

MAXIMIZING FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Spruce up the curb appeal.

Walk out to the front of your home and pretend you're a prospective buyer seeing the property for the first time. As you approach the front door, what is your impression of the property? Do the lawn and bushes look neatly manicured? Is the address clearly visible? What do you see framing the entrance? Is the walkway free of cracks and impediments?

- Mow** your lawn.
- Edge** the grass around walkways and trees.
- Trim** bushes and branches so they don't block windows or architectural details.
- Stow** your garden tools and hoses out of sight, and clear kids' toys from the lawn.
- Wipe** down the front door.
- Place** a seasonal wreath on your door.
- Set** a pot of bright flowers (or a small evergreen in winter) on your porch or front walkway.
- Clean** your windows, inside and out.
- Repair** any cracks or holes in the driveway, and clean oil spots with degreaser. Pressure wash sidewalks and driveways.

Look Through Buyer's Eyes When Your Home is For Sale.

Executing a deep clean before putting your home on the market will not only help it shine, but it will make tidiness easier to maintain between showings.

Clean. Clear. Light. Bright.

Upgrade the kitchen and bathrooms.

These are make-or-break rooms. Make sure they're squeaky clean and clutter-free, and update the pulls, sinks, and faucets, if necessary.

Make your bed better.

Pick up clothes and arrange the bedrooms to appear neat and organized. Store clutter out of sight.

Wash the walls.

Grease, smoke, and dust can adhere to walls and make even the best decorating look dingy.

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.

Clean out and organize closets.

Remember: Closets will be opened! Keep closets, cupboards, and even your attic orderly and neat. Remove anything you don't need or haven't used or worn in a while.

Perform a sniff test.

Clean carpeting and drapes to eliminate odors.

Enrich with color.

Paint is cheap, but it can make a big impression. If necessary, repaint or clean dingy, soiled or strongly colored walls with a light neutral shade.

Update window treatments.

Buyers want light and views, not dated, heavy drapes.

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. Replace burned-out light bulbs or cracked windowpanes. Repair cracks, holes or damage to plaster, wallboard, wallpaper, and tiles.

Get replacement estimates.

Do you have big-ticket items that will need to be replaced soon? Find out how much it will cost to repair an older roof or replace worn carpeting, even if you don't plan to do so. The figures will help buyers determine if they can afford the home, and they'll be handy when negotiations begin.

Lock up valuables and medication.

Agents can't watch everyone all the time.