

Fixes Buyers Will Love

Selling Your House?

These Fixes Buyers Will Love

You've decided to put your house on the market, now you've got to prep it for sale. Frankly, you've lived in your home sweet home for so long that you've become deaf to its squeaky floors, (nose) dumb to the musty basement, and blind to the peeling paint outside. But buyers will notice all of these flaws – and more! – in a flash. So how do you spruce up your house to make it irresistible to buyers? And which fix-ups make the most sense when you're designing to sell?

Depending on your wallet, you have several choices. First, there are the fixes that you absolutely must make, unless you don't care about getting top dollar or a quick sale and opt to sell your house "as is." After that repairs fall into one of three camps: free and easy, cheap and easy, and best bang for the buck. Let's look at each of these.



Honey (must) dos

Bottom line: Buyers want a house with no deferred maintenance. Before you plant the for-sale sign out front, take a tour of your house, inside and out, and scrutinize it the way a buyer will. Look for obvious issues of wear and tear and/or safety concerns and solve those problems first. These include:

- Cracks or holes in walls and ceilings
- Cracked or broken windows, tile or plaster
- Leaky or damaged roof
- Plumbing problems
- Leaky faucets, toilets, tubs, showers
- Electrical problems
- Damaged flooring
- Broken appliances
- Malfunctioning HVAC systems
- Rickety stairs / missing railing
- Code violations



Free & easy

Believe it or not, there's a lot you can do to make your house shine like a new copper penny without spending a cent.

- **Clear the clutter.** It's easier for buyers to imagine themselves living in your house if they can actually see your house and its gorgeous details. Pack up anything you can live without for a few months – hey, you're moving anyway – and remove all unnecessary “stuff” from your closets, cupboards and cabinets (yes, buyers will look inside!).

- **Clear out the garage.** Apply the same inside-of-house clutter-busting to your garage, jettisoning anything that doesn't belong there. (Hint: a garage is shelter for a car.) Buyers like knowing they'll have an off-street home for their vehicle(s).

- **Organize closets and drawers.** When it comes to storage, you can never have too much. Buyers want to know there'll be plenty of room for all their belongings, so keep your closets and drawers tidy and half-full to create the illusion of more space.



Free & easy (continued)

- **Rearrange the furniture.** Speaking of more space, move out big, bulky furniture and rearrange remaining pieces to make your rooms appear as large as possible and to create easy traffic flow room to room.
- **Clean like it's spring.** Your home is your jewel so make it sparkle. Clean the windows, drapes, blinds, rugs, baseboards, crown molding, furniture, behind furniture, etc. Scrub the refrigerator and degrease the oven; make bathroom fixtures shine. Pretend it's spring and clean like your life – or your home's sale – depended on it!
- **Light the way.** Keep blinds and drapes open to let natural daylight in and hang a mirror to reflect outdoor light if possible. When showing your house, turn on all the lights, especially in hallways and dark corners. Replace any burned-out bulbs.
- **Straighten up.** Make sure your gutters, mailbox and fences are straight and properly aligned.





Cheap & easy

Sometimes you have to spend money to make money. When a little more than elbow grease is called for, consider these simple, inexpensive fixes to make a big impact on buyers.

- **Paint.** Nothing transforms a room, or removes odors, like paint. Use low- or no-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint in light, neutral colors. Outside, amp up your curb appeal with a newly painted front door. Touching up the trim can make the entire exterior seem refreshed.
- **Caulk, patch, regrout.** Seal out drafts with a bead of caulk around windows, doors, vents, etc. Patch the cement cracks in your walkways. Freshen the grout in bathroom and kitchen tiles.
- **Trim it.** Give your house stand-out architectural detail with new crown molding or baseboard trim, or beef up the trim you have already by adding another layer.



Cheap & easy (continued)

- **Clean it.** If you don't have the time or energy to personally give your house a thorough going-over, hire a cleaning crew to do it for you.
- **Landscape it.** Charm buyers with a yard that reels 'em in. Keep grass neatly mowed and remove dead plants and tree branches. Add pots flowers in bloom for pops of seasonal color.
- **Dress up the driveway.** Fix cracks in the driveway and reseal the surface for added curb appeal.
- **Dress up the entry.** Get a new front door or spruce up the existing one. Replace worn doorknobs and locks. Add a brass kick-plate, door knocker or mail slot for added bling.
- **Let it ring.** Fix a broken doorbell and choose a soothing chime for a ringtone.



Best bang for the buck

Kitchens and baths sell houses, but a complete makeover for lackluster rooms is rarely cost-effective. Remodeling is for buyers, not sellers. Instead, focus on updates that are truly worth their investment.

- **Mini-kitchen makeover.** Paint your cabinets and update the hardware to freshen up a tired kitchen. Change your lighting fixtures and add a mirrored backsplash to introduce light and visually expand your space. Paint the walls an inviting neutral color. For even more impact, consider buying one high-end stainless steel appliance. When buyers see one fancy appliance they assume the others are too.
- **Refinish floors.** Who doesn't love a hardwood floor? If yours have seen better days, or are covered by carpet, refinish them. Wood floors add about 6% to a home's selling price and at about \$3 to \$4 per square foot, the cost to refinish is well worth the investment.
- **Update wiring for tech toys.** Appeal to tech-savvy buyers by adding power outlets with USB ports in rooms like kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and home offices. Go a step further and add a wireless router.

Remember, once you decide to sell your house it's no longer your home – it's a product. Make it a house buyers will love and they'll flock to your door.



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