

How to prepare your house for an open for inspection

The finishing touches for an open house inspection can make all the difference to how potential buyers view the property, so make sure you tie up all the loose ends.

Think of the open house as a first date with your prospective buyer; you only get one chance to make a lasting impression. While it's common knowledge to de-clutter and clean every nook and cranny in the house, what is the key to making your home stand out so that it has the best chance to sell for a great price and quickly? It's important to remember that a well-presented home gives buyers the impression that the property is well maintained and suggests to them that the chances of encountering hidden problems post-sale are minimal. A well-presented home builds trust.

You are permanently on show

Although you won't be letting people into your home all day, every day, there is a good chance you will have people driving by to look at the home and assessing the street appeal from the minute the property hits the market. In some cases, this is a way properties are shortlisted. If a potential home buyer likes photos of your home, they might go ahead and do some research on the street appeal and what other houses in the street they like before they attend an inspection.

Present from day one

You always have a chance to make an impression before the buyer contacts an agent, so here are some 'housekeeping habits' to get into order to maximise your chances of drive-by buyers wanting to see more:

- > Make sure your front gardens and lawns are well kept and maintained.
- > Remove all junk mail and newspapers from the letterbox and yard as they arrive.
- > Park the cars in the garage, if possible.
- > Avoid having rubbish out for collection on the kerb.
- > Each night before sunset, turn on all outdoor lights.

Set a welcoming mood

You might not know what the potential home buyer is thinking, but you can do your best by making them feel positive and by creating a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere in your home.

A great way to set the mood is to think about the senses and what the prospective buyer will experience when inspecting your home. For instance:

- > Open all windows at least an hour before an inspection to chase away any 'house smells'.
- > Try placing a cinnamon stick in a cup of water in the microwave for two minutes, or try plug-ins, candles and oils to add a subtle fragrance in your house - subtle, not overpowering.
- > To add to the mood you could play some non-offensive music in the background, keeping in mind that everyone has different tastes.
- > Remember to adjust room temperature, making sure it is comfortable for visitors walking in and out of the house.

Accessorise

Whether you already accessorise or not, it's the little things that help create a great impression. For example, spruce up cushion covers, put your newest towels in the bathroom, or even buy some new towels from a cheap high street store, and clear your paperwork off your desk [no matter how neat it is].

These few things go a long way in creating a large but lasting impact of the house and its owners.

Other tips and ideas:

- > Buy fresh flowers, even if it is simply a centerpiece for the dining or coffee table.
- > Straighten and align photographs and art on walls.
- > Turn off all electronic devices, such as computers and televisions.
- > Leave toilet seats down.
- > Leave all internal lights and lamps on during inspection.

A home that is a fresh, cared for, low-maintenance property is something most people are very attracted to, so the day your home goes to market should be the best it has ever looked. Inspection time is the moment to make your home shine and stand out from the competition and where you aim to gain the maximum price in the shortest time period, so be sure to make an effort.