

Preparing your home for sale

10 steps homebase recommend you take when putting your house on the market

1. Clean up and de clutter

Put any unnecessary furniture, personal accessories and clutter into storage. This will make your home appear more spacious. Organise and tidy your cupboards and wardrobes. Replace odd coat hangers with a complete set of matching hangers. To enhance the spaciousness of your home use one or two larger eye catching accessories rather than many smaller items. De-personalise the house by removing and putting into storage any personal photographs, certificates, awards or memorabilia - potential buyers want to visualise themselves in the home and not you.

Consider repainting any brightly coloured rooms in a contemporary neutral colour. Distract the eye from any areas that are less appealing. Use a sheer curtain fabric to hide an unpleasant view.

Spring clean everything, including windows inside and out and shampoo the carpets. During the open home period your home should be as spotless as possible.

2. Soft furnishings

Take a good look at your soft furnishings. Towels in the bathrooms need to be new, unstained and arranged neatly. Remove any tatty cushions or if they are looking a bit squashed, replace the inners. Have a good look at the curtains. If they are not in great shape, consider them down and having no curtains or look into getting them dyed. If you decide to replace them, choose something that is in your budget and which will complement the room, remember to play it safe. Consider removing frilly net curtains and anything that dates the house. Make sure bedding is clean and tidy and make the bed well. Straighten covers to produce a look that you might find in a hotel room. The pillows on the bed need to be full and opulent looking. Never use a rug over carpet, if carpet has become saggy employ a carpet layer to restretch it, if the carpet is wool it could be dyed. To hide rips or marks on a couch, strategically place a throw.

3. Furniture arrangement

Well placed furnishings can open up a room. Avoid lining furniture along the walls, try placing a piece or two on an angle. If there is a feature in the room such as a fireplace or bay window, arrange the furnishings to enhance the feature.

4. Consider the season

Consider whether it is summer or winter and use appropriate colours and accessories to bring out the best of your house at this time. In winter, use warm coloured cushions such as red and gold - in summer use cool blues or greens. In winter, light the fire. If it is summer open up the doors and accentuate the indoor outdoor flow. Use seasonal flowers to reflect the look. This helps potential buyers visualise what their life could be like in their new home. Create an atmosphere by playing music that completes the experience during the open home.

5. Lighting

During the open home have lights on throughout the house. Ensure that light fittings are clean and sparkly and not dusty. Consider using interesting lamps and candles. Also consider mood lighting eg: dim the lighting in the bathroom where you have candles lit. During the marketing period, have the exterior lights on the house as potential buyers may drive by at night to view the property.

6. Smells

Smells are a strong trigger so make sure any potential buyer is left with the right feelings towards your home. Use natural smells to enhance the house for example lavender and vanilla are good ones to use, avoid patchouli and anything that may conjure up the wrong impression. Burn scented candles and aromatherapy oils. A citrusy lemon smell in the kitchen will help make it smell clean. Use a dehumidifier and a gentle room spray in any damp areas. Do not over perfume or people may wonder what you are trying to hide. During the open home period be careful about the kinds of food you are cooking, high smelling foods such as fish, curry, garlic etc linger in the room.

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7. Ensure the front entry has a welcoming wow factor

Ensure the letterbox is in good condition and that the house number is visible. The entry path to the front door must be swept regularly and kept tidy. The front entry should appear clean and well painted; consider putting fresh-looking plants in pots on either side of the door and buy a new front door mat.

8. Exterior of the house

Stand on the opposite side of the road and look with a critical eye at your house - what do you see that could be improved. Get the outside of your home professionally washed or hire a water blaster and do it yourself. Consider touching up any peeling paint eg: window sills.

9. Gardens

If your garden is in fairly good shape, weed it and generally tidy it up. If your garden has been neglected it may need replanting. It is best to keep the style simple by planting many of the same type of plants. If you prefer, plant into pots so you can take them with you when you move. Consider using bark, river stones or lime chip to give your garden a fresh look and for instant green, use ready lawn. Emphasise any indoor/outdoor flow. Your garden is an extension of the interior of your house so ensure colour and style flow through.

10. Contact homebase for a Fresh Eyes consultation

We will take a fresh look at your home and by considering the target market, the location and style of the home and the furnishings you currently have we will put together a report with itemised furnishing and decorating recommendations, designed to suit your home and your budget. We will also be happy to advise you on how to carry out the steps listed above and provide you with many other secrets to a great sale.

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