

# 10 Tips to Sell Your Home Fast

by Scott Stroud, Editor, Selling More Homes Media

By now you've probably realized that now is a phenomenal time to buy a new home. Interest rates are down, prices are still low, and there's a new home shortage that will soon drive both of these costs higher.

Still, before you can invest in a new home, you might have an existing home you must sell. Below are 10 tips from industry experts to help you sell your home faster, easier, and for the most money:

## 1. Make sure it's in good repair.

You know that 'honey-do' list you've been working on? It's time to finish it. Make sure there are no obvious obstacles for a prospective buyer to trip over when they look at your home. Even little things, like minor cracks in drywall, paint flaking off the window trim, or bare patches in the lawn, can raise questions of bigger problems in a buyer's mind. Wouldn't you rather purchase from someone you trusted had taken good care and maintenance of their home?

## 2. Un-decorate and de-personalize.

When you moved into the house, you brought in your personality. It may be hard to accept, but your home will show better with less about you and a more 'neutral' motif. Remove your family photos (yep, those things that make a house a home!) Simplify any artwork and use neutral shades if you need to repaint walls or replace carpets.

"Buyers have a hard enough time envisioning how their stuff will look on your walls," recommends Ilyce Glink, author of *50 Simple Steps You Can Take to Sell Your Home Faster and for More Money in Any Market*. "By neutralizing your decor, you can help give them the blank canvas they need to imagine your house as theirs."

## 3. Clear out the clutter.

Make it easier for prospective buyers to see the house, not what's in it. Too much furniture tends to make rooms look smaller, and too many décor items tend to distract buyer's attention from the house. Hey, your going to have to pack it up anyway when you move, so why not get started now!

## 4. Remember the 'white glove' test.

There used to be a commercial for cleaning supplies that had the mother-in-law coming through the young couple's home with her white gloves, looking for dust on window sills, etc. Picture your prospective buyers doing the same thing, and make sure all they see is 'squeaky clean.' That goes for sills, countertops (kitchen and bath,) glass, even pantries, cabinets and closets.

Wood, tile and vinyl floors should sparkle, and you might consider having your carpets steam cleaned, particularly in the high-traffic rooms. And, don't forget porches, decks, garages and the yard. These, too, should be clean and well maintained. Children's toys, bikes and skateboards can quickly get out of hand and can be a big distraction to buyers.

If you have pets, it can be a real challenge getting rid of pet hair and odors. This is so important to making an appealing impression on buyers, though, that some experts even advocate finding another home for pets during the time the home is for sale!

### **5. Have your home inspected.**

It's true that the buyer's lender will probably insist on that an inspection be done during the closing process, but hiring a professional inspector before the home goes up for sale can be a big help. It gives a third party certification that the home is, indeed, in good shape and that there are no 'surprises' in store for buyers. It also gives you a chance to find and fix any issues that could come back to bite you if they weren't discovered until later! A home inspection typically runs between \$300 and \$500, depending on size of the home and your area.

### **6. First impressions: Curb appeal.**

When a potential buyer first sees the outside of the home, are they attracted and compelled to see more? What your home looks like from the outside sets the expectation of what they'll find inside, so make it as special as you can. Does your driveway need to be sealed? That's an inexpensive item that can make a huge impact. Is the lawn full, lush and well kept? A little fertilizer and seed can make it so.

It's not uncommon for shingles to get stains and streaks, and having these cleaned, along with the gutters, can brighten the entire home. Also, landscaping contributes to the appeal of a home. Shrubs should be kept well trimmed, and those that have grown too big should be removed and replaced.

### **7. Documentation.**

If the appliances are fairly new and are staying with the home, have a folder with all invoices and warranty information for the new owners. If you've invested in energy saving options, such as added insulation, low-e windows or high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment, have a separate folder to show your actual utility costs for several months. And, make a list of your trusted service providers (plumbers, electricians, etc.) who have worked on your home for the new buyers. This will greatly increase their comfort level with making your home theirs.

### **8. The Price is Right**

Of course, we want to get the absolute most we can for our home, but we also tend to add emotional value to the house. Be realistic in your asking price. If you're using a Realtor to sell your property, listen to their best estimates of where you should set your asking price. If you're going it on your own, then hire a real estate appraiser to

give you an objective market value – this will need to be done if the new buyers are applying for financing anyway, so it's good to know up front how lenders will view your home.

### **9. Assemble the right team.**

Sure, you can try the FSBO (For Sale By Owner) route and try to market your home yourself, but unless you already have a group of potential buyers in mind, you might not be saving much money. Realtors typically charge 6% - 7% of the sale price as their commission, but that covers all the marketing and advertising they do to promote your home, plus the expertise they have in working with buyers, obtaining financing, overcoming other issues, etc. For most of us, working with a Realtor will achieve a faster sale, and probably for top dollar... *if you have the right team.*

Choose an agent or company that is aggressive and knowledgeable about your specific area or community. Some agents just like to solicit listings, but the great ones are actively showing homes, working with buyers and closing sales. Do your homework, look for a good track record of 'Sold', and make sure your agent has your best interests in mind.

### **10. Emotionally detach.**

As mentioned earlier, we become emotionally attached to our homes. This can cloud our judgment when it comes to working with buyers. So, if you haven't said your emotional 'good-byes' to your home yet, it's time to do so and move on to your next new home.

So, when your Realtor is showing your house, it's probably best if you're not there. In most cases, your presence will distract from the home. Remember, new buyers are looking to place themselves in the house, something harder to do when you're there, too.