

1. Painting

You should paint bathroom ceilings if they need it, paint kitchen cupboards if the colours are dated. Consider changing the handles as well – a very inexpensive way to modernise your kitchen and most cupboard handles are a standard size so they are very easy to change (all you need is a screwdriver).

Consider painting hallways and rooms if the existing colours are very dark. Use light, neutral colours at all times.

Go for lighter shades where possible.

Paint your front doorway (and front door if required) to improve a buyer's first impression. Go for a bold colour that fits the exterior colour scheme of your property – A dark red front door looks great next to grey weatherboards for example. Re-staining decks can also be a fairly simple job without too much prep work involved and can also make a big difference to the overall appeal of your home.

Be aware that re-painting entire exteriors can be expensive, especially when scaffolding is involved so call me for advice before going ahead with a total re-paint! We sometimes advise against this. Often small touch-ups or just painting window sills will be sufficient.

2. Gardening

You want your garden to appear as low maintenance as possible. If you present a section that is well maintained it will give buyers confidence that you have taken care of your property. Make sure any trees and hedges are not coming into contact with the house itself. Make sure paths are clear from overhanging branches of leaves and above all – trim anything that is blocking the sun! Be ruthless.

Note: Mulch/compost or bark chips can be your best friend to provide attractive ground cover over bland areas once you have cleared out tall grass and weeds.

3. House-Washing & Cleaning

Sometimes all that is required to make a massive difference to the presentation of your property is a good, thorough house wash. When these are done professionally they can cost a bit more than you might think but they are worth every penny. Be sure to also wash gutters, paths and driveways too.

When you are just about to sell you need to clean as if the local health and safety inspector is coming for a visit. Buyers will poke around and inspect every nook and cranny so your usual Sunday afternoon whip-around really will not do. Hire some help if you need to and clean all those surfaces you don't normally bother with – like the top of the range hood, inside your pantry, behind toilets, in high corners where the cobwebs live and inside wardrobes. Wash curtains if required, or have them

dry-cleaned – buyers love looking behind curtains to see if they can find spots of mould (and owners always forget to look there first). Clean as if your mother-in-law is coming to stay and you should be on the right track.

4. De-clutter

Firstly, take out everything you absolutely don't need for daily life. Now take out some more. When you visit a show-home the first thing you notice is that they have a ridiculously small amount of furniture, but they do that on purpose. The more you take out of a room, the bigger it will feel to a prospective buyer. Leave prints and paintings on the wall (and *a few* personal photos to make it feel homely), but clear any surfaces like the tops of bookcases, the front of your fridge, the entire kitchen bench and dining tables, desks etc.

Hire a storage unit if you need to, and feel free to use your garage for storage. As long as buyers can walk into your garage and see how big it is, it's ok to fill it with boxes and some furniture. A garage is a garage for most people.

Now you can dress for success! Borrow nice furniture from friends and family if you can, invest in new curtains if needed, and buy a new shower curtain if you have one. New duvet covers are essential – keep it simple and neutral.

If the property is empty, invest in the services of a home staging company to present your property at its absolute best. With nicely presented, well-placed furniture buyers find it easier to picture themselves living in your home. That means they are more likely to develop an emotional connection to your property which will have a positive impact on the price they are prepared to pay. Empty houses feel cold and unwelcoming. If staging your home gets you just 1 extra offer, that added competition should help you recoup your investment and a whole lot more.

5. Now that you are ready to move, decide which you will pursue first: Buying or Selling...

This is a biggie. Owners often can't conceive of selling their first property without securing another home first. "*We don't want to be homeless!*" This is completely understandable, especially for families with young kids and pets where renting would be less than ideal. The problem with this approach is it often means that when you find your dream home you need to make your offer subject to the sale of your existing property. This is a sure-fire way to lose out in a competitive situation.

Think about the market you are planning to buy in. Are you going to be competing with multiple cash buyers? Or is a little slower, a little quieter, is it common for offers to be accepted 'subject to sale'? As a general rule of thumb, the further you move out of a main City, the more likely you are to have success with 'subject to sale' offers.