
- Are your backyard, deck and walkways clean? If not, use a power washer and do any necessary painting, staining, or sealing.
- If you have a swimming pool, are the deck and pool clean (when in season)?



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- Do all outside lights work? Replace any burned out bulbs, and clean fixtures of dirt and cobwebs.
- Is there a shed? Does it look presentable?
- Do windows and exterior doors need re-caulking? Even at six to seven years of age, the caulking may be dried out and in need of replacement.
- Do you have decorative wooden poles on the porch? Is the wood at the bottom in good condition? Overall, does it need a new coat of paint?
- If you have a gate, is it well oiled?

When you have completed the curb appeal inspection, carefully check the rest of your home's exterior.

Stage Your Home For a Sale

- De-clutter, clean, and/or organize all rooms in the house. This should be your very first step. Get rid of or pack up anything you don't think you'll need to use right away. Clean your drawers and cabinets (potential buyers will open them up and look inside) and put anything you think you might need in a small, organized box in an out of the way place.
- Address any and all repairs that need attention. Inspect your house inside and out to search for cracks, etc. The small investment of time and money will mean a bigger return when it comes to the sale price. Don't forget to check for leaky faucets, squeaky doors, and burnt out light bulbs. You may even want to consider repainting your walls with neutral colours so that they appear fresh and clean.
- De-clutter, clean and organize kitchen counter tops and cupboards. Counter tops and shelves should not be filled with food and appliances. You want your kitchen space to appear **large, clean** and **functional**. Make sure your dishes are stacked correctly, turn your cups and mugs so that they're all facing the same direction, and make sure everything (including your spice jars) are clean and in order.
- Keep the bathroom as bare as possible, never leave your personal items in view when showing your home.

In fact, depersonalizing your whole property is a powerful selling tip. Buyers will be more attracted to your home when they can imagine themselves living there. To make your house look lived-in without looking like anyone actually lives there pack away into storage:

- All Family Photos
- Holiday Souvenirs
- Trophies & Certificates
- Collectible Items
- Children's Artwork
- Home Gyms not being used



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Know that when the house has a showing, it should appeal to all five of the senses:

- **SIGHT:** Open the blinds and drapes to let in natural light. Keep clutter away and consider keeping your pet out of the home for the day.
- **SMELL:** Put out flowers and candles in the main rooms of the home and a colourful bowl of fruit on the dining table
- **TASTE:** A hot pot of coffee helps with taste and smell
- **HEARING:** Turn off the sounds on all television sets and computers, and have some easy listening or jazz music playing softly in the background
- **TOUCH:** Have your guests sit on the softest couch, and make sure everything is clean and dust-free

Make sure you put away or hide any major appliances you don't want to sell. If you want to take your antique chandelier you should take it down before you show the house. Otherwise, a potential buyer may see it and want it for themselves.

You are putting your home on display so present it well! If you don't think you have an eye for presentation ask one of your friends or family to prepare your house for you. If you can't see a problem with clothes lying around and sticky floors get someone else to present your house for you. Pay them if necessary as presentation is VERY IMPORTANT in showcasing your home.

Every room in the home, including the garage and decks, should be absolutely clean. Empty waste baskets and garbage pails daily. Try to keep pets outdoors along with their litter boxes and food bowls during showings. Try to relax during this stressful process.

- Keep furniture to a minimum so rooms do not appear smaller than they are. Ensure that traffic can flow in or through rooms unimpeded. If they contain bookshelves or cabinets overflowing with books, magazines and knick-knacks, remove some of these items.
- Ensure closets look spacious, organized and uncluttered. Create space by getting rid of old clothes and junk.
- Remove or lock away valuables such as jewelry, coins, currency, cameras & other electronics.



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Kitchen and Bathrooms

People splash water around in the kitchen and bathrooms so check around sinks, tubs and toilets for rotting countertops and floors. Problems could be due to poor caulking or plumbing leaks. Fogged windows, mould and sweating toilet tanks indicate high humidity levels which you can remedy with exhaust fans.

- In the kitchen, clean all appliances including your oven. Clean or replace your greasy stove hood filter. Clean your cabinets inside and out, as well as your countertops and backsplashes. Repair dripping faucets.
- Remove anything stored on top of your fridge and remove artwork and magnets.
- Remove items stored under the sink.
- In bathrooms, scrub sinks, tubs and toilets, taking care to remove any rust stains. Remove mildew from showers and bathtubs. Fix dripping faucets or trickling toilets, and vacuum your fan grill.
- Clean mirrors, light switch plates and cupboard handles.
- Consider installing new 6-litre toilets if you currently have water guzzler.
- If you have ceramic tile in either your kitchen or bathroom ensure grouting is intact and clean.

Basement

The condition of the foundation and main structural members in the basement are critical to the fitness of any house. The purpose of your inspection is to make sure these are sound and durable.

- Look for cracks, water seepage, efflorescence (white powder-like substance), crumbling mortar or concrete, and rotting wood. If any of these problems are present, you need to do further research to learn about causes and possible solutions.
- If your basement is damp or musty, consider using a dehumidifier.
- Like all other areas of your home, your basement should be organized and clutter-free.
- Change the filter in the furnace and have it cleaned; this is the number one item purchasers want done after a home inspection.
- If you have a pet with a litter box, ensure it is clean.



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Garage

- Get rid of broken tools, old car parts, discarded bicycles, empty paint cans and the hundreds of other useless items that accumulate in garages. Again, you want a clutter-free zone.
- Use cleaning solutions to remove oil stains from the floor.

Will Your Roof and Chimney Pass Inspection?

If you are uneasy about climbing onto your roof, you can inspect most items from the ground using binoculars. Otherwise, be careful when working or moving about on your roof. Unless roof repair is a simple matter of applying new caulking you will probably need the services of a professional.

- Check the general condition of your roof. Sagging sections, curled shingles, pooled water on flat roofs and corrosion on metal roofing means it is time for repair or replacement.
- Both masonry and metal chimneys need to be straight and structurally sound, have proper capping on top and water-tight flashing where they penetrate the roof.
- All roofs undergo stress from snow and rain loads so a truss or rafter may become damaged resulting in a noticeable small depression. A professional should do this inexpensive repair.

Examine Your Walls

The condition of your exterior walls directly affects the look and curb appeal of your home.

- Replace old caulking. You may have to cut or scrape away old caulking to get a good seal. Do not seal drainage/ventilation gaps.
- Is your exterior paint looking good? If you see faded colours and cracked or peeling surfaces, you need to repaint. Be sure to get several quotes if you hire a professional painter.
- You can clean vinyl siding but defects or damage to it means siding usually will need to be replaced.
- Stucco can be repaired but skill is required to blend patches with existing stucco.



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Let's Go Indoors

- A prospective buyer will usually enter through your front door, so this is where you should begin your interior inspection. You want your buyer to see a neat, clean, well lit interior. Get clutter out of sight, ensure the carpets are clean and floors are scrubbed and polished and that walls and trim show fresh paint (preferably neutral or light colours).
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- Take a sniff... Are there any unpleasant odours in your home? If there are, track them down and eliminate them. Ensure all your lights work and are free of cobwebs. You want your home to look spacious, bright and fresh.
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- If you have considerable family memorabilia, consider thinning it out. Your objective is to help potential buyers feel as if they could live in your home. That mental leap becomes more difficult for them if your house resembles a shrine to your family.
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- Professional Realtors and decorators say the most important area of your home to upgrade and modernize are the kitchen and bathrooms. Buyers also want to see new or recently installed floor coverings throughout.

General Interior

- Check stairs for loose boards, ripped carpeting and missing or loose handrails and guards.
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- Most problems with interior walls are cosmetic and can be repaired with spackling compound and paint.
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- Ensure doors open and shut properly. Minor sticking is normal but excessive binding indicates possible structural problems.
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- Open and close all windows to ensure they work properly. Fogging between the panes of a sealed window indicates the seal is broken and the unit needs to be replaced.



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