



The Difference



Preparing your
home for sale

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You never get a second chance to make a first impression

When you think about selling your home, one of the first things you should do is walk through the property with fresh eyes and imagine that you are a potential buyer.

How does your home look — is it welcoming, bright and spacious? Is it clean and well cared for or cluttered and dusty? Can people easily imagine themselves living there, or is it too full of your personal stuff?

Putting a tiny bit of effort into preparing your home for sale can make a significant difference. Not only can it accelerate the process to sell faster, but it can also contribute to boosting the final price. That is why we put together this guide, full of hints, strategies and tips to help you achieve the best outcome possible. And if you need help with arranging and styling your home, or once your property is ready, get in touch with your local real estate agent who will guide you through your selling journey.



Set the tone with a welcoming entrance

Your property needs to look great from the street. As soon as prospective buyers arrive, they want to be excited about coming in and taking a closer look. Spending just a few hours on improving the entrance can create the right energy the moment buyers see your home for the first time.

Neat, clean and functional

The first thing to do is to make sure that everything looks clean and well cared for. Check that roofing, gutters, windows, balustrades, driveways, footpaths, walls and garden areas are all functional and clean. They must be free of dirt and things like spider webs.

If you have a front gate, it will be the first thing people come into contact with. Knowing how crucial a first impression is, make sure it is also in good operating condition and quiet. If possible, keep the garbage bins out of sight. Clear out your letterbox each day and ensure no flyers or newspapers are left lying around.

Place a doormat outside your front door as this shows you care about keeping your property clean. Also, check that the street or unit number is clearly visible and that the doorbell and all external lights work (often people will take a peek at night).

Pave the way to a successful sale

You may want to guide buyers through to your door with a paved pathway. Plain white pavers look terrific against a green lawn. If the steps to your front door look a little shabby, a great trick is to tile the stair rises, rather than ripping everything out and starting from scratch.

A freshly painted front door will also help your home look fresh and inviting. If necessary, replace the handle with a new one. Potted plants on either side of the front door and neat landscaping can very much contribute to making your home more welcoming and memorable. Try and keep things symmetrical. The trick is to keep it simple and not clutter the space.

Step inside and see the light

If your hallway feels dark, try painting the walls white to lighten things up or add a skylight. A broad runner will make an entrance seem wider, while fresh flowers are simply a great way to greet visitors.

Focus on the kitchen, the room that sells

The kitchen is THE feature that can make or break a sale. It is usually the most expensive room in any house, so prospective buyers don't want to deal with one that would need a full upgrade. This doesn't necessarily mean a total refit (you don't want to overcapitalise and lose money). Still, there are small things you can do to make your kitchen more appealing.

Clear the clutter

If you have more on your kitchen benches than in the cupboards, then start with clearing the clutter. You want your kitchen to look clean and functional.

Add appliances

Buyers know just how expensive a new oven or dishwasher can be. They may shy away from your house if they believe extra money should be spent on buying new ones. So if your appliances are out of date, consider replacing them yourself. It will very likely be a worthwhile investment.

Freshen up walls and doors

A fresh coat of paint can work wonders in a drab kitchen, especially if cooking splatters have become a feature. Don't forget your worn tiles, a little primer and paint can make a huge difference.

Swapping cabinet doors can also give your kitchen a whole new look. If entirely new doors are outside your budget, you can make a huge difference by simply replacing the handles of your cupboards and drawers.

Lift the lighting

The lighting in a kitchen is something buyers will take careful note of. Installing fluorescent or spotlights under the top cupboard can provide light for benchtop work areas.



Maximise the space in living areas

Buyers like large living areas, so your priority should be to reduce the clutter and find ways to maximise the space.

Colour can help a room look bigger

If the size of your living room is on the smaller side, then you will need to show ingenuity to make the most of the space you have. Colour can help. For example, blues and greens can make a room appear bigger.

How you organise a small room is also important, especially if it has low ceilings. Keep furnishings below waist height and limit the number of pieces, as clutter would make the room look even smaller.

Go with the flow

Show buyers how easy it is to live in and enjoy your living space. These rooms are places for people to communicate and relax, so make sure you arrange your room to demonstrate this. Consider traffic flow, conversation areas, access from seating to coffee or side tables, and task lighting for work or reading areas.

Watch out below

Floors are the most expensive part to replace in a living room. Buyers know this, so expect them to pay extreme attention to these. Replacing worn or inappropriate flooring before you sell may not be economical, so try to make the most of what is there. Have your carpets professionally cleaned. Marked or damaged timber floors should be re-sanded and polished.

Keep things neutral

Barbie pink striped walls might be the latest trend, but most buyers will be put off by such a fashion statement. When selling, the best advice is to keep things neutral so people can easily project themselves. This doesn't mean living in a world of white. If your living area seems cold, try a colour scheme of rich neutrals like sand and bronze tones. For a cooler feel, look at whites with a blue tinge.

Find a feature

One of the golden rules of interior design is that rooms need a focus. It could be a fireplace or the view from your window or French doors. If your living space doesn't have a natural feature, why not create one? You could consider a feature wall, for example. Even if buyers don't buy your style, it will get their attention (and most won't have a problem with repainting it).

A clean, stylish bathroom can soak up a sale

Whatever condition your bathroom is in, it must be clean. Nothing puts more buyers off than mildew, a dirty loo or bad smell.

Clean, clean, clean

Clean your tiles and grouting, and make sure your windows, mirrors and shower screens are spotless and free of streaks. Hairs in the drains are a real put off, so check this before you open your home to buyers. Replace your soap bars with liquid soap, as there will be less mess to take care of.

That smell won't sell

Bad smells can sometimes creep into your bathrooms and scare buyers away. Make sure to air well. Open the windows, use the extractor fan, and add some potpourri or air freshener if needed. However, try not to go over the top as buyers might think you are trying to hide something.

Fix the fittings and add a touch of luxury

Cracked basin, toilets or tubs give the impression the room is unhygienic, so consider replacing these. It is not that expensive provided you don't change the plumbing. Luxury spa bathrooms are trendy but can be very expensive. To add a little touch of luxury to any bathroom, and create a nice, cosy feeling, rely on accessories. Fresh, plump towels, some handmade soaps, plant or fresh flowers, and some boutique bath products set out in your bathroom will do the trick.

Create more space

If you have a small bathroom, don't clutter the limited wall space with towel rails. Instead, put them on the back of the door. If you are renovating, consider wall-mounted sinks and toilets. Use big mirrors to make the room appear twice the size. Not only will they enhance the feeling of spaciousness, but they are also very convenient.

The bathroom will seem less cluttered if you keep the colour scheme simple and light, and ensure that you have proper storage to hide all those bits and pieces.

A fresh coat for a new look

Stained or chipped bathtubs and basins can be easily fixed by enamelling companies that can give your fitting a whole new look. They can even enamel old tiles, so if your bathroom's colour scheme is straight out of the 1970s, this simple, inexpensive process could save your sale. Add to this a fresh coat of paint on the walls, and you have a whole new bathroom.





Bedrooms should feel like a sanctuary

When it comes to bedrooms, again, size matters. After looking at the number of bedrooms, buyers are most interested in how big they are. Use neutral colours to make your bedrooms seem larger and reduce the amount of furniture to maximise the feeling of space.

Also be smart when arranging furniture. If you have a small bedroom, use a double bed instead of a queen or bunks in a children's room.

More storage and less clutter

You can never have enough storage in a bedroom, and that is why you will see people peeking in cupboards and wardrobes at an open house. To reduce the demands on limited space in small bedrooms, consider having built-in robes installed, but keep the interior simple. Indeed, if you include all the bells and whistles, you won't recoup the costs.

Less is more. However large your bedrooms are, they will look small if cluttered with all your personal knick-knacks. When comes the time to sell, make sure you clear away the clutter and personal items such as photos. That doesn't mean your rooms need to look impersonal.

Create a sanctuary

Buyers want a bedroom where they can escape the worries of life. Lighting is crucial in creating the right atmosphere. To give a romantic feel, consider adding dimmer switches and bedside lamps. If you are having evening viewings, quality lighting is essential.

You can make your bedroom a sanctuary by adding a little luxury with fresh linen, puffed up pillows and extra cushions, a comfy chair, and a few unique features, like candles and perfume bottles. All these can contribute to making the room feel like home for potential buyers.



Give your garden a fresh trim

Just like inside your house, your garden should be tidy and clear of clutter. Weed your garden and keep the lawn trimmed when opening your home for inspection. Consider your plants – remove dead ones and replace with new ones, but make sure they suit the conditions in your garden.

You don't want them to die before you sell.

Colourful creations

The garden is one place you can have fun with colour. However, rather than introducing lots of different ones into a small garden bed, try sticking to one shade and perhaps use varying tones. You can also add instant colour with pots of whatever is in flower from the nursery.

Style your garden

You can give your garden a simple makeover before you sell by adding defining borders to your flower beds and adding a focal point. Timber borders are popular, but you can also outline your beds with small shrubs or grasses. Add a few larger plants as focal points, but keep them in proportion to the size of your garden.

Make the courtyard look bigger

Many houses today, particularly in the inner city, don't enjoy large gardens. Often there is only a small courtyard, so it is essential to maximise this space. The first step may be to create a focal point like a water feature, statue or urn. This should be placed at the furthest point from the entrance, so your buyers' vision is drawn to a distance, giving a sense of space.

You can also create an illusion of space by paving the entire area with large pavers. It will make the ground look wider and less busy. Don't use any dark colours in your courtyard structures as these reduce the perception of space.

Be marketing savvy to stand out

Selling your property should not be a secret – target your audience and communicate about the sale.

Marketing strategies

One of the reasons a good agent will be highly valuable throughout the selling process is their ability and knowledge around marketing your property. You could waste hundreds or even thousands of dollars by not advertising your property the right way.

So how to get the best return on investment? You need a strategy to ensure maximum market exposure and reach your target audience. Remember that finding one extra buyer can make a real difference in the sales price.

See marketing as an investment (not a cost)

Marketing should be seen as an investment. Many buyers see it as a cost and spend too little on their marketing. This can result in it being ineffective and a waste of money.

If you think you need to spend \$400 on advertising a \$50,000 car, then calculate how much you should invest on a \$500,000 home. Your marketing campaign should not only rely on websites, press or a signboard in front of your home. Buyers should be able to find your property in many different mediums, including social media. Keep in mind that they will usually need to see your listing multiple times before they act.

Focus on buyers' needs (not yours).

Buyers may have been in the market for many weeks before your home comes onto the market. This is why your strategy should be to focus on buyers' needs and wants, which your property's features and benefits will fulfil.

Beware of agents that include advertising for free as they may have a vested interest in your property sale. They may be looking to quickly recoup the money they have spent rather than taking the time to negotiate the highest price with the best buyer.

Due to consumers having information at their fingertips, thanks to email and text alerts or push notifications, the buyer's journey is getting ever shorter. Therefore, a high impact advertising campaign in a shorter time frame is usually most effective.





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North Parramatta

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Interested parties must rely solely on their own enquiries





Where do I start?

Look for marketing, negotiation and communication skills

When selecting an agent to represent you on the sale of your property, make sure to check that the agent can demonstrate good marketing, negotiation and communication skills.

Some sellers have fallen into the trap of choosing an agent that either tells them the highest price or offers the lowest fees. Both of these criteria can be costly in the long run, and we would recommend not making a decision based on these two criteria.

What to expect?

A good real estate agent will:

- Provide you with the facts of what is happening in your local real estate market, thanks to their knowledge and the depth of research they undertake daily.
- Provide you with a comparative market analysis so you can gain an understanding of where your property sits in the local market.
- Suggest ways to best prepare and present your home to maximise price and reduce selling time.
- Develop a cost-effective marketing plan to attract as many prospective buyers in your target market as possible, within your given time-frame.
- Ensure your property features are comprehensively promoted to potential buyers to maximise the value of your property.
- Conduct property inspections through both open homes and personal inspections, and provide you with accurate market feedback on the level of buyer interest.
- Negotiate the best possible price and terms on your behalf by exhausting every potential buyer and not leaving any stone unturned.
- Be enthusiastic and passionate about your property and willing to go the extra mile to refresh the marketing strategy to keep your property top of mind.



Checklist

Entrance and garden

- ☐ Clean/repair gate and fence
- ☐ Clean/repair and empty letter box
- ☐ Move garbage bins out of sight
- ☐ Sweep/fix/clean driveway, paths and steps
- ☐ Mow lawn
- ☐ Clean, weed and trim garden
- ☐ Remove/replace dead or dying plants
- ☐ Clean/repair gutters and eaves
- ☐ Check/reseal/repair roof
- ☐ Tidy garage and shed
- ☐ Clean windows
- ☐ Add a welcome mat
- ☐ Clean/paint front door
- ☐ Ensure street number is visible
- ☐ Check exterior lights and doorbell

General inside

- ☐ Do a complete spring clean
- ☐ Scrub/clean skirting boards, walls, floors, windows, lights, curtains and blinds
- ☐ Clean/repair flyscreens
- ☐ Remove clutter
- ☐ Install new light bulbs
- ☐ Buy fresh flowers
- ☐ Clean/polish/vacuum floors
- ☐ Remove/hide personal items
- ☐ Dust and straighten pictures
- ☐ Hide/unplug electrical cables

Bathroom

- ☐ Air bathroom well
- ☐ Use air freshener/candle to remove smells
- ☐ Clean bath, basin, loo, shower, mirrors, taps, etc.
- ☐ Ensure grout and tiles are free from mildew
- ☐ Use lighting and mirrors to create feeling of more space
- ☐ Check fan works
- ☐ Replace/repair cracks in bathtubs, basins, etc
- ☐ Remove personal toiletries
- ☐ Lay out luxury bath items and plump fresh towels

Bedrooms

- ☐ Make the most use of space
- ☐ Remove furniture that gets in the way and takes up room
- ☐ Ensure all cupboards are neat and clean
- ☐ Remove surface clutter on dressers, drawers bedside tables
- ☐ Put on fresh linen, puff up pillows, add some luxury features
- ☐ Clean/dust all surfaces and mirrors
- ☐ Remove dirty laundry
- ☐ Remove dated appliances (eg. older bulky televisions)

Entrance and garden

- ☐ Remove clutter from counters
- ☐ Check cupboards are not overflowing
- ☐ Freshen up walls and cupboard doors
- ☐ Create the right atmosphere with lighting
- ☐ Ensure tables and benchtops are clean and not damaged
- ☐ Clean outside and inside of the fridge, oven, microwave, etc.
- ☐ Replace out of date appliances
- ☐ Clean/repair the floor
- ☐ Clean drains and empty bins
- ☐ Ensure dishwasher is empty and clean
- ☐ Minimise decorations

Living areas

- ☐ Ensure colours are neutral
- ☐ Arrange room to emphasise best use of the space
- ☐ Highlight key features
- ☐ Ensure sofas are clean
- ☐ Replace older appliances (eg. replace old TV with a flat screen) to create more space
- ☐ Remove old magazines/newspapers

Laundry

- ☐ Remove clothes from washing line
- ☐ Empty washer and dryer
- ☐ Put clean laundry away
- ☐ Clean cupboards



Seek help from a professional

Is your property (nearly) ready for sale?

Get in touch with your local real estate agent who will guide you through the process of selling your property. In this guide, we put together a range of expert hints, strategies and tips to accomplish the best outcome for your sale.

These should all help make a significant difference to the time it takes to sell your property and the sale price you achieve.





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