

## To Market, To Market

When you think about getting a home ready to sell, where do you start?

Looks mean a lot, and one way to make a home "market ready" is to highlight its best features. You can make a good start by decluttering every room, kitchen to closet, and basement to attic. While you don't want to make a home look empty, you do want to make it look spacious, so removing possessions such as knickknacks and perhaps a few pieces of furniture will open up the space. Many people forget what their house looked like back when they first move in, and before they began to furnish and decorate it.



To declutter a kitchen for example, the counters must be completely cleared, with extra items stored in cupboards. If this creates a logjam in the cabinets, extra pots, pans, dishes and small appliances need to be boxed up and stored, preferably off-site. By limiting the amount of items in cupboards, prospective buyers will be reassured that the cabinets and cupboards offer plenty of space for their needs.



The same holds true for closets. They need to be only half-full rather than crammed full. By boxing up and storing clothes, shoes and other items and storing them elsewhere, the closets will echo the feeling of spaciousness that will be displayed throughout the house.

The concept of removing a favorite recliner or floor lamp from a home may seem foreign, but an overabundance of tables, lamps, chairs and couches take up the floor space. Empty space allows buyers to visualize how they could fill it.

In living, dining and family rooms, the window treatments should be minimal, furniture and knickknacks should be reduced, and photos and portraits of family and friends should be put away. It's easier for buyers to imagine themselves in a house when its owners and their family members aren't in view in frames on the walls or tables.

Once some of the clutter has been relegated to boxes or bins, the temptation is strong to head right downstairs, or to the garage or attic and pack them away. Sadly, it's a temptation that must be resisted. Storage space needs to be obvious, not hidden underneath all those boxes. Again, buyers need to be able to picture the garage storing their bicycles and lawn mowers, not yours. Off-site storage is an option for some people, or you may be able to borrow space in the home of a friend or family member.

Some people decide that remodeling gives them the best chance to sell their home, but instead of investing in a construction project, money is better spent to address existing issues, such as roof or window repairs, or plumbing or electrical problems. A pre-listing home inspection helps sellers avoid unwanted surprises after an offer to purchase is made.



New fixtures provide a way to update the appearance of sinks and tubs very inexpensively. New paint can freshen up walls in a similar manner. Off-white is one of the most popular colors for a home about to be placed on the market, because it helps rooms appear large and bright.

Checking your curb appeal is a good idea, too. A neat yard, with blooming flowers or bushes, depending on the season, can catch a buyer's attention.



Pricing a home is often difficult for homeowners because of the emotional attachment they have to their home. In other cases, a homeowner may be looking to recoup some of the money and time they put into repair and remodeling projects. While money and "sweat equity" may play a role in pricing, homeowners need to be realistic about market conditions and price the home appropriately.

When a home is first placed on the market, it is as a "new listing." Experience has shown that this is the time when a home receives the most interest and activity. If the seller prices a home too high and then later drops the price, the home is old news and many buyers will pass it by. By overpricing a home, some homeowners are eventually forced to take a lower price than if they had settled on a more realistic price at the start.