



Checklist: For a Better Home Showing

Remove clutter. Clear off counters and pack unnecessary decorative items. Put extra furniture in storage, and remove out-of-season items. Don't forget to clean out the garage, too.

Let it shine. Cleaning windows and screens will help bring more light into your home. Replace burnt bulbs, and consider higher wattage in low-light areas. Clean the walls or brush on a fresh coat of bright, neutral paint. Replace heavy curtains with sheer ones and show off your view.

Keep it clean. A deep clean before listing your home will make upkeep easier. Consider hiring a cleaning service to help.

Maximize comfort. In summer, shut A/C vents on the first floor so more air will get upstairs. Reverse the process in winter.

Perform a sniff test. Clean carpeting and drapes to eliminate odors. Open the windows to air out the house. Consider potpourri or scented candles and diffusers. For quick fixes in the kitchen, cotton balls soaked in vanilla extract or orange juice can instantly make the fridge a nicer-smelling place. Boil lemon juice in your microwave, then add it to your dishwasher to eliminate odors. You can also run lemon rinds through the garbage disposal for a similar effect.

Take care of minor repairs. Sticky doors, torn screens, cracked caulking, or a dripping faucet may seem trivial, but they'll give buyers the impression that the house isn't well-maintained.

Tidy up outdoors. Cut the grass, rake the leaves, add new mulch, trim the bushes, edge the walkways, and clean the gutters. A pot of bright flowers near the entryway adds great curb appeal.

Set the scene. A bright afghan or new accent pillows easily jazz up a dull room. Pretty dishes or a simple centerpiece on the tables can help buyers picture themselves living there. Try staging a chess game in progress. If you have a fireplace, lay fresh logs or a basket of flowers there.

Make the bath luxurious. Make sure your personal toiletry items are out of sight, along with old towels and toothbrushes. Add a new shower curtain and fancy guest soaps.

Send the pets to the neighbors. If that's not possible, crate or confine them to one room, and let the real estate practitioner know where they'll be to eliminate surprises.

Lock up valuables and medication. Agents can't watch everyone all the time.

Head out. It can be awkward for everyone if you're home at the time of a showing.