

A beautiful open house is easy to achieve using this handy checklist.



De-clutter!

This can't be overemphasized. A cluttered home is a turnoff to most buyers. It's also potentially dangerous: you don't want people to be injured as they try to navigate your junk. Remember, it's not enough to simply stuff everything into cabinets and closets; people will be looking inside these areas to assess storage capacity. Either get rid of it or store it offsite.



The white glove test

Clean up! Not just everyday cleaning like dusting, sweeping and scrubbing the bathtub—that should be obvious. You've got to deep clean: carpets should be steam cleaned, drapes washed/dry cleaned, upholstery thoroughly vacuumed and shampooed if necessary. Attend to areas that are often ignored—the top of the fridge, cobwebby corners, cabinet interiors, and the oven. The bathroom and kitchen should be spotless. Can't manage to make your home immaculate? A maid service is a worthy investment in getting the best offer.



Get a check-up

Consider having a pre-listing home inspection report prepared. Potential buyers can examine it, noting repairs you've made since and easing their mind about your property.



Revive and repair

A fresh coat of light, neutral paint is practically obligatory. If you have decent hardwood under grungy or outdated carpet, consider trashing the carpet and refinishing the floors. Take care of scuffed woodwork, ripped wallpaper, water damage and exposed wiring. Half-finished home improvement projects deter buyers; complete any such projects if at all possible.



Enhance curb appeal

Most buyers form conclusions about a property from the curb. Cast the same critical eye on your home's exterior. Does the roofing need repair? Are the gutters overflowing with debris? Does the front lawn look like a missile site? Does the driveway need sealing? Make any necessary exterior improvements. Try buying a fresh new doormat and decorate with some container plants.



Lawn and order

If you haven't paid attention to landscaping; it's too late to start planting trees. Young ones will have no impact and mature ones are expensive. Prune, trim and weed whatever you have. For a few hundred dollars, consider having a professional landscape plan done. An appealing landscape plan may help buyers envision the potential for the home. Don't forget interior landscaping: if you have no healthy house plants inside your home, buy a few attractive specimens and locate them strategically around the house. Dump any dead or dying plants.



Depersonalize

Put away family photos, children's artwork, trophies, pet toys, etc., to help buyers imagine themselves in your home. Clear all the junk off the fridge; the kitchen will look bigger and cleaner.



The sniff test

To check for off-putting odours that can cost you a sale, ask your real estate agent (or a trusted friend or neighbour) to help you identify bad smells in your home. Common culprits include smoking, laundry, bathroom mould and mildew, garbage cans, musty basements, cooking smells, litter boxes and other pet paraphernalia. Don't attempt to cover bad smells with deodorizers and air fresheners—address the problem.



Light up your life

Check that every single fixture in the house has a working light bulb of the maximum safe wattage. Clean all the windows so that buyers can appreciate how bright the rooms really are.



Out of sight

Before allowing strangers to tour your home, stash all valuables in safe places. Jewellery, cameras, credit cards, ID, medications and other small, easily pocketed items should be locked away. While you're at it, remove fragile items from harm's way. Ensure your insurance policy is up-to-date.
