



## Setting the Stage Sells Your Home

The age-old observation that “you never get a second chance to make a first impression” certainly applies when it comes to attracting buyers to a for-sale home.

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Making a good first impression can mean the difference between receiving serious offers for your home or being subjected to months of lookie-loos dropping by but never buying.

How can you ensure that your home will make the best impression possible? Here are six tips for savvy home sellers:

- 1. Focus on curb appeal.** The outside of your house can be the source of a very good first impression. Keep the grass well-watered and mowed. Have your trees trimmed. Cut back overgrowth. Plant some blooming flowers. Store toys, bicycles, roller-skates, gardening equipment and the like out of sight. Have at least the front of your house and the trim painted, if necessary. Sweep the porch and the front walkway. After dark, turn on your front porch light and any other exterior lighting.
- 2. Clear out the clutter.** Real estate agents say buyers won't purchase a home they can't see. If your home has too much furniture, overflowing closets, crowded kitchen and bathroom countertops or lots of family photos or collectibles on display, potential buyers won't be able to see your home. Get rid of anything you don't need or use. Fill up your garage or rent some off-site storage space if that's what it takes to clear out your home.
- 3. Use your nose.** Many people are oblivious to scents, but others are extremely sensitive to offensive odors. To eliminate bad smells, bathe your pets, freshen the cat litter box frequently, shampoo your carpets, dry clean your drapes, and empty trash cans, recycling bins and ash trays. Place open boxes of baking soda in smell-prone areas, and refrain from cooking fish or strong-smelling foods. Introduce pleasing smells by placing flowers or potpourri in your home and using air fresheners. Baking a fresh or frozen pie or some other fragrant treat is another common tactic.
- 4. Make all necessary repairs.** Buyers expect everything in their new home to operate safely and properly. Picky buyers definitely will notice-and likely magnify -- minor maintenance problems you've ignored for months or even years. Leaky faucets, burned-out light bulbs, painted-shut or broken windows, inoperable appliances and the like should be fixed before you put your home on the market. These repairs may seem small, but left undone they can lead buyers to question whether you've taken good care of your home.
- 5. Introduce lifestyle accessories and make your home as comfortable and attractive as possible.** Set the dining room table with your best dishes. Put out your only-for-company towels. Make up the spare bed. Hang some fresh curtains. Put some logs in the fireplace. Use your imagination.
- 6. Get a buyer's-eye view.** Walk up to your home and pretend you've never seen it before. What do you notice? How do you feel about what you see? Does the home seem inviting? Well-maintained? Would you want to buy this home? Your answer should be an enthusiastic yes!