



2014 Home Seller's 10-Step Prep Checklist

If you're planning on selling your home next year, now's the time to start preparing. Selling your home can be a stressful process, but with a little foresight, some smart organizational moves, and the right resources, you'll be well on your way to a successful home sale. Use this simple checklist to stay on track and get the best deal possible!

Do Your Research

Timing is everything when it comes to buying or selling a home. The national housing market has been steadily recovering, but can vary vastly from city to city. Talk to a real estate professional you trust early on to get their advice and expertise to find the ideal time to start the selling process. They'll be able to lend insight into where the market is headed and how it may impact your home sale.

Organize & Declutter

When it comes to selling your home, sometimes it's not about what you don't have—it's about having too much! Clearing out closets, paring down on piles, and tossing trash are some of the most cost effective ways to get top dollar for your home. Start these tasks early and take them on little by little to keep from feeling overwhelmed. The goal is to create a home that is open and bright. Consider a storage unit to help get larger items that you're not ready to part with out of the way.

Make Minor Repairs & Upgrades

The smallest repairs can sometimes make the biggest impact on your home sale. Visit a local open house or two in your local area. Take note of the little eyesores that you notice, then turn the critical eye on your own home. Does your house need a new coat of paint? Are your bathroom fixtures outdated? These small, budget-friendly fixes can make a big difference when it comes to getting a great offer.

Hire an Agent

The right real estate professional can ease the stress of a home sale. Look for an agent who demonstrates expertise in your neighborhood and has had success selling comparable homes in the area. An experienced real estate agent can help you through the details of the home sale process and can help set realistic expectations for how much your home is worth.

Consider a Pre-Listing Inspection

A pre-listing inspection will cost you a couple hundred dollars up front, but can save you money in the long run. The inspection will alert you to any issues ahead of time—which can be particularly valuable if you have an older home. You'll be able to fix any minor issues ahead of time or allow a credit for the issue in the home price.

Set a Price

Many sellers have an emotional attachment to their home—as they should—but at times this can lead to unrealistic expectations for the market value of the home. Your agent is your team leader in the pricing game. They'll be able to walk you through what comparable properties in your neighborhood sell for and can help you settle on a realistic asking price. You should also be open to course-correcting your asking price if the market necessitates it.

Work to Create a Sell Sheet

Your real estate professional will help you create a strong sell sheet, but sometimes you know the best features about your home and neighborhood. Help your agent out by sending them a quick note highlighting your favorite things about your neighborhood and community. The little details may be just the thing needed to get a buyer to pounce.

Get Open House Ready

Now's the time to clean, clean, clean. Buyers will want to explore the nooks and crannies of your home and notice every detail. Keep pets out of sight, eliminate any strong odors, and open the drapes. You'll also want to depersonalize the space so that buyers can picture themselves in your home. Remove photos of your friends and family or any strong indicators of your specific interests and hobbies.

Prepare Yourself for Success

During the period where you are actively showing your home, you will want to be open house ready at all times. You never know when the best buyers will want to see your home. Even on non-open house dates, it's smart to keep your home clean, the lawn and garden maintained, and any pocketable valuables out of sight.

Close the Deal

Once you get an offer, finalize negotiations, and get into contract, the hard work is *almost* over. However, deals can sometimes go south at the final moments. Cooperate with your home's buyer, appraiser, inspectors, contractors, escrow providers and your local authorities to get your home sale transaction closed smoothly.