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How To Prepare Your House For Sale

By [Elizabeth Weintraub](#), About.com Guide

Prepping and [staging a house](#)¹. Every seller wants her home to sell fast and bring top dollar. Does that sound good to you? Well, it's not luck that makes that happen. It's careful planning and knowing how to professionally spruce up your home that will send home buyers scurrying for their checkbooks. Here is how to prep a house and turn it into an irresistible and marketable home.



The first step to preparing a home for sale is to let go of your emotional attachment to it.

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Difficulty: Average

Time Required: Seven to 10 Days

Here's How:

1. Disassociate Yourself With Your Home.

- Say to yourself, *"This is not my home; it is a house -- a product to be sold much like a box of cereal on the grocery store shelf.*
- Make the mental decision to "let go" of your emotions and focus on the fact that soon this house will no longer be yours.
- Picture yourself handing over the keys and envelopes containing appliance warranties to the new owners!
- Say goodbye to every room.
- Don't look backwards -- look toward the future.

2. De-Personalize.

Pack up those personal photographs and family heirlooms. Buyers can't see past personal artifacts, and you don't want them to be distracted. You want buyers to imagine their own photos on the walls, and they can't do that if yours are there! You don't want to make any buyer ask, *"I wonder what kind of people live in this home?"* You want buyers to say, *"I can see myself living here."*

3. De-Clutter!

People collect an amazing quantity of junk. Consider this: if you haven't used it in over a year, you probably don't need it.

- If you don't need it, why not donate it or throw it away?
- Remove all books from bookcases.
- Pack up those knickknacks.
- Clean off everything on kitchen counters.
- Put essential items used daily in a small box that can be stored in a closet when not in use.
- Think of this process as a head-start on the packing you will eventually need to do anyway.

4. Rearrange Bedroom Closets and Kitchen Cabinets.

[Buyers love to snoop](#)² and will open closet and cabinet doors. Think of the message it sends if items fall out! Now imagine what a buyer believes about you if she sees everything organized. It says you probably take good care of the rest of the house as well. This means:

- Alphabetize spice jars.
- Neatly stack dishes.
- Turn coffee cup handles facing the same way.
- Hang shirts together, buttoned and facing the same direction.
- Line up shoes.

5. Rent a Storage Unit.

Almost every home shows better with less furniture. Remove pieces of furniture that block or hamper paths and walkways and put them in storage. Since your bookcases are now empty, store them. Remove extra leaves from your dining room table to make the room appear larger. Leave just enough furniture in each room to showcase the room's purpose and plenty of room to move around. You don't want buyers scratching their heads and saying, *"What is this room used for?"*

6. Remove/ Replace Favorite Items.

If you want to take window coverings, built-in appliances or fixtures with you, remove them now. If the chandelier in the dining room once belonged to your great grandmother, take it down. If a buyer never sees it, she won't want it. Once you tell a buyer she can't have an item, she will covet it, and it could blow your deal. Pack those items and replace them, if necessary.

7. Make Minor Repairs³.

- Replace cracked floor or counter tiles.
- Patch holes in walls.
- Fix leaky faucets.
- Fix doors that don't close properly and kitchen drawers that jam.
- Consider painting your walls neutral colors, especially if you have grown accustomed to purple or pink walls. (Don't give buyers any reason to remember your home as "the house with the orange bathroom.")
- Replace burned-out light bulbs.
- If you've considered replacing a worn bedspread, do so now!

8. Make the House Sparkle!

- Wash windows inside and out.
- Rent a pressure washer and spray down sidewalks and exterior.
- Clean out cobwebs.
- Re-caulk tubs, showers and sinks.
- Polish chrome faucets and mirrors.
- Clean out the refrigerator.
- Vacuum daily.
- Wax floors.
- Dust furniture, ceiling fan blades and light fixtures.
- Bleach dingy grout.
- Replace worn rugs.
- Hang up fresh towels.
- Bathroom towels look great fastened with ribbon and bows.
- Clean and air out any musty smelling areas. Odors are a no-no.

9. Scrutinize.

- Go outside and open your front door. Stand there. Do you want to go inside? Does the house welcome you?
- Linger in the doorway of every single room and imagine how your house will look to a buyer.
- Examine carefully how furniture is arranged and move pieces around until it makes sense.
- Make sure window coverings hang level.
- Tune in to the room's statement and its emotional pull. Does it have impact and pizzazz?
- Does it look like nobody lives in this house? You're almost finished.

10. Check Curb Appeal.

If a buyer won't get out of her agent's car because she doesn't like the exterior of your home, you'll never get her inside.

- Keep the sidewalks cleared.
- Mow the lawn.
- Paint faded window trim.
- Plant yellow flowers or group flower pots together. Yellow evokes a buying emotion. Marigolds are inexpensive.
- Trim your bushes.
- Make sure visitors can clearly read your house number.

Watch Weintraub's video about [Preparing a Home For Sale](#).⁴

Read [How to Stage Your Home](#)⁵ NEXT!!!

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