

HOUSE FOR SALE!

Tips for Getting It Buyer-Ready

When a house is for sale, the goal is to make it as attractive as possible to potential buyers. The most cost-efficient way to spruce up the home is to clean it thoroughly, advises The Soap and Detergent Association (www.cleaning101.com).

Getting Rid of Clutter

Many potential buyers may not see past dirt and clutter. If the house is crowded with the owner's "stuff," they will assume that the house is too small for their possessions. Too much clutter also poses a safety - *and buying* - hazard! A person who trips over items left on the stairs is unlikely to have a good feeling about the house. In addition, a clean, clutter-free environment is more attractive than a grimy, untidy one.

Begin by purging the house, including the basement, attic and garage, of items that are no longer needed. Things that are in good condition can be sold or donated to a charity. The remainder can be thrown in the trash. Rooms will appear more spacious, closets will look bigger and shelves will look roomier to potential buyers.

Time to Clean

Focus on the rooms that potential buyers are most interested in - living room, dining room, kitchen and bathroom. Look at each room as a potential buyer might and see what catches the eye first. Make that the starting point for the cleaning process. Then, follow the top-to-bottom, left-to-right rule for cleaning each room. That way, no surface is overlooked.

Give major attention to the kitchen and bathrooms. Check the labels on cleaning products to make sure they are appropriate for the surfaces to be cleaned. Abrasive cleansers provide extra cleaning power for hard-to-remove soils like food particles and grease residue in sinks. However, they may be too harsh for surfaces that are easily scratched, such as laminate or solid surface countertops. In general, liquid and gel cleansers are less abrasive than powders.

Spray cleaners are easy to use for small areas, such as countertops, while powders or liquids mixed in a pail of water are more efficient for larger areas, such as walls and floors. Floors can become cloudy from cleaning solution residue, making them look dirty when they're actually clean. To prevent this, use a no-rinse product or rinse the floor well after each cleaning.

Combat Mold & Mildew

Mold and mildew are especially problematic in bathrooms. With all the publicity concerning the illnesses that mold can cause, prospective home buyers are more sensitive than ever about its presence. Use liquid household bleach or cleaners with bleach to remove mildew stains from shower doors, shower curtains and grout between tiles.

Use a non-streaking cleaning product, such as a glass or glass and multi-surface cleaner, for shower doors and mirrors. A regular routine, including rinsing the tub after bathing, using a small squeegee on shower walls after each use, and drying faucets and handles to prevent water spots, will keep things clean.

Don't Forget to . . .

- Wash the windows, vacuum carpets and drapes and dust thoroughly. Use a dusting product so that the dust will be trapped and removed rather than dispersed in the air. Vacuum regularly, using long straight strokes.
- If repainting is not in the budget, carefully clean surfaces to remove dust, grime and fingerprints. Painted surfaces are usually washable, but test the cleaning solution on an inconspicuous area first. Use a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner. To avoid streak marks when cleaning large vertical areas, start at the bottom and work up, overlapping areas and using a circular motion.
- Keeping on top of the cleaning chores will make your home look its best. And, once a buyer is found, it'll be easy to have the house "broom ready" for that final walk-through before closing day.