

Increasing the Value of Your Property in 28 days

Here's our 28-day plan to get your house ready for a sale (don't worry engage us now and we can speed it up):

Day 1: Change light bulbs and update light fixtures. It's easy to forget about all the bulbs that have burned out over the years, but you want your home to be as bright as possible. Lighting makes an incredible difference to how a home looks to potential Buyers. If you have dated light fixtures (it's OK, a lot of us do), take a quick trip to IKEA or Home Depot and pick up some modern ones.

Day 2: Prep the paperwork: Buyers and agents are going to ask a lot of questions, so start digging out the paperwork now: utility bills, tax bills, renovation details, warranties, mortgage details, survey and rental contracts. We will want to make a great profile for your home: here's an example

Day 3: Get some boxes and duct tape. A big part of the adventure you're about to embark on involves reducing clutter, and while Costco and the LCBO might be cheap options for boxes, it sure isn't convenient. An investment under \$100 will get you proper packing supplies and reduce your stress. Better yet, consider Frogbox – re-use-able boxes that won't fall apart (bonus: they're good for the environment too). If you're going to be moving a lot of stuff out of your house for the sale, consider renting a POD storage locker – you fill up at your house, it gets carted away, stored and delivered to your new home when you move in!

Day 4: Make an extra set of keys. Prospective Buyers and their agents will need to access your home, so you'll need an extra set of keys. It's worth the \$3 not to have to open the lockbox every time you want to come home.

Day 5: Tackle the bathrooms. Remove all the toiletries you have on display (nobody wants to know you use Head & Shoulders). Invest in some new white towels (and no, you don't get to use them). Visit Winners or Homesense for affordable accessories: soap dish, toothbrush holder, etc. If your toilet seat, shower curtain or bath matt are gross (be honest with yourself), replace them. Consider replacing the toilet paper holder and towel rack/hooks too.

Day 6: Spruce up the kitchen. The kitchen is one of the rooms Buyers are most attracted to so if you're looking to skip a room, this shouldn't be it. Remove your blender/George Foreman Grill/Kitchen Aid mixer/toaster/bread machine from the counters – you want the counters to be as clear as possible. Clean inside all the cupboards (and yes, I mean remove everything and wipe them out). Don't cram all your dishes and food back in – again, you want to convey to Buyers that your kitchen has enough storage for the Buyer's stuff. Clean inside the fridge (and remove the magnets, photos and reminders). Turn on your self-cleaning oven (probably for the first time). Store your booze collection (and take out the empties). Consider investing in some fresh flowers and a beautiful bowl with some fresh fruit in it.

Day 7: Next up: the bedrooms. The bedrooms should be inviting, and that means more cleaning and decluttering and investing in a few props. If you don't already have one, invest in a neutral-coloured duvet cover and some new fancy pillows. Straighten the bookshelves. Remove personal photos, knick-knacks and personal grooming products. Clean out the closets. Consider getting an area rug if the floors are cold. If you've jammed in a dresser or armoire that doesn't really fit into the space (condo owners, I'm looking at you), consider storing it offsite. If you've converted two of your three bedrooms into offices, convert at least one of them back to a bedroom.

Day 8: Tackle the living room. Clean the sofa and chairs and invest in some new throw pillows. Consider getting an area rug to bring the room together. Hide the magazine rack and all the clutter that has accumulated. Hide the wires from your TV/stereo/speakers.

Day 9: Make your dining room look like a place someone might actually want to eat in. Remove the kids' homework and the piles of stuff that have accumulated on the dining room table. Clean up the hutch. If your dining chairs have seen better days, consider getting them reupholstered. Invest in a new tablecloth to hide an old table.

Day 10: De-clutter, organize and clean the basement. If your basement is anything like ours, this is going to take more than one day. Whether your basement is finished or just a storage area for extra crap, you'll need to invest the time to make it look as spacious and clean as possible. And what a great way to rid yourself of all that stuff you never use.

Day 11: Tackle what you can't see: closets and storage areas. Much as I'd love to say that you can cram all the stuff you don't want on display into your closets, the truth of the matter is that Buyers will open your closets. They'll look in your cupboards. And they'll judge you. The last thing you want is for Buyers to think there isn't enough storage in your home, so take the time to pack away what you don't need in the immediate future.

ONGOING: Store vs. donate vs. throw away. It's a pain (and expensive) to store all the stuff you don't really need. Also if you call us we can make some for places to donate items. See our recommendations for local charities who offer pickup/drop off's.

ONGOING: Get rid of all the things that make your home yours. Ouch, I know it hurt to read that. You want your house or condo to appeal to as many Buyers as possible, and that will only happen if they can picture their own stuff in your house. Get rid of all the family photos, the collections and the souvenirs from your trip to Asia. Walkthrough every room in your house and pretend you're a Buyer. If what you see helps people get to know you as you, remove it.

Day 12: The entrance. Remember that most Buyers will have an emotional reaction to your home within 15 seconds of entering it, so what they experience at the entrance is CRITICAL. You want your entrance to be clean, de-cluttered and inviting. And no, you won't really wear all your shoes and coats while your house or condo is for sale, so be disciplined and store things away. If you don't have a hall closet, don't pile 15 coats on a coat rack – that's just drawing attention to your lack of a closet.

Day 13: Hire a REALTOR If you haven't already hired someone, today is the day. A REALTOR will likely need two weeks to schedule and prepare the marketing. Check out our blog: Choose the right realtor. An experienced listing agent will also guide you through the home preparation and staging process, so you don't have to do it alone. Here's some reasons to use our award-winning service

Day 14: Paint touch-ups and re-painting A fresh coat of paint is one of the cheapest ways to freshen up your home. Bold colours are bound to be a turn-off to some Buyers, so to appeal to the most people possible take the time to re-paint that red bedroom and blue bathroom. (Tip: light colours will help small rooms look bigger). Don't forget about baseboards and ceilings – they might need some paint too. Call us for a recommendation and discount from our partners.

Day 15: part 2: The walls and doors. If your walls and doors are scuffed, buy some Magic Erasers and go to town. You'll wonder why you didn't do it sooner. If your art needs an update, now's the time to do it too. Make sure to also change your doorknob hardware if necessary.

Day 16: Make a list of all the little stuff that you've been avoiding repairing including the leaky faucet, the picture holes in the wall, etc. and get it done once and for all. If you aren't handy yourself, bring in a handyman to take care of it (we know some good ones, we can help).

Day 17: Get the windows cleaned. I know, you probably don't even think about cleaning your windows, but rain, snow and construction can really make your windows dirty. We like College Pro Window Cleaners for affordable window cleaning.

Day 18: The front yard Curb appeal matters and will significantly impact people's first impression of your house. Stand on your street and take in your front yard: what do you see? At a minimum, clean the scuff marks off the front door and touch-up the chipped paint or give it a fresh coat. And if your front door has seen better days, consider investing in a new one. If you have a front porch, make it look inviting (and not just a receptacle for more of your stuff). Invest in some seasonal plants. Clean up the garden. A lot of Buyers will see your home at night, so make sure that your outdoor lighting is showing off your home.

Day 19: The backyard What you can accomplish in the back yard will of course depend on what time of year you sell. If you're selling in the spring/summer: clean up the gardens, trim the trees, cut the grass, stain the deck and clean the patio furniture and BBQ. If it's winter: do your best to make it look presentable. If you have a garage: tidy it up and fix any peeling paint and the sagging roof.

Day 20: Get the carpets cleaned. Unless your carpets are brand new, you'll want to have them steam cleaned (or do it yourself). You'll be amazed at what a difference it makes.

Day 21: Don't forget about the floors. You'll need more than a Swiffer to get into all the corners and cracks. If your floors are scratched, there are some great products out there to make them look almost-brand-new.

Day 22: The final clean. By now you're probably exhausted..sorry about that. While you can do this final step yourself, we always like to bring in professional cleaners who will make sure to clean all the spots you don't: the baseboards, inside the lights, the fridge, etc. We think this step is so important that we actually pay for it for our Sellers.

Day 23: Make plans for the dog/cat/ferret/hedgehog. I love my dogs too, but prospective Buyers won't appreciate the barking/jumping/submissive peeing. Make a plan to get your pets out of the house: Doggie daycare? Grandma and Grandpa? Multiple walks?

Day 24: part 2: Make plans for the kids and the kids stuff. No Buyer wants to look at all your kids' toys, finger painting works of art or dirty diapers, so put it all away and make a plan to keep it concealed.

Day 25: Make your house smell good. If you're a dog owner, wash any couches, beds and surfaces where the dogs sleep. You may not smell him anymore, but Buyers will. Tuck the litter box away (and clean it twice a day while your home is on the market). Use Febreze on EVERYTHING. Consider lighting some candles (but avoid strong air fresheners).

Day 26: Get a pre-listing home inspection (for houses) or order the status certificate (for condos). It's not fun to find out what's wrong with your house or condo at the negotiating table, so arm yourself with the information before you list your home. You can either fix the problems before you list your home, or factor it into your asking price and expectations. (we pay for home inspections and status certificates for our Sellers, 'cause we're awesome like that).

Day 27: Photography. When your house or condo is de-cluttered, cleaned and ready for prime time, it's time for the photographer to work his magic. This will happen a few days before you list your home for sale, and may include a virtual tour or video. Make sure to tell your REALTOR the times when the light is best – that'll make a big difference in the photos.

Day 28: The final once-over. You've worked hard, and now it's time to step back and admire your work. How does it look? Do you see anything that might distract or turn off a Buyer? Take one final walk through all the rooms and adjust as necessary. Give your price a final analysis too. See here for our article on pricing

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