

# HOME SELLER GUIDE

INCLUDING IMPORTANT STEPS TO  
SELL YOUR HOME FAST AND  
FOR THE MOST MONEY



FROM YOUR LOCAL REAL  
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## **YOUR HOME SELLER GUIDE**

As a seller, your primary objective is to sell your home quickly for the most money possible. However, it's not always as simple as just listing your home on the open market. You can't force a buyer to purchase your home. You have to market your home in such a way as to appeal to their senses and emotions. You want them to feel that your home is the right home for them and their family. That's why it is important to develop a plan and to do the appropriate things to ensure your home is appealing, ready to show, and ready to be purchased.

Below are important tips and information you need to know for selling your home fast and for the most money possible. Be sure to read to the end for the **BONUS** section for the guide on pricing your home right!

### **#1 – Curb Appeal**

Let's talk about curb appeal. The front of your home will be the very first thing a potential buyer will see. Take a moment to go out front into the street and stare back at your home. What do you see? What will a buyer see? What initial



message is being sent regarding how the home is maintained? Buyers may believe that the outside of the home is an indicator of the condition of the inside. You never

want to make a poor first impression on a buyer, especially before they have even come inside.

Here are a couple of inexpensive ways to ensure the front of your home leaves a positive first impression. To start, take a Saturday afternoon and remove all weeds. Weeds equal neglect in the minds of buyers. You should also get some weed killer to spray those small and pesky weeds that are rearing their ugly heads.

You will also want to trim all trees, shrubs, and flowers. It's important to remove as much dead growth as possible. Make your yard look nice and neat. You don't want the word "dead" popping up in the minds of someone who is about to walk inside your home.

Take a look at your garage door and the paint condition on the front of your house. Though you may not want to invest in a new paint job, quickly hosing off the dirt and garage door can improve the appeal immensely.

Lastly, take a careful look at your driveway. Is there a lot of dirt, tire marks, oil stains, and/or grease stains? If so, go down to



your local hardware store and rent a pressure washer. Clean is the name of the game.

## #2 – First Area They See

In the event you only had enough time and money to invest in one area of the house, you should invest it in the area or room anyone walking in your front door



sees first. It could be a large hallway, family room, or living room. Pay special attention to this area. Remember, first impressions are everything. Make sure this area is always clean and clutter free. The first impression may be the only impression left on a buyer.

If you have the time and money, it might be a good idea to give this area a fresh coat of paint. A clean and new look right away may carry over in the minds of a buyer when they walk through the rest of your home.

It's imperative that as you continue to read the rest of these selling secrets, to keep this particular area in mind. You will likely gain more ideas.

## #3 – Keep the Primary Childcare Provider's Perspective in Mind

In many real estate transactions involving married couples, the home buying experience begins with the person who spends the most time at home. That may be either party, but this person may ultimately make the final decision to buy or not to buy.

Let's face it, men and women are different and they look for different attributes in a home. Women tend to see certain important details more than their counterparts, and it's important to keep this in mind. They may want to entertain more, which means the kitchen is an important component. Also, they are the ones who may spend more time focusing on the needs of the children. Is your home kid friendly?

Keep in mind that many single parents are in the home buying market. Though single dads raising kids are not uncommon, statistically speaking, there are more single moms raising kids than fathers. You should always be considering their needs and wants when preparing your home for sale. Is your home a place that a single parent, or any parent for that matter, could picture themselves raising their children?

#### **#4 – Clean Your Home Thoroughly**

There's an old expression, "Cleanliness is next to godliness!" That's a bold statement, but it is certainly important when it comes to selling a home. It is critical that your house remains clean throughout the entire selling process. And you should give your home a thorough cleaning before any prospective buyer sets foot inside it.



You may even want to consider hiring a professional cleaning service. You are setting the stage for your potential buyer, and quality is everything. Here is a great



article we love from Houselogic.com: “[7 Spots You Keep Missing When You Clean that Everyone Else Notices.](#)”

Flooring is important. Make sure all flooring, including tile, carpet and linoleum, is cleaned regularly. Don't hesitate to have them professionally cleaned. Make sure all spots and stains are eliminated to the best of your ability.

One item that is often overlooked are floorboards. Make sure to wipe them down. This will do wonders for the appearance of the rest of the flooring.

Also, don't overlook the bathrooms. Remove all clutter and keep in mind that buyers often open drawers and medicine cabinets. Make sure they are spotless and organized.

Pay special attention to the kitchen. Kitchens are often the determining factor in decisions to buy or not to by. Make sure the cabinets, stove, oven and refrigerator (inside and out) are clean and odorless. Trust me, your prospective buyers will be opening your refrigerator doors. If a buyer cannot picture themselves preparing a meal in the kitchen, the deal is over.

## **#5 – Take Care of any Bad Odors**

Bad odors can instantly turn off a buyer, especially cigarette smoke, mold, and pet odors. Science has proven that smells and scents can evoke strong emotions. What is the best part of a new car? The new car smell! What emotions does the smell of your home evoke?

Utilize spray and plug-in air fresheners. A good smell can hide a bad or old smell relatively easy. However, it's important not to overpower the senses by aromas that are too strong. A buyer may think you are trying to hide something.

If the odors are emanating from your carpets, this may be the time to hire a professional carpet cleaning service. They have the equipment and expertise to minimize or even eliminate those bad odors. You may also be unaware of the smell of your own home. Have a trusted friend or family member give you their honest opinion.



## **#6 – Pots and Pans**

Enough can't be said about the emphasis buyers place on the kitchen. A great deal of family time takes place in the kitchen, and this notion is never lost on families. A great deal of your prep time should be spent in this area of the home.

Spend time cleaning the stove, oven, microwave, refrigerator and cabinets. Never leave the house without ensuring these items are sparkling.

Also, you will want to pay special attention to what is in your cabinets, especially the pots and pans. One of the first things the primary cooker will do is open your cabinets and assess space. Make sure they are organized. Eliminate clutter and that "hastily thrown in" feel.

This might be a good time to start packing. Remove and pack any pots, pans, dishes, and bowls that you don't absolutely need during the selling process. Your primary objective is to leave them with the feeling that their kitchen supplies will fit comfortably.

## #7 – Declutter Your Home

Clutter is one of the biggest deal killers in the home selling business. The more clutter you have in your house or a room, the smaller the house or room will feel to a buyer. Remember, most buyers want the biggest home for their money. Even if you might not have as much square footage, you can make your home feel bigger.

Just as with the cabinets in your kitchen, this might be the time to start packing. Walk through the home, especially the kids' rooms, and pack any items that don't bring value to the appearance of your home.



Examine every piece of furniture and shelf in the home, and carefully assess the items on them. If they make your home look cluttered and you don't need them, pack them up. Also, keep in mind that closet space is important to most buyers. Closets are the last place to store these items. Your real estate agent can help you figure out what to prioritize.



## #8 – Always be Ready to Show

Once you have your house listed, you and your home are on call; much like a doctor is when they leave the office. Your home needs to be ready to show at a moment's notice. You never know when that right buyer is in their car and ready to look at your home.



Make sure your house is always clean, smells good, and the clutter is put away, especially in the kitchen and the bathrooms. Also, lighting is key. Keep the lights on, especially if your house is listed and may be shown when you are away from the home. Believe it or not, lighting is a key factor in the buying decision-making process. Think about the last time you were in a furniture store. Furniture stores understand this principle and maximize the lighting in their showrooms.

Keep in mind that holiday weekends are a busy time to look at homes. Don't fall into the trap of not showing your home during these times for the sake of family time. Some of the most serious buyers are sacrificing their family time to look for their next home.

You may want to put together a checklist. Make sure all items are checked before you leave the house. You can't predetermine when the right buyer will visit your home, so always have your home ready.

### **#9 – Have Friends & Family Preview the Home**

These are only a handful of the many secrets and considerations to make when preparing your house for a quick sale. Once your home is ready, you are probably not the best person to determine how well your house shows.

Enlist the help of family and friends who will give you their honest assessment. Ask them to pretend to be a buyer and preview your home. Have them start with the curb appeal by pulling up to the front of your home in their car. Allow them to walk the entire house, as would any potential buyer. Remember, make sure you have women and men included in the process to get the female perspective. And we, your experienced real estate agent team, will be more than happy to give you our opinion.

The two most important things your pretend buyers can do is to take lots of notes and to be as honest as possible. Don't get your feelings hurt. Your primary objective is to sell your property fast, and the more honest the feedback, the better.



However, don't get overwhelmed. Keep in mind that you can't do everything. Only focus on the items that are critical, the items you can afford, and the items you have time for. You will have to prioritize.

## **#10 – Don't Do It Alone**

Imagine a professional sports team hitting the field without a coach or a game plan. There are so many moving parts to a game and so much strategy to consider. That's why there are coaches. A lack of a coach can lead to confusion, uncertainty, and eventually a loss.

Selling a home is a lot like a game. There are many factors to consider, such as pricing your home right, marketing your home, dealing and negotiating with buyers, scheduling the buyer's vendors, ensuring the buyer is qualified for a mortgage, and making sure any offers are properly put in writing in order to mitigate risk. That is where a licensed real estate professional can play a vital role.

For starters, a licensed real estate agent is in a better position to help you make more money on your home. There is a myth that bypassing an agent and paying commissions will result in a higher profit margin for the seller. Statistics suggest that sellers who list their own home are more likely to sell their home for far less than it could sell for, leaving a great deal of money on the table. Sellers often put themselves in a situation where they make less, even with commissions and fees factored into the equation.

Also, your agent has access to the Regional Multiple Listing Service, an online database that seller agents use to list homes, and buyer agents use to see what homes are for sale. Since most sellers list their homes with a REALTOR®, it is important that your home is considered by the majority of the buyers who are in the market to buy.

Any marketing expert will tell you that in marketing, exposure is key. Don't let your home get left out of this powerful marketing tool, since most homes are found by buyers, and sold, through the use of the Multiple Listing Service.

Your nest egg is on the line. You would never want to take the field without someone to direct your team's approach to the game. The same goes for selling your property.

As your REALTOR®, we are on your team and committed to your success. We have the knowledge and insight to ensure your property is properly priced and marketed for a quick sale. In addition, the tips included in the guide are only a handful of the



considerations you should make to prepare your house for sale. Our job is to make sure no stone is unturned, your house sells quickly, you make the most money possible in the transaction, and that your personal interests are protected.

We have many more valuable tips and ideas to help you sell your home fast and for the most money. Call us to provide a professional and accurate estimate of

the value of your home. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet you and show you our large database of buyers and how we market your home to buyers specifically looking for homes like yours in your community. Contact us!

### **Additional Tips to Consider**

There is no way to list every possible tip and item you could address when preparing your house for that right buyer. However, here are a few more:



- Replace all burned out or dim light bulbs.
- Clean or update your front door knob.
- Keep your blinds open.
- Purchase a new mat for your front door.
- Put fresh flowers on the kitchen table.
- Spend time focusing on the backyard.
- Clean and organize your closets.
- Throw a Home Warranty into the deal.
- Visit neighborhood open houses.
- Put away your pets when you leave the house.
- Price your home right – don't be greedy.





As you can tell, there is a lot that goes into selling a home. At times, it can be very overwhelming. That is where I can help.

As your REALTOR®, our number one objective is to ensure your specific needs and interests are met and protected. I have the knowledge and insight to answer all your questions, and to help you sell your home quickly. Remember, I have access to the Multiple Listing Service to market your home, and I can use it to help you find your next dream home.

**BONUS: 7 TIPS TO PRICING YOUR HOME RIGHT**



**TIP 1:** Online estimates can be an okay place to start, but be sure the sites you use not only return a price, but also connect it accurately to your address. Also, because online estimates can vary widely, make sure you get at least five prices, nix any that seem unusually high or low, then average the rest.

Know that the data collected from an online estimate is very general, including the standard things like square footage, beds and baths, and neighborhood comparables. They don't do a walk-through, so they don't know if you're next to the highway, or if you have an outstanding view, or if the condition of your house is better or worse than similar houses in the neighborhood. In other words, these

estimates are just that: estimates. Once you've come up with a general idea about the price, you can move on to the next step.

**[CLICK HERE TO GET YOUR ESTIMATED HOME VALUE](#)**

**TIP 2:** After getting a ballpark estimate, it's time to ask the experts. And why not? It's free, and as agents we can walk through your home and provide a Comparable Market Analysis (CMA). A CMA will include carefully selected comparable properties, a listing of the factors that make your house unique and an analysis of current market conditions. If you are shopping for agents, keep in mind that some agents may offer an unrealistically optimistic listing price, imagining you'll choose the agent who thinks he or she can get the best price. If an agent's suggested listing price seems too good to be true, it probably is. We have experience in your community. Call us to schedule an appointment at (309) 247-1604, or email [dorian@dorianjames.com](mailto:dorian@dorianjames.com).

**TIP 3:** Think Like a Buyer! You've heard the term "sentimental value." And just as the word "value" implies, the memories your house holds can add to its price. That is, if you're thinking like a seller.

If you're thinking like a buyer, however, these memories won't mean anything to them. Neither does your seller's optimism. When you're pricing your home, learn to think like a buyer and not like a seller. Prepare to



be rational. For example, when looking at your house among a menu of comparables, imagine which one you'd buy if you were looking at them from an outside point of view.

**TIP 4:** What's your home really worth? Well, it's worth what someone will pay for it. And what will someone pay for it? Well, that is what someone would likely pay, based on what others have paid for similar houses in the recent past. Be sure to price your home accurately with the recent and local competition.

That is, if you know the competition. You can bet that buyers will visit a few



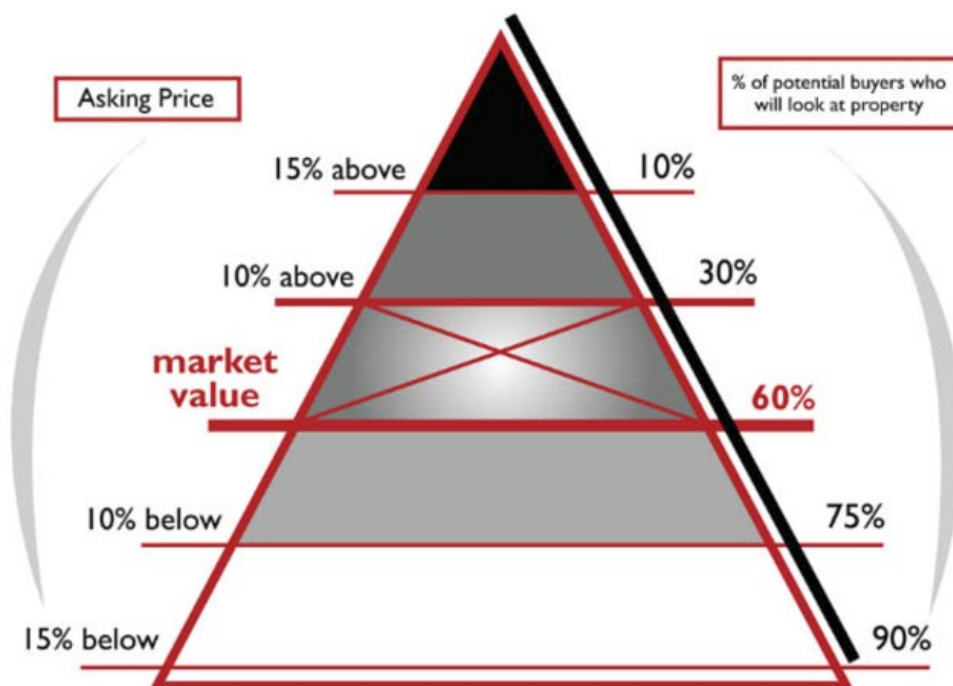
of these comparables, and you should, too. There's nothing like walking around a house to see how it stacks up against yours. Active listings are your competition, but they're active for a reason. They haven't sold yet. Looking at comparables currently

on the market might give you a good picture of what houses in your neighborhood don't sell for, if they have been on the market a long time. Instead, try to find out as much as you can about what has sold, and compare your home to those homes.

**TIP 5:** Know the Market! While it's worth looking at a graph of recent average home prices, here's the thing: These graphs rarely line up in different locales. You can look at what housing prices have done nationally in recent years and months.

Again, look to comparables. Take a look at what local houses were selling for a year ago, six months ago, three months ago, and now. Does the line point up or down? If you're in a seller's market, you might tack on an additional 5-10 percent. In a buyer's market, you might subtract that 5-10 percent. Also, explore the effect of foreclosures and short sales. One foreclosure in the blocks near you shouldn't sink your sale, but if more than 25 percent of the sales in your area are bank sales, you'll have to reduce your price in order to compete.

**TIP 6:** Price ahead of the curve. Imagine this: Prices are decreasing in your local market. You set the price of your house at today's fair value. But two months down the line, when you're dealing with make-it-or-break-it interest, your house is overpriced. You're behind the curve. At that point, if you cut the price to market value, you'll be behind the curve again, as prices erode beneath you. And cutting the asking price is a sign of desperation that makes buyers wonder what's wrong with the house. Chasing declining house prices is not a good place to be but it's one you can easily avoid by looking into the future and pricing your house accordingly.



However, the same is not true in an increasing market. If you overprice your house, listing it at what you imagine it will be worth three months in the future, you doom yourself to missing the all-important interest in your fresh listing. By the time your price is competitive, your house will most likely have been on the market three months, and your house will look like a tired listing.

**TIP 7:** The fair price of your home takes some things for granted: the paint and floor coverings are in good condition, it's spotless, landscaping is maintained, and you've decluttered your space. If you go above and beyond, your selling price can reflect it. The tips on the previous pages of this guide will help you get your home to show its best. How much you spend to fix up your home will depend on your possible return on investment in the end.

Be sure to stay rooted in your comparables. If every house on the market has granite countertops, then this amenity will already be reflected in the fair price you listed earlier. But if you're truly going above and beyond -- with heated floors or a basement sauna, for example -- then you have room to grow your asking price, but be careful not to price yourself out of the market with your upgrades!

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We are ready to serve you and your family, and to help you reach your real estate goals. Here's to happy selling and a successful close.

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