

H **YOUR** HOME



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Get Your House Show-Ready

Preparing to sell your house means more than cleaning out cobwebs and scrubbing the floors. Appliances, foodstuffs and cleaning supplies can make valuable kitchen space look cluttered and turn off prospective buyers. Old paint and worn carpets can also throw up roadblocks. Here are a few suggestions to help you spruce up your place and entice homebuyers.

Put small kitchen appliances — the toaster, slow cooker and rarely used dishes, pots and pans — in storage. Eat, donate or throw away canned goods; they take up space and cost too much to have

moved to your next house. Don't forget to clean the area under the sink, scrubbing thoroughly afterward to remove any stains.

Freshly painted walls and new carpet can go a long way toward helping make a sale. Before showing your house, replace all torn or frayed carpets and rugs, and sand and paint your walls to increase the interior's appeal. If you have hardwood floors, bring in a contractor to check their thickness and make sure the boards are level. You may need to replace older hardwood floors that have thinned from repeated sanding over the years.



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21st-Century Kitchen

Worried about an outdated kitchen bringing down your house's market value? Give it a face-lift. Cabinet refacing is one of many easy, inexpensive ways to take buyers' attention away from less-than-new appliances and bring a healthy new look to your kitchen.



Make sure cabinets are in decent shape first; cabinets in older homes are generally of higher quality than those in newer homes. If you can't afford refacing, repaint cabinet doors with a light color. Replacing

drawer pulls and door handles can also transform outdated cabinets. Hide nicks on enamel appliances with appliance touch-up enamel, then polish them with a soft cloth and auto body polish. If you have once-popular-colored appliances — in shades like avocado or coppertone — have them refinished in white for about \$200 per appliance.

Maintain Your Curb Appeal

Since the exterior of your house is the first thing prospective buyers will see, it is important to make their first impression a winning one. Use the following checklist to prepare the outside of your house:

- Sweep the front walkway. If it's winter and you live in a cold climate, shovel snow and clean away ice.
- Mow the lawn and plant flowers. Though neutral is



key on the inside, you can afford to be bold with color in the garden.

- Trim shrubs and rake leaves. Prune dead tree branches, too.
 - Remove newspapers, bikes and toys. A shiny swing set is fine; rusty ones should be eliminated.
- Park extra cars away from the property.
 - Make sure sprinklers and other exterior plumbing are in working order.
 - Clean windows and screens. A mix of ammonia and water will make windowpanes sparkle.
 - Touch up any peeling paint on the body and trim of your house. If the exterior seems more dirty than worn, rent a pressure washer from a tool center and hose down all outside surfaces.
 - Replace broken gutters, loose downspouts and missing or torn roof shingles.
 - Fix cracks in the driveway and entry walkway. Asphalt sealant from a building-supply store and a stiff broom makes this a relatively easy do-it-yourself job.
 - Reseal the deck or porch.

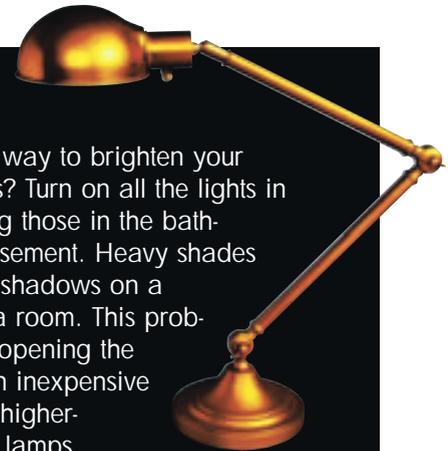
Bigger Is Better



Buyers like spacious, airy places. There are simple ways to

make your house look bigger than it really is. Light neutral colors expand the feeling of a room, especially small spaces such as entryways and bathrooms. Tone-on-tone decorating with furniture, draperies, walls and accessories will create this same open feeling. Remove the leaf (and extra chairs) from your dining room table. Put extra or bulky furniture in storage, and clean off countertops and tabletops. Get rid of basement or attic clutter by having a yard sale—and make a little cash to boot!

Lights On!



Looking for a quick way to brighten your house for showings? Turn on all the lights in the house, including those in the bathrooms, closets and basement. Heavy shades and curtains can cast shadows on a homebuyer's view of a room. This problem is easily fixed by opening the drapes and adding an inexpensive light fixture or putting higher-wattage bulbs in your lamps. Replace soft bulbs with 100- to 150-watt bulbs and ceiling fixtures with 150-watt halogen lights to bring a bright glow to your rooms. Note: Check the fixtures for wattage maximums before changing bulbs.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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