



Better Austin Living - Home Seller

Room By Room Review



101 Quick & Easy Tips to Make Your House Show Like a Model Home

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It All Starts with Creating Curb Appeal

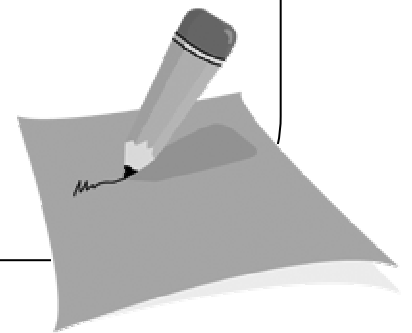
The first impression people have of your house is what it looks like from the outside. What are they going to say to themselves as they approach your home? Believe it or not, some buyers make a decision to keep on driving just by looking at the outside of the house.

Here are some tips to make them want to come inside:

- Tidy up the outside by removing any leaves, debris, branches, and other “yard clutter” to make a neat and tidy appearance.
- Pick up any garden equipment, buckets, rakes, shovels, lawn mower, etc. and coil hoses neatly.
- Give the hedges a fresh trim, paying special attention to anything blocking windows or getting in the way of walking to and from the house.
- Power wash the driveway, walkway, patio, and deck.
- Clean the pool and keep it sparkling and free of pool toys, pool equipment, and rafts.
- Neaten and refresh any play areas: Maybe some fresh sand in the sandbox, fix any rusted or dirty swings, slides or other playground equipment.
- Spruce up the lawn by cutting, trimming, weeding, and fertilizing where necessary. A great-looking lawn makes a better impression than a neglected lawn.
- Color it up by adding some bright annuals in places that could use some brightening, or add a colorful potted plant at the entryway.
- Make the garage and front door look as inviting as you can. If it needs it, a fresh coat of paint and kick-plate can inexpensively transform a front door. Make sure the garage door is not dented or dirty. Little things count a lot.
- Fresh mulch around the base of trees and flowerbeds gives a fresh and maintained look for a small amount of money.
- Pressure wash the outside of the house if necessary, and consider painting if the house needs it, or if the color is “dated” – a fresh coat of paint on the outside can make the house look completely updated.

- Look at the mailbox. Does it need freshening up? Maybe consider replacing it if it needs it.
- Make sure the numbers on the house make it easy to find, and consider getting new ones if it would improve the look from the street. Cut back vegetation that may have grown over the numbers.
- Make the windows sparkle. Clean windows and repair any caulking or paint that needs attention.

Notes:



The Entryway Sets the Stage

The buyers' first moments in a house are their moments of greatest anticipation about what's to come. It's here in the entryway that you set the stage for their experience throughout the rest of the house.

Here are some tips to make the front entry experience a great one:

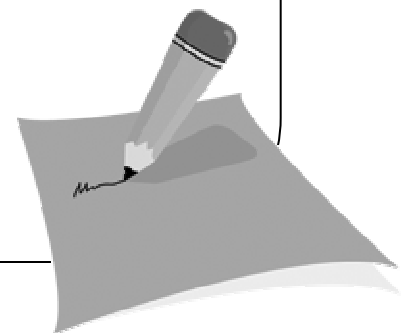
- Do your front entrance and front door make a good first impression? A fresh coat of paint and a seasonal wreath make a good door great.
- Hanging plants or potted plants can add some color and define an entry way.
- Does the front entrance light work? Replace the light bulbs to brighten up the entry, and make sure the light is on if people are coming at dusk or after dark.
- Replace the front door hardware if tarnished, dated or working ineffectively. The doorknob is the first thing buyers look at as their agent is getting the key out of the lockbox.
- Replace any torn or worn screen doors, and make sure the door is in perfect working order. No squeaking, jamming, or sticking locks. Make it effortless to get in the house.
- Make sure the doorbell works.
- Once inside, make sure the immediate entryway is free of clutter, shoes, coats, umbrellas, and anything that takes up space.
- If your entryway is small, brighten it up with a bright light bulb and a light-colored coat of paint if appropriate.
- Weed out all the "stuff" from the entry table, or shelves in the front entry. Pick up extra key rings, mail, and other stuff that gets piled up at the front door.
- Clean out the front closet of all but immediately used coats, boots, shoes, hats, gloves, and all the other clutter that gets thrown in the closet. Make the closet look spacious and uncluttered.

Tips for Every Room In the House

- Give the house a real “once over” cleaning. Clean it from top to bottom. Clean houses have a competitive edge over dirty houses.
- Let some air in. Get a fresh breeze going to completely air out the house and get rid of any “stale” odors you may not even notice. Springtime fresh!
- Start packing now. Pack up everything you don’t use right now, put it in boxes and store the boxes out of the house if possible.
- Think model home. Remove “extra” furniture and accessories. Make it appear spacious, not crowded. That favorite chair may have to go for now.
- Clean and deodorize carpets, paying special attention to high-traffic areas and stains that can be removed.
- Check all the light fixtures and lamps, replacing burned-out or low-light bulbs with bright white bulbs. Make sure light switches are functional; consider updating them.
- If the couch, chairs or loveseat need some updating, try a neutral slip cover and add accent color with some throw pillows.
- Check for squeaky doors, and add a little WD-40 to remove the squeaks.
- If necessary, paint interior walls. Paint is relatively cheap, and a great return on investment. It doesn’t have to be white, but stay away from the other end of the spectrum. Neutrals are usually best.
- Remove any peeled or torn wallpaper and borders.
- Check the window coverings to make sure the blinds work properly. Clean them and keep them open to let in as much light as possible.
- Remove all valuables and make sure confidential documents are out of sight, and safe.
- Weed out the magazine racks and coffee table. Only the most current magazines should be in view.
- Make sure the house smells its best at all times. Keep cat boxes clean at all times, and preferably out of the house for showings.

- Do some plant and flower triage, removing the ones that aren't going to make it. Clean the leaves of the healthy ones and make sure they're watered and looking great.
- Let the buyers see their lives in your house...not yours. Store excess family photos, the "wall of fame" and anything that is too much a reflection of YOUR life. We want them to focus on what their life would be like in their new home, not the museum of your life.
- Put the bookshelves on a diet. Pack up most of the books on your shelf, leaving only the larger books and lots of room on the shelves. Overcrowded bookshelves shrink the appearance of a room.

Notes:



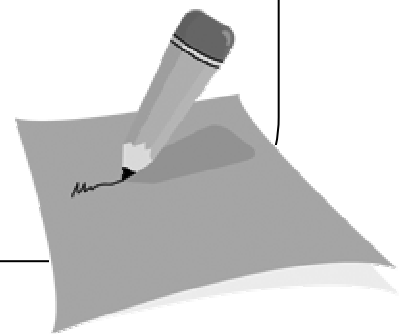
Making the Most of Your Kitchen and Dining Room

The kitchen is the heart of the home, and it's the most highly valued room by buyers, so you want to make it show its best. Here are some tips to create a captivating kitchen:

- You can cut down on visual clutter by removing items you normally store on the counter. This will help your kitchen look more spacious.
- Your eat-in kitchen should have a table and chairs in it. Buyers like to see an eat-in kitchen, but often don't have the vision to see it as such without the furniture.
- Remove window screens in the kitchen. Screens take away from allowing natural light inside. Plus, no one will notice they are missing.
- It's a good idea to keep some toll-house cookie dough on hand, and bake up a few cookies just before a showing...but don't overdo it 😊.
- Keep the exotic spices and fish to a minimum when cooking the night before a showing. Work towards achieving a "clean" smell.
- Thoroughly clean all your appliances and cupboards, including the inside of your oven and microwave.
- Set the dinner table with your best china to stimulate your buyers' imagination of the dinner parties they'll host.
- Many buyers will look inside your cabinets, so make sure the inside is organized and clean. Also store non-essential items elsewhere to make the cabinets look more spacious.
- Clean as much as possible off the countertops. Items such as the coffeemaker, toasters, can openers, salt and pepper shakers, recipe boxes, and dish draining rack can be put away.
- Make sure that your counter is spotless and shiny.
- If you keep fruit or flowers on your counter, be sure they are always fresh.
- If your cabinets show wear and tear, you might want to paint them. A simple trick to update the look of your cabinet doors is to replace your current knobs with new ones. It sure can make a difference.

- Shine your faucets and knobs and use spot remover to prevent water spots.
- Remove notes, pictures, and coupons from the refrigerator door.
- Empty your trash cans. Garbage and recycling bins must be out of sight.

Notes:



Can the Buyers See Themselves Living In the Living Room?

The living and family rooms are where your new buyers will do most of their “living,” so you want to make the space as inviting as possible.

Here are some tips to make the living and family rooms appear their best:

- If you have a favorite “old” chair that doesn’t go with the rest of the furniture, remove it. Big furniture can weigh down a space.
- Place a vase with flowers on the coffee table, or a tray with a tea pot, cup set and napkins.
- Take down or rearrange pictures or objects that create the sense that this is *your* home. Patch and paint if necessary.
- Vacuum your floors often. Consider getting your carpets cleaned before potential buyers view your house.
- Clean your fireplace.
- Leave some lights on during the day. During “showings” turn on all lights and lamps.
- If the carpeting is in bad shape, shampoo it or replace it.
- If your furniture shows the effect of raising five kids or if pets have ruined the rugs and upholstery, think about storing or removing your existing furniture. Buy, borrow or rent what you need.
- Put away your holiday decorations unless you are showing your home during the holiday season.
- Have your DVD collection, CDs, and video games out of sight.
- Open the drapes and blinds. Nothing is more depressing than walking into a home where shades, curtains and drapes are closed.
- Remove all knick-knacks under 10 inches tall.

Make the Bathroom Sparkle

Next to the kitchen, the bathroom is the room that gets the most scrutiny. Some inexpensive designer tricks can make your bathroom look like a million dollars.

Here are some tips especially for the bathroom:

- Always empty bathroom trash cans before showings. Also, put the trash can under the vanity to clear floor space – you want the bathroom to appear as big as possible.
- A new shower curtain is a great investment – very little money for a big impact.
- Things like toilet cleaners, plungers, and hampers add clutter; put them away while you're selling your house.
- Keep all reading material out of sight in the bathroom.
- Place personal items (such as hairdryers, makeup kits, and hairbrushes) in cupboards or drawers.
- Hang matching new towels; go for the best-looking towels you can. Like shower curtains, they add a nice impact.
- Remove everything from the countertop, except pretty soap sets, candles or fresh flowers.
- Check the faucets for leaks, drips or disrepair. Repair or buy new faucets if they are leaky or worn out.
- New silicone beading can do wonders for your shower, tub and sink area...especially if the caulking is stained or cracking.
- Shine your faucets and knobs and use cleaner to prevent water spots.
- Keep your shower and tub area spotless. Buyers will often look behind the curtain, so make sure the area looks as good as it can. Keep shampoos and soaps to a minimum.
- Scrub tiles and bleach the grout so it all sparkles.
- Replace or paint the vanity if it shows excessive wear and tear. Replacing knobs can give an updated look to an older vanity.

Look at These Big, Beautiful Bedrooms!

Bedrooms are a key part of the home buying experience. Bigger is better. Nobody comments favorably about “lovely, tiny bedrooms.” Just like other areas of the house, clutter takes up space and makes rooms look smaller.

Here are some tips to make your bedrooms look bigger and brighter:

- Candles and fresh flowers are excellent accessories on bedroom furniture.
- New bedspreads or quilts make a bedroom look inviting.
- Make your bed look pretty and make sure the bedspread or quilt fits the bed properly and hangs low enough to cover the view under the bed. Buyers won't look under the bed, so you can store other non-essential items there (preferably in low storage boxes).
- Put away the stacks of reading material on night stands and leave room for one good book.
- In kids' rooms, posters, photos, drawings and awards are all personal items that should be taken down for showing the house. You want the buyers to imagine the rooms as their own.
- Remove the super-ninja turtle posters or torn-out magazine covers in kids or teenagers' bedrooms.
- Put away all items that are hanging off the backs of doors. Cluttered and clanking doors often make the room feel smaller – especially if they don't allow the door to open all the way.
- Remember that buyers are most likely going to look in your closets, so a better place to hide things is under the bed. Make sure the closets are as spacious looking as they can be. Remove all the clothes, shoes, and items that you won't be using right away.
- In kids' bedrooms, be sure to put the toys in boxes or bins, and slide them under the bed.
- Items that you don't need should be taken out of the closet to make them more spacious. Get an early start and pack items in boxes and store them in the garage or basement.
- Coordinate your clothing in your closets and line shoes up neatly so it looks as organized as possible.

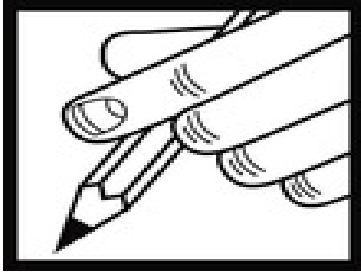
Create a Clutter-Free and Functional Home Office

Working out of the home is a reality for many people today, so a functional home office space can give your home a competitive advantage over other homes on the market.

Try to make the space as functional as possible, and if it's part of another room, make sure and maintain the main function of the room.

Here are some home office tips:

- Store all the files and paperwork you don't need for everyday function.
- Remove big, bulky filing cabinets that take up a lot of space and store them somewhere else to make the office look bigger.
- Clean everything off the desk surface, leaving only your computer and desk lamp. A neat desktop makes the work space look more functional, and the lighting makes it look more inviting.
- Store all personal and confidential or client information out of sight. Set up a password protected screensaver on your desktop.
- Weed out the postings on bulletin boards or wall organizers. A few things are okay to make the office look organized and functional, but an overcrowded bulletin board looks crowded.
- If your office is a part of another room, make sure it doesn't overpower the main function of the room. If it's in the dining room, consider setting up temporary space elsewhere.



Room-by-Room Recommendations

Must Do

Could Do

Don't Do

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