



The HomeOwners Alliance guide:

Top Tips: How to make your home more saleable – and valuable

Preparing your home for viewers, or “staging” as it’s called, is important. It will not only ensure your property is sold faster, but can potentially add thousands of pounds to its value

Declutter - but don't depersonalize

- Get rid of all the excess stuff that has accumulated in every nook and cranny. Put it in storage or give it to a friend
- People need to be able to envisage what the property would look like if they were living there. People often find this difficult, so make it easy for them to see all the fantastic living space you're offering them
- Don't make it look like a generic hotel; leave some personality. Apart from anything else it gives unimagined buyers suggestions as to what they might do
- People are often buying into a lifestyle as much as a property. Show them the attractive side of your lifestyle
- Consider removing any bulky furniture that makes the room feel small and replacing it with smaller furniture

A fresh lick of paint

- Giving your walls a fresh lick of light, neutral paint will make your home seem lighter and bigger
- It will enable the viewers to more easily imagine how they would adapt the rooms to their needs
- It will be easier for the buyers to move in and use the rooms immediately than if the walls were still bright purple or lime green
- Create a good first impression - give the front door a fresh lick of brightly coloured paint

Fix and clean

- Make any minor repairs necessary – holes in walls, broken door knobs, cracked tiles, torn or threadbare carpets. Many buyers want to move in without making changes, so allow for this
- Clean *everything* until it sparkles. Get rid of limescale, clean and repair tile grout, wax wooden floors, get rid of all odors, hang up fresh towels. This will make the place more appealing and allow viewers to imagine living there
- Tidy up the garden: cut bushes back, clean the patio and furniture of lichen and dirt, and cut the grass. While this doesn't add much value to your home it makes it more likely to sell as people visualize themselves using the garden

Update the kitchen

- The kitchen is the most valuable room in a house. It is worth the most per square foot and can make the difference when buyers are unsure
- Consider refacing your kitchen cabinetry. This is much cheaper than installing new cabinetry and often as effective
- Upgrading kitchen counter tops is expensive, but can add serious value
- Declutter the surfaces and just leave a bowl of fruit out. Take out any bulky appliances



- Consider upgrading the plumbing fixtures and white goods, but keep in mind that while that could make your property sell faster, you will be unlikely to recoup their full value

Light and airy

- Wall mirrors make a room look much bigger and lighter. Consider putting some up, especially in smaller rooms or hallways
- Clean windows inside and out, and replace any broken light bulbs. Making the place feel light and airy makes rooms feel bigger and the property more attractive
- Ensure that you have lamps on in any dark corners
- Putting a soft lamp in the bathroom can create a warm glow

Light a fire

- If it's a cold evening, or even chilly day, light your fire. Consider burning some pinecones for the delicious smell. This will make your home feel warm and inviting. If you don't have a fire then ensure the fireplace is clean

Make it look pretty

- Make sure the windows are properly dressed with blinds or curtains as naked windows make a place feel impersonal and run down. Buy some cheap ones (eg from Ikea) if necessary
- Plants and flowers bring colour, life and light to a room and also smell delicious. So does that fruit bowl on your kitchen counter

Get the right smells

- Bad smells are the single biggest turn off for prospective buyers. Don't just cover them up, fix the source of the smell. Clear drains, wash bins, open windows, air the kitchen from old cooking smells, get rid of furniture that is embedded with cigarette smoke, and wash any grimy bed sheets
- If you are a smoker, place bowls of vinegar around the house and leave out for three days. Though the vinegar will smell when you open the windows it will disappear quickly taking a most of the stale cigarette smell out with it
- Conversely, good smells can make a property feel like an alluring home. While it might be impractical to bake fresh bread, cakes or brownies for every viewer that visits your home, you could perhaps brew some fresh coffee

Showing the property

- You'll have chosen a good estate agent (see our guide *How do I choose an estate agent?*), so let them show the property
- It's their job to know what things to say, what to highlight and what to downplay
- They are also effective at answering those tricky questions about the noisy neighbours

Obvious conversions

- If there are any obvious conversions – adapting the garage into extra rooms, or going up into the loft – and you have some spare cash, why not take advantage of this cash cow rather than letting the new owners make easy money out of improvements. You should usually recoup your money
- If you don't have enough spare cash to make the conversion, consider getting planning permission anyway

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