Your Home Prep Checklist

The first 30 days on the market are when your home gets the most attention, and online photos are the first showing every buyer sees. A home that looks cluttered in photos or at a first showing rarely gets a second look. This list covers the two moments that matter most: photo day and every showing after.

None of this takes a contractor. Most of it takes an afternoon.

1 Before photo day

Start a week or so out. This is the cleaning and decluttering, so photo day is just finishing touches.

THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

- [ ] Deep clean: floors, baseboards, windows, mirrors and light fixtures.
- [ ] Replace any burnt-out bulbs, and match bulb colors in the same room.
- [ ] Pack away extra furniture, decor and anything you won't need for the next few months.
- [ ] Clear closets and the garage enough to store what comes off counters and surfaces. They usually aren't photographed.

KITCHEN

- [ ] Pare counters down to one or two simple items.
- [ ] Clear the front and top of the refrigerator: magnets, papers, photos.
- [ ] Find a spot out of sight for trash cans, pet bowls and pet toys.

BATHROOMS

- [ ] Clear personal items from the sink, counters and shower, and find them a cabinet or bin.
- [ ] Have fresh, matching towels ready, or plan to show the room with none.

LIVING SPACES

- [ ] Put away chargers, cords, remotes, mail and magazines.
- [ ] Remove most family photos and personal items.
- [ ] Plan where pet beds, crates and toys will go on photo day.

BEDROOMS

- [ ] Clear dressers, nightstands and desks.
- [ ] In kids' rooms, put most toys away and keep a few lined neatly along one wall.

OUTSIDE

- [ ] Mow, edge and clear the front beds a day or two before.
- [ ] Sweep leaves and debris from walkways, the driveway and patios.
- [ ] Store hoses, trash bins and anything stacked against the house.

2 Photo day

The morning of the shoot, before the photographer arrives.

THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

- [ ] Turn on every light: overhead lights, lamps, and under-cabinet lights.
- [ ] Turn off ceiling fans and TVs.
- [ ] Open curtains and blinds all the way.

ROOM BY ROOM

- [ ] Kitchen: remove towels, mats, dish soap and sponges from the sink area, and hide trash cans and pet bowls.
- [ ] Bathrooms: remove floor mats, trash cans and tissue boxes, close toilet lids, and hang the matching towels.
- [ ] Bedrooms: make the beds neatly.
- [ ] Living spaces: put away anything that came back out since the cleanup, plus pet beds and toys.

OUTSIDE

- [ ] Move cars out of the driveway and away from the front of the house.
- [ ] Close the garage doors.
- [ ] Take off grill and furniture covers, straighten patio cushions, and open any umbrellas.
- [ ] Give walkways and the driveway one last sweep.

3 Before every showing

Buyers decide in the first few minutes. These keep every showing as strong as the photos.

- [ ] Lights on and blinds open, same as photo day.
- [ ] Set the thermostat to a comfortable temperature.
- [ ] Empty trash cans and take care of strong odors (pets, cooking, smoke). Skip heavy air fresheners.
- [ ] Make beds, wipe counters, and clear dishes from the sink.
- [ ] Take pets with you, or crate them and let us know where.
- [ ] Lock away valuables, medications, mail, and anything with personal or financial information.
- [ ] Leave the house for every showing. Buyers stay longer and speak more openly when the seller isn't home.

4 While you're listed

- [ ] Keep a quick 15-minute reset routine for short-notice showings.
- [ ] Confirm or decline showing requests promptly in BrokerBay. Every missed showing is a buyer we may not get back.
- [ ] Tell us about any repair, change, or new issue right away.
- [ ] Read your weekly report from us. Showings and feedback tell us early whether price or presentation needs to change.

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