



# Easy Tricks to Get Your Home to Sell Faster

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As sale prices for condominiums and single-family homes have steadily declined since 2008, now, more than ever, it's a buyer's market. While this is good news for homebuyers looking to snag a bargain, for sellers, it means extended time on the market, which translates into lower bids.

But experts say with a little work, you can potentially [sell your home](#) in less time and receive close to a competitive asking price that's set by a licensed real agent.

"When you are putting your house on the market, the work is not about tricking people or hiding damage, but about doing the work for potential buyers," says designer Lisa LaPorta.

The preparation should start before a potential buyer even sets foot into a home. Donna Freeman, a resident real estate expert and co-author of *Seven Steps to Sold: The Secrets to [Selling Your Home](#) for Big Bucks . . . Fast!*, recommends removing old lawn furniture and taking care of outside maintenance work.

This difference in an interested buyer's bid and the seller's asking price will most likely be more than the actual cost of fixing a swimming pool, cracks in cement or driveways, leaking roofs, broken windowpanes, and rotting trim, says LaPorta.

Work on the homeowner's part can translate into a higher sale price. Painting a home's exterior, for example, may cost a homeowner about \$1,677, but can increase the sale price by \$2,222, according to real estate blog HomeGain.com. If you are unable to paint the house, power washing the outside to remove any dirt may have a similar affect.

"A good rule of thumb is to think about what people see when they approach the house," says Barry Katz, owner of Barry Katz Homebuilding. He suggests having an immaculate lawn and removing any leaves and dead shrubs. Planting in-season, cheap annuals in a flowerbed can add color and curb appeal.

Landscaping that costs about \$540 can increase a sales price by \$1,932, according to HomeGain.com. If the house looks unappealing from the outside, buyers may think the inside is just as bad.

Once inside, buyers need to be able to imagine living in the space with their belongings, says Freeman. As they inspect the house, a buyer wants to see that everything works, including doors and their locks, drawer pulls in kitchens and bathrooms, toilets, sinks, and lights. Also, every fixture in the house that you intend to take with you, such as chandeliers or built-in furniture, needs to be removed and replaced before showing your home.

"The way we live in a house and the way we sell a house are two different things," Freeman advises. Your house should be immaculate and clutter free, and she recommends having a friend inspect your house for cleanliness and hiring a professional cleaning crew.

Depersonalizing your house can also significantly increase your sales price. Children's toys and cribs need to be put away and

out of sight. Removing excess furniture will make a room appear larger and help buyers to imagine how their furniture will fit into the space. Also, remove your personal photos and all religious and ethnic art. "Blank walls allow buyers to move their own things in mentally," Freeman says.

Instead of stuffing closets with extra items, Katz suggests renting storage for collectables, art, decorations and other items that clutter [kitchen](#) countertops, closets and bathrooms. Empty closets always look bigger.

"Don't be stubborn or proud about your taste and design in your home," LaPorta cautions. If someone doesn't like the color of a house, they may not be savvy enough to recognize that they don't like the house because of the color. Gender neutral colors, like white and off-white, on walls and floors appeal to a wide range of tastes. Also, painting the interior can help remove any odors and give the house a move-in condition feel. Painting a house has a 109% return on income, according to HomeGain.com.

Neutral-colored carpets that match neutral-colored walls are most appealing to home seekers. Katz recommends shampooing dirty rugs and exposing hardwood floors that add warmth to a house.

The kitchen and bathrooms tend to be the most important to homebuyers, according to LaPorta. These rooms should not look like they need major renovations. Kitchen appliances stand out and give a high return to sellers. New, energy-star rated appliances that aren't necessarily top of the line are better than old appliances, says Katz.

If you are unable to replace older appliances Freeman recommends having them professionally painted. Updating kitchens and bathrooms can have a 172% return on income when selling a house, according to HomeGain.com.

For outdated kitchen and bathroom cabinets, sanding them and adding a fresh coat of paint or stain can make a big difference. Use a bleach pen to clean grout, and re-caulk tubs and sinks. "The bathroom should look as if anyone can imagine laying their toothbrush on the countertop," says LaPorta.

Freeman recommends purchasing a new, white shower curtain and mat, removing any bathrobes, and putting out new white towels that are used only when buyers are inspecting a space.

Lighting in the house is also very important. To maximize the amount of natural light, clean the windows and prune any shrubs blocking windows.

"Being in a bright space makes people feel happy," Katz says. Spending \$375 replacing light fixtures may increase the sales price by \$1,550, according to HomeGain.com.

When ready to show your house, one of the simplest do-it-yourself projects for selling a house is to cook a frozen apple pie during an open house. "The whole house will smell great for a few hours," says Katz, and the aroma will trigger emotions in a buyer that may lead to a bid.

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