

Homeowner's Checklist

So you're planning to sell your home. You and your real estate broker have decided on a price, based on current market values, but your home will sell faster, and bring a higher price, if it shows well.

Potential buyers will get the best impression if your home is clean, neat, uncluttered, in good repair, light, airy, fragrant and quiet.

This checklist will help you get your home ready to show.

General Guidelines

General Guidelines

- Clean everything. Cleanliness signals to a buyer that the home has been well cared for and is most likely in good repair. A messy or dirty home will cause prospective buyers to notice every flaw.
- Unclutter your home before you show it. Have a garage sale. Empty closets. Throw away what you can't sell. The less "stuff" in and around a home, the roomier it will seem.
- Let the light in. Raise the shades. Open the blinds. Pull back the curtains. Put brighter bulbs in all the lamps (but not bright enough to cause a glare). Bright, open rooms feel larger and more inviting. Dark rooms feel small and gloomy.
- Let fresh air in. Get rid of odors that may be unfamiliar or unpleasant. People are most often offended by odors from tobacco, pets, cooking and musty or sour laundry. Fresh flowers and potpourri can be used to your advantage. Other smells that attract positive attention include fresh baked bread and cinnamon.
- Fix anything that is broken. This includes plumbing, electrical systems/switches, windows, TV antennas, screens, doors and fences. If it can't be fixed, replace it or get rid of it. (No window screens are better than broken ones.) A buyer will make a much lower offer if your house is in disrepair and will probably still insist that everything be fixed before taking occupancy. You're better off if you leave potential buyers no reason to offer less than you are asking.
- Send pets away or secure them away from the house when prospective buyers are coming. You never know if people will be annoyed or intimidated by your pets or even allergic to them. And you never want a prospective buyer to have to avoid animal droppings.
- Send the kids to grandma's or take them on a walk around the block. Children can be noisy and distracting to someone interested in looking at a home.
- Paint. There's nothing that improves the value of a home for a lower cost than a

fresh coat of paint. And it's often easier to paint a room than it is to scrub it. Stick with neutral colors—off-white is safest. Be sure to avoid black, violet and pink.

- Keep noise down. Silence is a restful sound that offends no one. Turn off the TV and radio. Soft, instrumental music is fine, but avoid vocals. If necessary, close the windows to eliminate any street noise.
- Fix squeaky floorboards. Don't run any noisy equipment like a vacuum cleaner or table saw while people are looking at your home, and, if possible, ask your neighbors to avoid irksome noises.

Main Interior Rooms

● ALL ROOMS

Clean especially around:

- Doors
- Windows
- Light switches
- Baseboards
- Wash lace curtains and have draperies cleaned if necessary
- Remove or pull back dark curtains
- Lubricate window slides (soap for wood/silicon or a candle stump for metal)
- Make sure doors open smoothly
- Clean ceiling light fixtures
- Check for cobwebs in all corners
- Fix any scratches in wooden floors
- Replace worn/broken flooring
- Remove or replace worn carpet
- Use area rugs where needed
- Empty wastebaskets
- Make the beds
- Fluff the pillows

● KITCHEN

- Keep dishes and food out of sight
- Clean appliances

- Clean range hood, including light bulbs
- Clean behind appliances
- Keep floor clean
- Clean light fixtures
- Make sure all electrical outlets work
- Eliminate cooking odors
- Deodorize garbage disposal, dishwasher, refrigerator
- Repair faucets
- Put fresh shelf paper in cabinets
- Organize cupboards
- Clean out under sink
- Replace garbage disposal gasket to reduce noise



● BATHROOMS

- Keep them spotlessly clean
- Shine mirrors
- Keep wastebasket empty and clean
- Clean out cabinets and remove non-essentials
- Keep fresh, clean towels on towel racks
- Clean shower door — if sliding door, keep track well lubricated
- Remove soap residue, mildew and mold from sink/tub/shower
- Remove lime deposits from fixtures/drains/sink/toilet bowl
- Remove stains from porcelain sink/tub/toilet
- Replace torn/moldy shower curtain
- Clean tile grout
- Make sure toilet flushes properly — replace mechanism if necessary
- Clean exhaust fan/heater — replace if broken or noisy

Exterior Areas

● Replace, repair and/or paint any damaged:

- plaster
- wood siding
- trim
- rain gutters



- shutters
- doors
- window frames
- glazing
- screens
- hardware
- fences/gates
- outdoor lighting

● **Clean/Wash:**

- siding
- windows
- screens
- outdoor BBQ
- AC unit
- pool/spa

● **Put 100-watt bulbs in:**

- porch lights
- carport
- garage



- Clean around service areas/trash cans
- Haul away rubbish
- Straighten woodpile
- Repair leaky faucets
- Clean up pet droppings
- Paint or varnish doors
- Polish door hardware
- Make sure doorbell/knocker works
- Paint or replace street numbers on house
- Make sure septic tank is odor-free

- Clean oil stains from driveway/street
- Patch/reseal driveway if necessary

● Landscaping

- Mow/edge lawn regularly
- Aerate/feed lawn
- Overseed bare spots in lawn
- Water lawn regularly
- Remove/replace dead plants
- Prune overgrown/diseased/damaged shrubs
- Prune or remove shrubs/trees blocking view
- from windows (unless view is undesirable)
- Stake up any sagging trees/shrubs
- Keep flower beds free of weeds
- Trim around base of trees/walls/fences



● Repair or remove any broken/damaged landscape accessories such as:

- fences
- walls
- gazebos
- fountains
- trellises
- planters
- other (_____)
- Replace any broken stepping stones
- Adjust any sprinkler system; repair any broken/leaky heads
- Install fencing or shrubs to hide any unsightly views

Miscellaneous Areas

● CLOSETS

- Keep closets clean and free of clutter
- Throw out or pack away non-essentials
- Adjust/repair any sliding doors
- Lubricate sliding door hardware
- Paint if needed



● LAUNDRY AREA

- Clean out area behind washer and dryer
- Eliminate any mildew odors

● GARAGE/CARPORT/SHED

- Install 100-watt light bulbs
- Keep area clean and uncluttered
- Hang up and put away any tools
- Clear away any cobwebs
- Remove oil and paintstains from floor
- Adjust tension rod to eliminate sag from overhead garage door
- Lubricate, adjust and/or repair garage door opener
- Paint if needed



● BASEMENT

- Eliminate any signs of dampness or mold
- Check for and eliminate cracks

● HEATING/AIR CONDITIONING UNIT

- Vacuum
- Replace filter
- Clean intake vent
- Remove any stored items

* If at least 75% of the items above have

been checked off, and your home is realistically priced, expect to make a sale.

Final Hints

- Make sure the temperature in your home is comfortable —keep it cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. If it's cold outside, and you have a fireplace, a nice fire will make your home seem cozy and inviting.
- Be available in case prospective buyers have questions, but don't crowd them.
- Provide an exhaustive written list of the features of your home.
- Answer questions professionally and truthfully, but don't volunteer any information.
- Know the distances to schools and shopping centers.
- Let the home and the salesperson do most of the selling.
- Refer any prospect who calls or comes by to your broker for pre-screening and pre-qualification as well as for your own safety.
- Provide a home warranty and promote it. (First American has [homewarranty policies](#) available in many states.)
- Tell your real estate agent all about the home — good and bad. Let the professional decide how to handle any negatives and feature or highlight



the positives.