

# A CHECKLIST TO HELP YOU SELL YOUR HOME.

If you're planning on putting your house on the market, you'll want your property to look its best. Good housekeeping, repair and spaciousness bring top dollars and quicker sales. Use this checklist as your guide to help in preparing your home to sell. This list is extensive so if you're looking for something in particular, scroll down to that particular item.



**EXTERIOR** - *If the buyer is not impressed with the outside sometimes they won't even bother going inside, even if they have a scheduled appointment!*

**PAINT** - Few things you do will enhance the salability of your house quite as much as painting the outside. Before painting, scrape or pressure wash any blistered or peeling paint, repair gutters and down spouts, and replace wood showing dry rot. Remember to pay special attention to wood, trim, gutters and wrought iron.



**FRONT ENTRY** - First impressions make a big difference! Give special care to this area because the front entry is where buyers get their first opportunity to make a close inspection. Remember, the showing agent will be reviewing special showing instructions, getting the Supra key ready, removing the house key from the Supra, and unlocking the door. This can take a minute or two. While the showing agent is performing these tasks you can bet the buyer is giving the entry a good once over! All woodwork should be freshly and neatly painted, including the entry door if necessary. Replace a badly worn or broken doorbell button. Polish any door brass. Paint or replace an unsightly mailbox. Put out a new or clean doormat. If the concrete porch, steps or walkway has settled and is showing separation apply a good exterior clear or grey colored concrete caulk to seal the cracks. Try to minimize areas that can cause a potential buyer to trip.



**YARD** - Mow and trim the lawn. Water regularly during the growing season. Weed flower beds, and remove or replace dead plants or trees. Make sure that no underlying landscape plastic is exposed, landscaping rocks and mulch are tidy and not washed out, and that weeds and unwanted grass are removed.

**DOWNSPOUTS** - Make sure that all of your downspouts are properly diverting rain water away from the foundation of your home. At a minimum you should have splash blocks under each downspout. It is preferable to have corrugated tubing attached to the end of your downspout. The tubing should be buried and the length should be sufficient to carry the water away from the home. **This is one item that I routinely see home inspectors include as a deficiency in a home inspection report.**

**DECKS** - A buyer will look closely at this space and will visualize entertaining or relaxing. Make certain that your deck is in very good condition. Power wash your deck. Apply a fresh coat of colored or clear sealer. Check the stability of your deck by jumping on it. Yes, jump a rope on your deck. It should not move or give. Make sure that all of the deck spindles are secured and not bowed.

**DRIVEWAY, GARAGE, CARPORT AND DETACHED OUTBUILDING OR STORAGE BUILDING** - Clean up grease or oil spots and remove the soil at least, if not the stains. See that the garage door opens freely, and if you have an automatic door opener, make sure that it is in good working order. Size does matter with your garage! Buyers will pay a premium price for a garage if they can visualize it being of value to them, but it's hard to sell a garage when it's filled and overflowing. Try to move excess items to a storage facility if possible. If every square inch is over taken with boxes, tools, bikes, tires, etc., and there is just a rectangle of empty space left for the vehicle, this will not impress the buyer at all. Installing shelving in the garage is an inexpensive and quick fix! Shelving will get the items up off the floor and permit the buyer to view the actual floor space of the garage. Clean, and if necessary, paint all windows and service doors of the garage. If you have an attic pull down in the garage make sure that it is safe and operable.

If your carport is made of metal make sure that there are no rust stains. If necessary, clean with a pressure washer and apply a new coat of paint. You want your detached outbuildings or storage buildings to be as tidy as possible too. If the building has a dirt floor, apply a layer of fresh gravel. If the building is made of wood, remove any wood rot, and apply a fresh coat of paint.

Make sure that any storage building on the property will be accessible to the buyer. They will want to inspect this area as well!



**AIR CONDITIONERS** (outside and window units) - Paint or replace any rusted exposed metal. Correct improper drainage. If your outside unit has settled and is not level, please have it leveled. **If it is not level, this will definitely show up on the home inspection report.**

**PATIO** - A nice spread of outdoor furniture looks very appealing. If necessary, borrow some from a friend to enhance the appearance of your property.

**SWIMMING POOL** - Keep the area around the pool clean and secure. Adjust the chemicals until the pool sparkles. Hose dust and cobwebs from filtration equipment. Store chemicals and tools neatly. Treat rusted areas accordingly.

## INTERIOR

**WINDOWS** - Repair or replace torn or bent screens. As a last resort, remove them entirely. It's better to have no screens than to have unsightly screens. Replace any cracked or broken panes. Also remove any overgrown foliage near windows. A window framed in ivy can give a warm, homey feeling, but cut it back if the foliage is restricting the light coming into the rooms. Test each window to make sure that it is opening and locking freely and smoothly. Check the exterior of each window to make certain that the space between the construction materials (brick, stone, wood siding) and the window has a good seal with clear exterior caulk. **This one item routinely shows up on home inspection reports.** Last, all of your drapery rods should be affixed firmly to walls and work smoothly, and draperies should be clean and hanging properly. Pull back window dressings or raise blinds to allow natural light to fill the room.

**DOORS** - Check to make sure that all doors open and close freely, including closet doors and patio or sliding glass doors. Tighten the hardware, particularly doorknobs. Oil squeaky doors. A little WD-40 can work wonders! Make sure that you can not see daylight around your entry and exit doors. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know and understand that if you see daylight your are losing precious heated air in the winter and cooled air in the summer. Replace worn weather stripping. **This is a frequent item that appears on home inspection reports.**

**CABINETS** - Tighten the hardware on all kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Clean the cabinets, inside and outside, very thoroughly.



Organize the storage space that your cabinets provide and if necessary pack up items that you do not routinely utilize. Check the space under the kitchen sink and bathroom sink for water stains. A buyer will open your cabinets!

**WALLS** - Like the exterior, painting indoors will help the interior of your home. Wallpaper should be clean and adhere smoothly to the walls. Knicks, holes, and dents should be filled in with drywall mud, sanded and painted. If you do not have a back splash or protective cover behind the cooking surface of your range and/or stove, make certain that this area is not spotted with dried food or grease. If it does have residue from food or grease clean it very well. If necessary give the area a fresh coat of paint. If you do have a protective surface or back splash, check the area for food residue and clean to make it sparkle. There are a couple of things that will turn off a buyer fast. Seeing spaghetti sauce droplets or grease build up near and around the stove or range is one of them!

**FLOORS** - Repairing loose carpeting on a stairway or a loose stair tread plate is a top priority. Replace or repair missing or damaged pieces of tile, hardwood, and vinyl. Replace missing or chipped grout. Sparkling clean floors are a must and don't forget to clean the baseboards and quarter round trim pieces too. Walk through your entire home going over every square inch of the walking surface. If you hear a squeak or feel a raised or depressed area, the buyer will too. Address these areas so that you can remove as many obstacles as possible.

Steam cleaning is the best answer for soiled carpets, especially when shampooing isn't enough. If pet odors or smoke odors are present, clean the carpet some time before your home is placed on the market to be sure that all the odors have been eliminated. And...if you are a smoker, please stop smoking inside your home immediately.



## MECHANICALS

**LIGHTS** - Every light socket in and around the house should have a good bulb with adequate wattage. Don't overlook the lights outside or in the garage. Also remember the utility room, hall closets, over the sink in the kitchen, and in the oven exhaust hood.

**SWITCHES & FIXTURES** - Repair or replace wall switches, outlets, and light fixtures that don't work. Replace any broken or missing switch plates. A missing switch plate in a basement that is not yet finished will be viewed by a home inspector as deficient. You may need to call a professional electrician.

**SMOKE DETECTORS** - All smoke detectors should be operational and should either be hard wired or have a non-removable lithium battery. These typically last for a period of 10 years.

**APPLIANCES** - Appliances that will remain with the home should be in good working condition and clean. If specific equipment does not work and you don't intend to repair it, point it out and make it known.

**PLUMBING** - Leaky or excessively noisy toilets should be fixed, as well as any dripping faucets. Straddle your toilet with your knees and try to move it back and forth. If it doesn't move or rock with you, fine. However, if it moves, even slightly, you will need to tighten the toilet to the floor. Toilet seats and the hardware should be polished and sparkling. Badly chipped or stained sinks, toilets and tubs should be re-enameled, patched or replaced. If you have a whirlpool tub make sure that all of your jets working properly. If you have build-up or residue on your shower heads, hand sprayers, or faucets, make sure that you clean these to make them sparkle.

**FURNACE AND WATER HEATER** - Perhaps because it's so unusual, a sparkling clean water heater or furnace really impresses buyers and it takes so little time and effort to make this happen! It is common to have items stored very near the water heater or furnace. This is a big no-no. You want to free up the space around both of these items.

## THE SPACIOUS LOOK

*On a personal note, I live by the six month rule...If I haven't touched it, used it, or moved it in six months, I want to throw it away. My husband on the other hand saves everything, and I mean literally everything. He has actually removed items that I have put in the trash. One example was an old lamp he discovered in the garbage can. He was bewildered and frustrated that I would, and did, throw it away. He told me that he could use the parts some day! We have been married a long time. Over the years I have learned to bury the items in the garbage can that have violated my six month rule, or to run them out to the garbage can just prior to pick up. My husband has revitalized items that he has saved for years and will profess to the world that he knew right where it was and that by saving it for years he in turn saved a trip to the store and money! I love him and all of the money and time he has saved both of us through the years!*

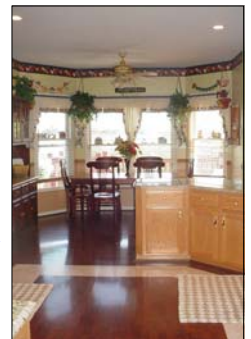
- One of the best and least expensive ways to improve the look of your home is to open up as much space as possible. Openness stimulates positive feelings in buyers. Overstuffed rooms and closets give the impression of being smaller than they really are. Remember, you can't change your room sizes, but you can try to present it in a pleasing manner.
- Open up your storage areas by getting rid of items you aren't using. One of the most frequently voiced requirements of buyers is for more closet and storage space.
- The same principle used for closets applies here: overcrowding gives the impression of inadequate space. This applies to bathrooms and kitchens with the kitchen being the most important. It also helps to store counter top appliances that aren't frequently used.

## HOUSEKEEPING HINTS



**BATHROOMS** - Few places in the home can get so dirty so fast, and yet few things will "unsell" a house as fast as dirty bathrooms. The vanity, sink, faucet hardware, and mirrors are big focal points. But don't forget other potential problems such as soap residue in a shower, a moldy shower curtain, accumulated dirt in the track of sliding shower door, soiled or missing grout, dirty toilet bowls, and bath mats.

**KITCHENS** - Most buyers will inspect the kitchen carefully, so extra time invested here is well spent. Clean the stove inside and out. Replace badly stained or corroded reflector plates under the heating elements on electric range tops. Remember, don't neglect the kitchen exhaust hood. Buyers frequently check this area as a clue to general housekeeping. Remove magnets from the front and side of the refrigerator.

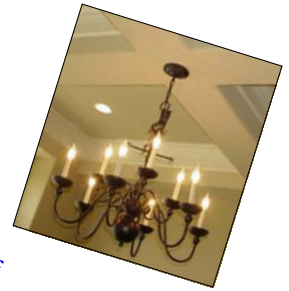


**WINDOWS** - If a house is to look its best clean windows are an absolute necessity. Weather permitting, open windows to let in fresh air.

**PERSONAL ITEMS** - You want the buyer to focus their attention on your home. Remove personal pictures that you have sitting around. Secure your jewelry, financial records, and your computer for each showing.

### **SIX WAYS TO HELP YOU SHOW YOUR HOME**

1. **LIGHTEN UP!** Bring on the light! Open all draperies unless the window has a poor view. Turn on the lights in rooms for a bright, cheerful look. Lamps and indirect lighting are preferable, but use overhead lights if that's all there is.
2. **CREATE NICE AROMAS!** Make your house smell nice and inviting. Open windows to let in fresh air. Set out fragrant, fresh flowers. Bake cookies or bread. Do not cook strong smelling vegetables like cabbage on the day of a showing.
3. **PETS ARE NICE, BUT...** Pets should be out of the house, if not off the property. Not everyone loves them. Some people don't like dogs, and others don't like cats or object to them because they're allergic.
4. **ADD MUSIC!** Soft background music creates a relaxed mood that prompts buyers to linger and enjoy. But it's better to have no music at all than to have it too loud.
5. **SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?** Go! Most buyers won't relax and closely inspect a home if the owners are present, so try and arrange to turn your house over to the Realtor for showings. If you must remain at the home, refrain from talking unless questions are directed to you. Trust the Realtor's professional abilities.
6. **YOUR CLOSETS** - Keep closet doors closed except for walk-in closets. Have those doors slightly ajar and turn on the lights to draw attention to this special feature.



## **THE ONCE OVER**

### **Living room**

- △ Put away photo accessories and knick-knacks, keep attention on your home, not your family.
- △ Remove any extra furniture to maximize spaciousness.
- △ Clean and polish the fireplace and fireplace tools.
- △ Ensure the carpet, hardwood, tile, laminate, vinyl and rugs are sparkling clean.
- △ Dust and clean furniture, windows, trim, and light fixtures.
- △ Fill in any holes and cracks in the walls with drywall mud, and caulk the trim that has dried and separated.

### **Bedrooms**

- △ Put attractive bedding sets on the beds.
- △ Dust and clean furniture, windows, trim, and light fixtures
- △ Put away photo accessories and knick-knacks.
- △ Secure personal items such as jewelry, financial items, loose change/money
- △ Ensure the carpet, hardwood, tile, laminate, vinyl and rugs are sparkling clean.
- △ Fill in any holes and cracks in the walls with drywall mud, and caulk the trim that has dried and separated.

### **Bathrooms**

- △ Remove any stains and mildew from sink, tubs, or shower stalls.
- △ Ensure the caulking around tubs and showers is filled. I am a big fan of caulk! It is a wonderful thing!
- △ Mirrors and faucets should be cleaned and polished.
- △ Put attractive towel sets and rugs in the bathroom. Use them for showings only.
- △ Replace shower curtain, toilet seat or towel rack if they look worn or damaged.
- △ Put away all personal care toiletries and don't forget those in your shower.
- △ Ensure the carpet, hardwood, tile, laminate, vinyl and rugs are sparkling clean.

### **Kitchen - a home's most important feature**

- △ Ensure that all kitchen appliances are in perfect working order.
- △ If any appliances need replacement, remember white is the best color.
- △ Unclutter counter tops. Put away any small appliances.
- △ Purchase new burner pans for your electric range top; the cost is minimal and the look is brand new.
- △ Clean light fixtures.
- △ Clean the oven.

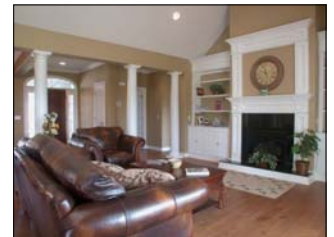
- △ Clean and paint the ceiling if necessary.
- △ Ensure the kitchen floor looks pristine - replace vinyl flooring if necessary.
- △ Take magnets and artwork off of the refrigerator. Keep one or two special items displayed.

**Exterior**

- △ Maximize your home's curb appeal; sweep up any trash in the road or sidewalk near your home.
- △ Do not leave any trash cans out.
- △ Get rid of any weeds in your lawn or sidewalk; trim any overgrown bushes.
- △ Water your lawn and keep it mowed and trimmed; fertilize to maximize lushness.
- △ Paint your mailbox, fence or any outside fixtures if necessary.
- △ Power wash, or consider repainting the outside of your home, this includes gutters, downspouts, fascia and soffit.
- △ Repair any broken windows or screens.
- △ Wash windows and doors. Clean your front door and repaint if necessary.
- △ Repair or replace any roof problems; remove any tree branches or visible debris from the roof or gutters.
- △ Ensure the doorbell works.
- △ Make sure gutters and downspouts are clean, painted and free of leaves.
- △ If springtime, plant colorful flowers in your front yard.
- △ Have a nice arrangement of outdoor furniture on the patio or deck.
- △ Make sure your deck is freshly stained and not splintered. If you have deck boards that are splintered they should be replaced. Check all spindles to ensure they are secure.

**General Interior**

- △ Clean or paint all trim, especially around doors. Don't forget to caulk trim that has separated or pulled away from the wall.
- △ Clean or paint walls to get rid of smears and fingerprints.
- △ Clean wallpaper and patch up any peeling.
- △ Professionally clean your carpet; wipe and clean hard-surfaced flooring.
- △ Repair and even replace any light fixtures, switch plates and outlet covers.
- △ Remove cobwebs from corners, ceiling, behind furniture, and on light fixtures.
- △ Shake out your draperies, clean your blinds.
- △ Make sure stairways are clear and hazard free.
- △ De-clutter your rooms and closets - rent storage space to place "stuff" if necessary.
- △ Organize all closets and cupboards. Remove things if necessary to maximize spaciousness.
- △ Repair leaking faucets, running toilets, sticky doors and windows.
- △ Keep noises to a minimum; spray squeaky hinges with WD-40. Play soft music during showings.
- △ Tighten the hardware on doorknobs and cabinetry.
- △ If wintertime, light a fire (if applicable) to create warmth.
- △ If springtime, place fresh cut flowers in vital places.
- △ Eliminate any food, tobacco or pet odors.
- △ Fill the house with pleasant odors such as potpourri or freshly baked cookies or bread.
- △ Turn on all lights just before showings (even in daytime); open blinds and drapes to maximize brightness in the house.
- △ Arrange to be absent during all showings.



**Garage/Basement/Attic/Storage Buildings**

- △ Take any unnecessary items to your storage space.
- △ Place bright lights in all of these locations.
- △ Consider painting walls a bright white color.
- △ Ensure there are no evidentiary signs of water damage.
- △ Remove any cobwebs and dust.
- △ Remove any evidence of pests such as mouse, ant, or roach traps.
- △ Remove dead bugs from the windows and along the walls.
- △ Remove any oil stains in the garage. Keep it stain free by placing a piece of cardboard under your car if necessary.

