

## Prepare your Home for Showing

**"You never get a second chance at a first impression."** We've all heard this expression before. And now, while you are preparing your home to sell, it should not be far from your mind.

While logical factors such as price and location narrow the pool of houses a potential buyer will look at, the ultimate decision to buy a particular home is fuelled by a mixture of logic and emotion and emotion often wins out.

Buyers are searching for a "home"—a place in which they will feel comfortable, secure, and happy, a place in which they can imagine settling down and raising their family.

As a seller, your goal is to cultivate these feelings through the property you're selling. Look at your house as a marketable commodity.

*A buyer's emotional response is triggered early*, so you want to ensure you have done everything you can to encourage a positive response to your house from the outset. Within minutes—even seconds—of pulling into your driveway, buyers have formed an impression that they will carry with them through the rest of the showing, and beyond. Keep in mind, this impression will not only influence whether or not they make an offer, but also what they consider to be the value of the property.

If you've ever visited show homes, you're familiar with effective presentation styles. Have you ever walked into one of these homes and immediately begun taking stock, planning how to get your home to look that good? Well, now is the time to take some of these steps. Of course, there are ways to achieve the same effect in your own home without incurring show home costs.

When homes create this immediate type of emotional appeal, they tend to sell quickly—and for more money.

Use the following step-by-step guide to get your house into selling shape before you put the property on the market, and you'll be well on your way to a successful sale!

**Depersonalize.** This should be one of your first steps when you begin preparing your house to sell. Over the years, a home inevitably becomes tattooed with the owners' lives, covered with touches that have made it that special place for them. At this point, however, you want buyers to recognize your home as a property they could make into their unique place. *When a homebuyer walks into a room and sees these personalizing touches—such as photos on the walls or trophy collections—their ability to picture their own lives in this room is jarred, impairing a positive emotional response.* So, your first step will be to remove all the family photos, the trophies, collectible items, and souvenirs. Pack them all together, so that you'll have everything you need at your disposal when it comes time to personalize your new home. For the time being, rent a storage space and keep these items there. Do not simply transfer these items to another place in your house. Do not hoard them away in a closet, basement, attic, or garage, as the next step in preparing your home is to minimize clutter—and these areas of your house will all be targeted.

**Remove all Clutter.** The next step on the list is to purge your house of the excess items that have accumulated over the years. This is the hardest part for many people, as they have an emotional investment in many of these things. When you have lived in a house for several years, a build-up of personal effects occurs that is often so gradual that you don't notice the space is becoming cluttered. If you need to, bring in an objective friend to help point out areas that could stand to be cleared. Try to stand back yourself and see your house as a buyer might. Survey shelves, countertops, drawers, closets, the basement—all places where clutter often accumulates—to determine what needs to go. *Buyers will open your closets and look in your cupboards.* Use a system to help you decide: get rid of all items, for example, you haven't used in the past five years, and pack up everything that you haven't used in the past year. Although getting rid of some things might be hard, try to do it without conscience or remorse. You'll be forced to go through this process anyway when you move, and with each box you eliminate, your storage space—and the room in general—begins to look larger. We've broken down the process into specific areas of your house to help you concentrate your efforts:

**Light bulbs and 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. Using LEDs maximizes the brightness while reducing wattage. Lighting makes an incredible difference to how a home looks to potential Buyers. If you have dated light fixtures, pick up some modern ones.

**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. The kitchen is an ideal place to begin, as it's easy to spot and eliminate the type of clutter that tends to accumulate here. Homebuyers will open your drawers and cabinets as they'll want to check if there will be enough room for their own belongings. If the drawers appear cluttered and crowded, this will give them the impression that there is not enough space:

Remove everything from the counters, even the toaster (the toaster can be stored in a cabinet, and brought out when needed).

Clean inside all of the cupboards (this means, remove everything and wipe them out).

Put aside all of the dishes, pots and pans that you rarely use, then box them and put them in the storage unit you have rented (not in the basement or a closet).

Clean inside the fridge (and remove the magnets, photos and reminders).

If you have a "junk drawer," clear this out.

Get rid of the food items in the pantry that you don't use.

Remove all extra cleaning supplies from the shelves beneath the sink. Make sure this area is as empty as possible. You should thoroughly clean this spot as well, and check for any water stains that might indicate leaking pipes. Buyers will look in most cabinets, and will notice any telltale signs of damage.

**Bathrooms.** Remove all the toiletries you have on display. Invest in some new white towels. Do not use them! They are for staging only. If your toilet seat, shower curtain or bath mats are unsightly, replace them. Consider replacing the toilet paper holder and towel rack/hooks also.

**Living room.** Clean the sofa and chairs and invest in some new throw pillows. Consider getting an area rug to bring the room together. Possibly re-arrange.

**Dining room:** 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.

**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.

**Closets.** Go through all clothes and shoes. If you don't wear something anymore, get rid of it. We all have those clothes, too, that we wear only once in a while, but can't bear to give away. Box these items and keep them in the storage unit for a few months. Remove any unsightly boxes from the back of the closet. Put them in storage if need be. Get everything off the floor. Closets should look as though they have enough room to hold additional items.

## Important Extras

**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 in a neutral colour. (Tip: light colours will help small rooms look bigger). Don't forget about baseboards and ceilings – they might need some paint too.

**Get the little things repaired.** If you aren't handy yourself, bring in a handyman to take care of them.

**Get the windows cleaned.** The importance of the overall first impression cannot be stated enough. Dirty windows or sills will be noticed.

**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? If your front door has seen better days, consider investing in a new one or give it a fresh coat of paint. If you have a front porch, make it look inviting. 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.

**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.

**If you have pets.** Wash any couches, beds and surfaces where the pets sleep. You may not smell any odour but Buyers will. Tuck the litter box away (and clean it twice a day while your home is on the market). Consider lighting some candles (but avoid strong air fresheners).

**Good Work! Now to Staging.** Don't order the sign up yet. There is more to go. We have detailed how to do this on a budget; [Preparing Your Home For Showing - Part 2](#)

**Hire a REALTOR®** Selling your home is a complex process that can be stressful and time-consuming. An experienced REALTOR® has the knowledge, skills, and connections to help you through the process every step of the way.

**Professional Experience:** With knowledge and training in marketing strategy, negotiation tactics, and the workings of the current real estate market, a Realtor will be able to guide you through the steps of the home-selling process and be able to explain exactly what to expect. S/he will make you aware of your rights and responsibilities, work with you to strategize the best moves according to your own goals, discuss financing options, and point you in the direction of other specialized professionals who will aid you in different stages of the process.

**Best Price:** Realtors have their fingers on the pulse of the current real estate market, and will know what comparable properties in your area are selling for. They have the resources and knowledge to establish the best asking price and to attract the highest selling price. With access to their company's professional marketing resources and connections, they will ensure potential buyers are immediately made aware of your home and market the property to sell as quickly as possible and for the most money.

**“Showcasing” Experience:** Your Realtor will know the importance of a property's first impression. She/he will have experienced first-hand, for example, the impact a property's “drive-up appeal” has on the rest of a potential Buyer's experience of your home. Your Realtor will be able to offer you tips and information on how to get your home in the best selling shape possible, in order to sell your property quickly and for top dollar.

**Access to Qualified Buyers:** Realtors save time and effort by dealing only with qualified buyers. They have access to a pool of pre-screened and pre-qualified buyers who are serious about buying a home in your neighbourhood. Realtors work hard to develop this base of qualified buyers which will become an invaluable resource for you.

**Negotiation Skills:** Realtors serve many functions, but perhaps the most important is their role as primary negotiator on your behalf. Your Realtor realizes your goal is to sell your home as quickly as possible, and for the most money possible, and will work closely with you during the negotiation process to facilitate this goal. Realtors bring to the process the knowledge

## Satisfaction Guaranteed

When you make the important decision to buy or sell a home, the Geddes Group Calgary is committed to going the extra mile to ensure that all of your needs are met in a professional and honest manner. For Service and Commitment, let us help you with your purchase or sale.

## Contact Us

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**Our client's experience with us is our Number One priority!**