



Dress Your House *for* Success

*A checklist to help you
sell your house for the best price
in the least amount of time.*

Getting Started

Now that you've made the decision to sell your home, you'll want to look at it differently. It's now a *house for sale*. Packaging – or staging – your house to appeal to more buyers can help you put the sold sign up more quickly and bring you a greater return on your investment.

The *Dress Your House for Success* program is an easy to follow staging program that can be tailored to fit your house, your time frame and your budget.

By the time buyers arrive at your front door, usually your house meets their basic criteria for location, price and style – the more rational side of home-buying. The purchasing decision is generally based on an emotional connection that begins when a buyer imagines living in your house. Each *Dress Your House for Success* step is designed to help more buyers imagine life in your house.

Dress Your House for Success doesn't need to be expensive or overly time-consuming. Purchase items that can be used in your new space or borrow or rent the "extras" – from accessories and furniture to artwork – to help build a series of positive first impressions. And, if you're short on time, consider hiring professionals.



As you make your *Dress Your House for Success* plan, take advantage of the experience and objectivity of your real estate professional. He or she can help you prioritize your efforts and concentrate on the areas that will set you apart from other houses on the market.

Staging your house begins with gaining objectivity. That's not easy when it's home. So, get "buyers' eyes" by looking at other houses for sale that are similar to yours in both features and price. How do they make you feel? What negatives do you notice? Stop in model homes and experience "move in condition."

Now, tour your house. Use this checklist to make a master list of everything that could be an obstacle to showcasing the full potential of your property.

Start with curb appeal – the first glimpse of your house that forms the most critical first impression. Curb appeal has been known to sell a house before the buyers even get out of their car! What can you do to improve your all-important first impression?

Next, go through your whole house as if you were a buyer seeing it for the first time. Be on the lookout for subtle signs that say, "There's work to be done here." Remember, if you think it's too much work, potential buyers will probably think so too!

When your list is complete, assign tasks, develop a timetable and reward yourself along the way.

Keep your goal in mind – to sell your house at the best possible price in the least amount of time. Investing a little time and money now will payoff when the curtain goes up and your house takes center stage!

Uncluttering

When in doubt, throw it out, sell it, store it or give it away! If a house is cluttered – regardless of its actual size – it feels smaller. Send a message of space and organization by removing up to half of the contents of your closets and cupboards. Hold a garage or tag sale, or donate surplus belongings to a charity before your house goes on the market.

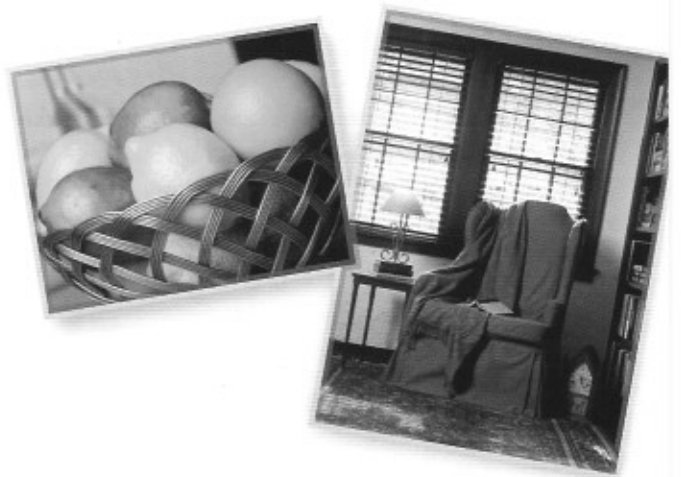
Exterior

- Lawn and garden – fertilize, mow, trim, weed, water; resod any bare spots
- Walks, steps and driveways – clear away all items; remove weeds
- Remove lawn ornaments
- Pet areas – thoroughly pick up all debris
- Extra vehicles – remove from curb view
- Decks, patios and backyards – remove excess ornaments and furniture

Interior

- Closets:
 - Remove and pack or store extra items
 - Clean or paint interior
 - Organize linens and group like clothing
 - Remove and pack or store extra sporting equipment
- Bookshelves – remove, pack, store and organize extra items
- Kitchen:
 - Clear counters; put away appliances, accessories, etc.
 - Remove and pack or store extra dishes
 - Consolidate duplicate food items
 - Remove notes and magnets from refrigerator
 - Organize silverware, utensil and “junk” drawers
 - Clean or paint flooring under the sink; organize and consolidate items

- Bathroom vanities, medicine cabinets:
 - Remove, pack, store and organize extra items
 - Remove stained or torn drawer and shelf liners
- Living areas:
 - Remove papers and magazines from tables
 - Remove extra furniture; arrange for openness
 - Remove extra or unhealthy plants
- Collections – pack and store
- Children’s play areas – pack, store and organize extra toys or games
- Tool, shop and laundry areas – remove, store and organize extra items
- Garage – organize tools and gardening equipment; remove extra items



Cleaning

Show buyers that your house has been well cared for. Scrub walls, floors, counters and appliances. Bring in the outdoors with sparkling clean windows. A scratch cover or stain/sealer will return the warmth and glow of natural wood. And be sure every room smells as clean as it looks! Use an odor neutralizer to clean away smoke, pet, cooking and mildew odors. Jump-start this step and give yourself some time off with a professional cleaning service.

Exterior

- Windows – clean to a sparkle
- Walks, steps and driveways – sweep and remove stains
- Siding, brick or stucco – hose off; use restoring product on vinyl and aluminum siding
- Gutters and downspouts – hose out debris
- Decks, patios and backyards – use a deck cleaner; hose off patios; wipe down lawn furniture, grills and pool equipment

Interior

- Floors – remove old wax; scrub and wax to a shine
- Carpet – clean thoroughly; consider professional service
- Walls – remove fingerprints, marks and cobwebs
- Woodwork – clean and then polish with a scratch cover
- Draperies and curtains – launder or dry clean
- Lighting fixtures – clean and polish, wash or replace bulbs
- Windows, mirrors, glass cabinets – clean to a sparkle
- Doorknobs, handles and pulls – clean and polish

- Kitchen:
 - Clean and polish cupboards – inside and out
 - Clean and deodorize vents and exhaust hoods
 - Clean appliances thoroughly – inside and out
 - Polish and clean sinks; remove stains
 - Clean and deodorize garbage areas; use a garbage disposal freshener
- Bathrooms:
 - Clean and polish vanities – inside and out
 - Remove stains and mold from sinks, tubs and showers; clean grout
 - Polish mirrors and chrome to a sparkle
- Basement, Garage, Attic:
 - Sweep or vacuum floors and ceilings
 - Wash furnace, water heater, washer and dryer
- Pet areas – clean thoroughly and deodorize
- Odors – scrub all hard surfaces; use an odor neutralizer on upholstery, carpeting and draperies



Repairing

Making repairs now can save money and negotiation stress down the road. Consider a seller's home inspection to eliminate buyers' objections before they arise. Decide what you can do yourself and what you'll need the pros to handle. Then, schedule projects so everything is complete before your house's debut. Look into a home warranty to provide protection for you – and a buyer – against failure of mechanical systems.

Exterior

- Doors and windows – repair screens, glass and door hardware; lubricate hinges
- Sidewalks, steps and driveways – repair cracks
- Siding – repair, replace or paint as needed
- Gutters and downspouts – repair or replace as needed
- Fences – repair, replace or paint as needed
- Doorbells – make certain they are in working order

Interior

- Plumbing – repair leaks and make all repairs
- Mechanical systems – have inspected and certified
- Appliances – check bulbs; replace broken parts
- Walls and ceilings – patch cracks; paint as needed
- Windows – replace cracked glass; re-caulk as needed
- Grout and caulking – patch or replace as needed
- Hinges and knobs – tighten or replace as needed
- Flooring – repair or replace as needed
- Light fixtures – repair; replace if dated
- Switch plates and outlet covers – replace cracked or mismatched plates

Neutralizing

Create a home for any lifestyle and taste. Neutral paint, décor and carpeting help buyers mentally “move in,” while unusual or dated decorating may make it difficult for a buyer to imagine their furnishings in your house. Choose warm, neutral colors. Replace unusual artwork and displays of family photos with a few carefully chosen accessories. And remember, many people are allergic to or afraid of animals. Kennel your pets or take them with you during showings.

Exterior

- Siding and trim – touch up or paint if needed
- Lawn areas – remove any bold decorations

Interior

- Walls:
 - Remove dated wallpaper
 - Paint a warm, neutral color; avoid cold whites
 - Use the same color in rooms that flow together
 - Choose a warmer, neutral color for bathrooms
 - Polish paneling or, if dated, remove or paint
- Floors – replace worn or dated vinyl or carpeting
- Artwork – remove distracting or bold posters and art
- Family photos and collections – remove extensive displays
- Basement – paint floors and walls



Dynamizing™

Build the essential emotional connection by helping buyers imagine daily life in your house. When you have completed the basic steps of *Dress Your House for Success*, take a buyers' tour. From the curb to the basement, evaluate the subtle message that every area sends. Then decide how to set your stage to say, "Welcome Home!"

Curb Appeal – Choose ideas that add elegance.

- Keep lawn mowed, shrubs trimmed and gardens weeded
- Set a potted shrub or topiary tree with annuals on a stoop or flank the door with matching pots; fill window boxes
- Add new house numbers and a cushioned doormat
- Polish or paint the door
- Add a fresh layer of rock or bark
- Replace or paint the mailbox

Entryway – Greet buyers with style and grace.

- Showcase a unique piece of furniture or artwork
- Add a mirror to brighten the entry
- Add drama with fresh flowers or a blooming plant
- Add warmth and texture with an area rug
- Add a dramatic new lighting fixture

Kitchen – Showcase the heart of the home.

- Open a colorful cookbook on a stand
- Create a neat, clean look with new burner covers
- Add a new throw rug
- Fill a decorative serving bowl with fresh fruit
- Add a blooming plant where it can catch the sunlight
- Replace worn curtains with mini blinds or a valance
- Paint worn or dated cabinets and add new hardware

Bathrooms – Create a luxurious, relaxing feeling.

- Use plush new towels and rugs to soften hard surfaces
 - Tri-fold towels and hang in layers on towel bars
 - Stack guest or hand towels neatly on a vanity
- Add a new fabric shower curtain
- Highlight tubs or vanities with colorful bath oils and salts
- Use a new bar of unscented guest soap for showings

Bedrooms – Convey privacy and comfort.

- Roll back a plush comforter to show layers of blankets and sheets; top with decorative pillows
- Add curtains or valances to rooms without them
- Add artwork for elegance
- Stack a few books on a nightstand
- Arrange toys in children's rooms to show a quiet place to play

Living, Family and Dining Rooms – Suggest comfortable family times and entertaining.

- Drape an afghan over a chair or sofa to suggest relaxation
- Add decorative pillows to sofas and chairs
- Add fresh flowers to a coffee table
- Add art pieces to a bookcase to suggest multiple uses
- Showcase a fireplace:
 - Place unscented candles on boughs, or pots of blooming plants on the grate
 - Add artwork above the mantle
 - Place a basket of birch logs on the hearth
- Dining rooms:
 - Add a bouquet of fresh flowers
 - Display a serving piece or candles on the table

Backyards, Decks and Patios – Suggest leisure activities.

- Arrange a grill and lawn furniture to suggest a barbeque
- Set out a lawn game
- Group colorful pots of annuals on a deck or patio

SHOWTIME!

Keeping a house in ShowTime condition can be easy and fun when everyone participates. Assign responsibilities for weekly and daily tasks. Remember, if you stay ready, you won't have to get ready!

Exterior

- Pick up lawn tools and toys
- Pick up after pets
- Remove obstructions from curb view
- Clear driveways and walk areas

Interior

- Do a once-over cleaning:
 - Vacuum, sweep and dust
 - Empty wastebaskets; pick up dirty clothes
 - Put away personal care items in bathrooms
 - Clean all sinks and faucets with glass cleaner
 - Make sure rugs are clean and straight
 - Freshen carpets, draperies and upholstery with an odor neutralizer
 - Clean pet areas and remove pets, beds and toys
- Open shades and drapes
- Set a comfortable temperature
- Turn on all lights
- Open windows to freshen rooms
- Arrange fresh flowers in key areas
- Play soft music and turn off the television
- Turn off all work sounds (dishwashers, washers, dryers, etc.)
- Final check every room