



Home Seller's Guide

How to get top dollar for your
home when selling

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Are you ready to put your home on the market? A real estate transaction is one of the biggest financial transactions most people will do in a lifetime. Understanding the sales process will help you navigate from listing to closing and reap the profits you deserve. This Home Seller's Guide will give you valuable information and tips for the home sales process.

This Home Seller's Guide will cover the top 11 things to think about in order to sell your home faster and for more money.

1. Preparing your home for sale
2. Should you remodel
3. Have professional listing photos
4. Price your home correctly
5. Make a good first impression
6. Online marketing of your home
7. Have an open house
8. Showing appointments
9. Listen to feedback
10. Always respond to offers
11. Completing the transaction



Preparing Your Home for Sale

Preparing your home for sale can be as simple as fresh flowers in the front yard. Your home needs to impress buyers from the first moment they drive up to the home until they leave and lock the door. This is where a knowledgeable, professional real estate agent would come into play. Typically, even a dated home can be spruced up with simple adjustments in furniture placement, fresh paint, new lighting and/or minor repairs. The most important thing to do is to try and see your home as a prospective buyer would.

- **Curb Appeal:** Using a critical eye, notice the way the home appears from the street. Are the plants fresh and trimmed? Is there chipping paint or missing roof tiles? Does the home seem welcoming or a project?
- **House Tour:** Buyers will open cupboards and closets. Are they neat and clean? An organized closet or drawer gives the impression of space. Demonstrate that there is plenty of storage room for all their needs.
- **Repairs:** Hiring a handyman for a few hours is a small price to pay to avoid the appearance of deferred maintenance: tighten loose cabinets, oil squeaky doors; check for leaks and drips under sinks.
- **Staging:** Whether you do this yourself or hire a professional, depersonalize your home. Remove clutter and excess furniture and add light to dark spaces.

Keep in mind, an experienced Realtor knows what today's discerning buyers are looking for and can provide more ideas that will maximize your home's appeal. Sometimes a small investment in time and money can give you a big edge over your competition and generate a faster sale at a higher price.

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Should You Remodel?

Most of the time, you should not begin any major remodeling before listing your home. Spending thousands of dollars on renovations is expensive and it may not result in a return on investment in the sales price.

Model homes showcase the latest in upgrades and decorating styles. When we get home all we can see is the tile in our bathrooms and yesterday's details in our kitchens. These things can become overwhelming if we are considering a home sale in the near future. Before you grab the sledge hammer and plan an HGTV weekend of expanding your family room, take a breath. Your home doesn't need to be the latest and greatest to fetch top dollar in the resale market.

As you evaluate making changes to your home prior to listing it for sale, the first thing you should do is talk with your real estate agent. They have market experience which allows them to speak with you about how your home compares to others in your area. They work with buyers and sellers every day and know what features and upgrades are top sellers...and which don't matter at all. While the urban modern home in the magazine looks great, changing the details in your country house into industrial loft style is not an improvement.

Some improvements do translate to better sales price in every case. Outdated wallpaper, dirty and worn carpet and dark rooms can always use improvement. New or cleaned carpet and a fresh coat of paint, coupled with light bright lighting, will really showcase the best features of your home.

Speak to your agent about your neighborhood and buyer expectations and determine if you really need to make changes or not.

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Have Professional Listing Photos

Most buyers start their home search online. The pictures they see in the listing often makes the difference in whether they schedule an appointment or not. Homes with professional photography are far more likely to encourage buyers to visit the home. Studies have shown the homes with professional listing photos sells faster, and for more money, than those without. Using your I-phone will hurt your chances of selling quickly and for top dollar.

Professional photographers do far more than snap pictures with the right lens. They understand how to create the right emotional response in the viewers. They have experience working with listings and homes and normally they specialize in real estate.

- **Artistic Eye:** As they move through your home, they will consider which room or area is the best feature of your home and concentrate on creating an emotional response.
- **Staging the Shot:** Your photographer will stage each picture. They use lighting and space to arrange each room for a beautiful photo.
- **Editing:** A professional has the latest programs to enhance the pictures so that the exposure is perfect.

Professional photography is no longer reserved for luxury property listings. More and more agents are seeing the value of beautiful pictures. Make sure your home stands out among the sea of listings as potential buyers sort through properties online.

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Price your Home Correctly

Choosing the right listing price is not magic, but it's one of the most important aspects to selling your home quickly and for the best price. Consider the market analysis with your agent carefully and base your list price on the comparable property values and your personal goals. You can do everything right and if the home is not priced appropriately, it will not sell.

Buyers are more informed than ever and often are able to know themselves if a listing is over-priced. Buyer's agents will also suggest they avoid an over-priced home. There is no point having their clients get excited about a home that is priced unrealistically. It's a myth that buyers will pay over market for a home they love and even if they are willing to pay over value, their lender will order an appraisal and if the value is not there, they will not get a loan at that price.

A home gains the most attention the first week it's listed. An overpriced home which lingers on the market often sells for less than had it been priced properly at the outset. Get a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA). A good Realtor can provide you will data on similar homes that recently sold, homes that failed to sell, and ones that are currently on the market in your area.

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Make A Good First Impression

You know the old saying, “You only get one chance to make a first impression.” In home sales that is the photography and the price. Package your home properly to attract buyers immediately and invite them to move quickly.

While you may have many beautiful and meaningful belongings in your home, those items might make it more difficult to sell and/or cost you thousands of dollars when you do. Be sure to consult a Realtor in this regard because they will be able to provide you with impartial feedback.

New listings on Thursday or Friday will capture the attention of potential buyers planning to house hunt over the weekend. Time your listing properly and present it at its best the first time.

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Online Marketing of Your Home

Since most buyers start their home search online, it is important to have your home online as well. While most agents automatically list your home on the local MLS, there are other syndicated platforms as well: Trulia, Zillow, Realtors.com and others. We also cannot discount the value of social media. Your home must be showcased on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google search, YouTube and the agent's real estate websites.

Technology is a home seller's best friend. Most buyers start their home search online, so it's important to work with a real estate agent who understands this and has a strong online presence. Load the online listing with high quality photographs and video which urges the potential buyer to linger and fall in love with your home.

Don't forget to market your community as well as your home. Neighborhood quality is one of the most important reason home buyers choose where to live. A good online strategy should link to local schools, parks, shopping and fitness centers as well as crime statistics.

Make your listing shine by using that professional photography, video and even drone media. The longer a buyer stays on your listing, the better the chance that they will want to schedule a tour.



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Have an Open House

There is data that shows open houses are an effective tool in attracting potential buyers. The first couple of weekends your home is on the market, it will get the most showings and attention. By having an open house within the first 2 weeks on the market, your agent can be there to provide information to the buyers and their agents thus encouraging offers.

The main criticism of the open house is the lookie loo. These are people out for a Saturday afternoon drive and they see your sign or the neighbor who has always wondered how that new kitchen looks. Yes, those lookie loos come through open houses. So what? The point of an open house is to get people into your home. They might know others that are looking for a home, or sometimes they don't realize they are ready to move until they see what they want. We want that special house to be yours.

There are also those buyers who do not want to talk with an agent. They would rather do the looking by themselves and when they find the right property, and then they will call an agent. These buyers will utilize the multiple websites which advertise open houses and head out to see them on their own. There are more of these buyers than you might think. Open houses allow them to get into your home and see it.

The goal is to get as many buyers as possible to see your home. Open houses are the easiest ways to get local prospects into your home.

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Be Prepared For Showing Appointments

Showing your home to buyers is the most important part of selling your home. Everything you do to attract buyers to see your home depends on your home showing well while they visit. Set the stage so the buyers see only the best of your home. Keep the home and yard clean and neat at all times. Understand that buyers and agents might show up unexpectedly and you need to be ready.

Remove or contain pets for their safety, as well as the comfort and safety of your buyers. If you are home when the buyers and their agents arrive, it's time to leave. Buyers feel uncomfortable looking through your home while you are there. If you've prepared properly, the home and the listing will provide any information required. Give them plenty of time to linger, the longer a buyer lingers, the more they start to see themselves in the home.

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Listen To Feedback

Once you start getting showings, your agent will follow up with the buyer's agent to get feedback. Listen to the information you receive. While you might not be able to change the location or view, there could be adjustments that you can make. It might be hard to hear, but remember you are moving on and the goal is to provide potential buyers with a canvas on which they will build their own memories.

Often small issues you do not feel are important are uncovered in the early days of your listing. This is the time to pay attention, while you still have time to adjust. If your home needs some minor changes, freshening up, or if the price is too high, most buyers' agents will give this information to your agent. Listen to the feedback and make adjustments if necessary.

Getting honest feedback is critical. When interviewing your potential real estate agent, ask about how they get feedback from showings. Choose an agent who has a solid plan for feedback. Every potential buyer who walks through your home without writing an offer has a reason....find out why and if you can make changes, take quick action.

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Always Respond to Offers

You've done your homework. You prepared your home to show beautifully in listings and home tours. Then your agent calls you with the good news, "We have an offer." Maybe you even have a couple offers. The more offers, the better...right? Now what? As you start to realize that you have some decisions to make, here are a few tips for handling the offers.

- **Trust Your Agent:** While the final decision is yours, of course, it's time to talk with your agent and listen to what they have to say. They are there to guide you.
- **Remove Emotions:** Stay detached. Of course you love your home, but this is a financial transaction, don't let hurt feelings cloud your judgement.
- **Respond to all Offers:** Even if you get a low-ball offer, respond. The buyer cared enough to write an offer so there is always an opportunity.
- **Consider Terms as well as Price:** An offer is not just sales price. A quick close or all-cash offer might be worth more than dollars to you.
- **Respond Quickly:** Don't sit on offers. Buyers assume you are not interested and will move on.

Negotiate as best you can and for as long as you can. Be patient and realistic about each buyer and offer.

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Completing the Transaction

After you accept an offer, there are many for step before you get to closing. You will have to handle typical contingencies and conditions. Some of the contingencies are as follows:

- Buyers securing financing
- Review of seller disclosures
- Inspection of home's structural and functional condition such as foundation, roof, electrical, heating, and plumbing
- Termite inspection
- Appraisal of home that will be required by buyer's lender
- Final walk-through

Any or all of these contingencies might result in additional negotiation of terms. This does not mean that the process is being derailed. It simply means that you are working through the transaction. Your agent has the experience to guide you as you move through the contingency period. Most issues can be resolved.

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The Bottom Line

Selling a home as quickly as possible for the highest possible price is the goal of every seller. By preparing the home properly and pricing it correctly, you can realize the profit you deserve.

Your 3 goals in selling your home are as follows:

1. Present your home in the best possible light to potential buyers
2. Create urgency online with photography and pricing
3. Properly stage your home to show beautifully in person

Selling your home should not be a mystery, but a process. There are professionals that are glad to offer guidance to you and your family.

