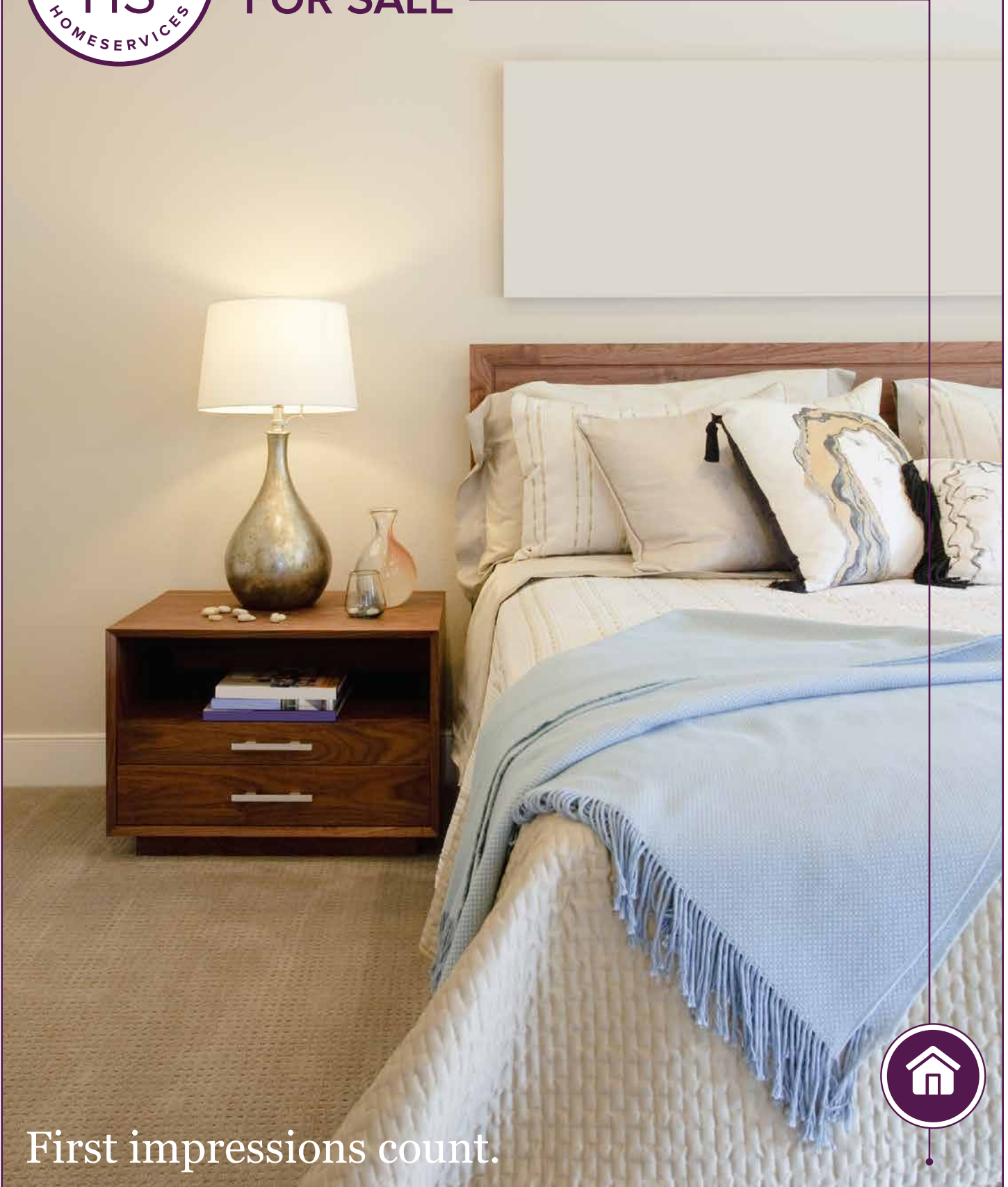




# PREPARING YOUR PROPERTY FOR SALE



First impressions count.

**EXTERIOR:** Curb appeal is your first chance to entice buyers. Focusing your efforts on the front of the house will assist in grabbing buyers' attention. It's true that first impressions are lasting, so be sure that your house creates a strong first impression.

- Get into your car and drive away from your home. Drive towards your home the way a potential buyer would. Notice your first impressions of your home? Is the landscaping well groomed? How about the driveway and curb? Can you easily see the architecture of the home, or is it blocked by trees and bushes. Notice your roof? Is it in good condition? Make a list of items that need attention.
- Paint your front door and mailbox. Polish your door and entry hardware.
- Make sure your doorbell is functional.
- Wash or thoroughly clean wood, aluminum and vinyl sided homes. Pressure washing can remove dirt, grime, peeling paint, and mildew.
- Rake leaves, trim shrubbery and trees, cut the lawn, and plant a few new, fresh flowers. Put down fresh mulch or peat moss around shrubs and flower beds.
- Sweep and hose off the walkways and driveways. Pressure wash if necessary.
- Clean the gutters and extend downspouts to prevent flooding or basement water seepage.
- Organize the garage. Get rid of clutter by either putting it in boxes, or pack ahead of time and rent a storage locker for your garage belongings. Make sure you wash your car.
- Check the locks of your home – both entry, back entry, and garage. Locks can give a first impression of a home that's needing maintenance. And they're the first thing a buyer sees. A small dab of graphite will make them work like new.
- Clean oil stains from your driveway and garage. This is best achieved by using poultice with Portland cement. Scrub with a detergent and rinse. Clean rust stains beneath rails with a commercial product.
- Clean up any litter, toys, yard tools or newspapers in the yard or walkways. Remove any leaves in the yard or walkways.
- Touch-up the paint on the exterior of the home if necessary. In some cases it pays to repaint the entire exterior if it hasn't received a coat of paint in years. Hardwood trim on the exterior of the home can make or break its appearance. Make sure it looks clean.
- Look for any cracks in exterior plaster, and make sure they're fixed and repainted to match exterior paint.

**INTERIOR:** Your house may fulfill all the criteria potential buyers want for location, price, style and amenities but it still needs to make an emotional connection. Inspire buyers by creating scenarios where they can picture themselves. To do so, create a neutral slate by using subtle colors in your entryway, living room, family room and dining room. Eliminate excess personal memorabilia and engage all of the senses with soft music and fresh flowers.

- The entry way sets first impressions. So make sure it's in great condition with fresh paint and clean floors. If the entry tile floor has build-up, consider using a commercial stripper and re-waxing.
- Clean out about 1/3rd to 1/2 of your furniture. You want your home to look uncluttered, and the rooms to feel open and bright. The average home has too much furniture for showing, and you need to move anyhow. So you might as well pack away any furniture that clutters any rooms in the home.

- Put away knickknacks and items that make the home look overly personal to you. You don't want your buyer feeling that they would never fit in the home because it's got so many of your personal items in it. Put away cluttered photos and other objects that will detract away from the home.
- Sleek and spacious sells. Consider renting a storage unit for extra furnishings, boxes and clutter.
- Do a thorough interior maintenance review: Oil squeaky doors, tighten doorknobs, replace burned-out lights, clean and repair ALL windows, and repair leaking taps and toilets. Look for chipped paint and cracked plaster or drywall that needs repairing.
- It's a good idea to have all windows professionally washed. And clean all window shades and blinds.
- Replace all burned-out light bulbs and clean lighting fixtures.
- Give your home a spacious look. If you've ever toured a model home, you've noticed that the home is spacious and bright. Make your home look the same by: 1) Clear out stairs and halls of clutter and excess furniture, 2) clear counters in the kitchen and bathrooms, and 3) Make closets and storage areas neat and tidy.
- Make sure your home is clean by doing the following: 1) Shampoo carpets; 2) Clean washer, dryer, and laundry tubs; 3) Clean the furnace; 4) Clean the refrigerator and stove; 5) Clean and freshen the bathrooms. Hire a professional cleaning service if needed. The money you spend on these areas will come back to you in purchase price.
- Wax or polish floors, and glue down any seams if you have vinyl flooring.
- Make sure windows and doors operate properly and lubricate bi-fold closet door tracks with a silicon spray.
- Glue loose wallpaper seams and remove soiled wallpaper.
- Clean around fireplaces and remove ashes.
- Organize all closets, pack up unnecessary items for storage, and put all toys away.
- Make sure all beds are made, bedrooms are neat and clean, and laundry is clean and folded.
- Consider holding a yard sale BEFORE you place your home on the market to get rid of excess items that can make your home look cluttered or small.
- Clean and repair your bathrooms. Repair loose tiles. Remove loose grout using a grout file, and apply new grout. Faded tile colors can be improved using an epoxy spray. Remove old tub and tile caulking with a hooked scraper and install new white silicone tub and tile caulk. Concentrate on areas such as counter corners, shower corners, and base of toilet. Old tubs can often be sprayed with an epoxy coating. Remove all soap scum and dirt build-ups. Clean glass doors with vinegar, and replace badly soiled shower curtains. Don't forget to vacuum exhaust fans.
- Clean and repair your kitchen. Clean ovens thoroughly. Clean cooktops and exhaust fans. Remember to clean behind your appliances. Double check all burners to make sure they're working. Defrost freezers, and thoroughly clean the interior of your refrigerator. Remove mold from refrigerator gaskets. Empty the water collection tray under the refrigerator. Neatly arrange soaps and cleaning accessories. Thoroughly wash fronts of cabinets. Cover counter burns with ceramic tile or heat-resistant glass. Make sure all handles are securely in place. Install new shelf and drawer liners.

**SHOWING YOUR PROPERTY:** When you know a showing is scheduled, you can put some last minute touches on your property and spot clean for maximum impact before the buyers arrive. Ideally, you should plan to leave the property and allow your agent to showcase your home to its maximum benefit- and don't forget to make arrangements for your pets to be elsewhere too.

- Save those receipts. If you completed any substantial work on your home, save the receipts and ONLY take them out if someone questions the value of the work performed (in the negotiating process). Many times extra work will increase the value of your home beyond your costs. So only use the receipts if you need support to justify the work.
- Save those utility bills. Buyers frequently have questions about utility costs of owning a home. If you have past utility bills, you will greatly increase your credibility and help provide precise answers to important questions. Save electric, gas, water, oil, sewage, and waste management bills.
- Go away during organized showings. There's a crowd when your home's being shown. The only exception to this rule is if you have specific knowledge about features of the home a Realtor® cannot answer. But in most cases, don't stay.
- Turn on ALL lights. Illumination is like a welcome sign.
- Empty all wastebaskets.
- Open all drapery and bring in as much natural light as possible. Buyers hate dark homes. Anything you can do to brighten your home will help.
- Turn off any radios and TV's. Very soft, background music can enhance a showing.
- Set a comfortable temperature.
- Plan a pleasant aroma. Cinnamon sticks or vanilla boiled in a pot of water on the stove emit pleasant aromas and make a home smell inviting. Apple and cherry wood smoldering a fireplace do the same. And who can resist the smell of apple pie or fresh bread baking in the kitchen. Often, these pleasant smells can override other odors your home may have.
- Keep pets out of the home during showings. It's best to keep them out of the home for an entire day before an open house.
- Do NOT volunteer conversation. Be courteous but don't force conversation with a potential buyer. They want to inspect your home, not make a social call.
- Stay positive: Never apologize for the appearance of your home. Let the showing Realtor answer any objections – they're trained to know how.
- DO NOT Tag Along. It makes buyers fearful and uncomfortable. The showing Realtor® knows the buyer's requirements and can better emphasize the features of your home. They will call you if needed.
- Never negotiate during a showing. Let your Realtor® discuss price, terms, possessions, and other items with any potential buyers. If any negotiations arise prior to an offer, politely request the buyer to submit an offer and you can consider it