

These tried-and-tested tactics will give your home an immediate face-lift that will increase your sale price and lead to a quicker sell. They won't cost you a great deal, although you'll need to spend some time doing them. Make sure you've taken care of everything before the FOR SALE sign goes up. **1. Tidy up!**

Hold a garage sale, run a car boot sale and sell stuff on EBay. Dispose of all unwanted and unused furniture, appliances and odds and ends you've been saving and generally anything you haven't used in the last five years. If it doesn't sell, donate it to the local charity shop or take it to the local dump.

Weed out every cupboard and drawer mercilessly and don't forget the garage and shed if you have them. Keep only the things you use regularly. Your home will look more organised and inviting, plus if you reside at the property, you'll save time packing and in removal costs!

2. First Impressions

Start at the front of your property or if you have a flat, start at the common parts.

With a house, does the front gate work? Weed paths and driveways and power wash if you can. Check that your property name or number be read from the street. Spend some time tidying up the garden. Repair fences, trim hedges, throw out any dead plants in borders and do some weeding. Mow the lawn and trim weekly during the growing season and rake leaves in the autumn. Add a spot of colour by visiting your local garden centre and investing in some bedding plants.

If you can, hide bins away. If not, make sure they are clean on the outside and not smelly on the inside. It may be environmentally sound, but crates of empty bottles and paper for recycling look untidy. Put them somewhere else while you're selling. Anyway, you're likely to need newspaper for packing if you will need to move, so hoard them out of eyes way!

If you have a flat, sweep floors and vacuum carpets in common parts. Change burnt-out light bulbs and consider using a higher wattage bulb to make things brighter. Clean the windows inside and out. Make sure that any entry phone is clearly marked with your name and/or flat number.

3. Roof & Windows

Broken gutters and loose tiles jump out at prospective buyers. So clean paint and repair gutters. Repair loose tiles and flashing, especially when visible from the ground.

Replace cracked windowpanes, wash the windows or get the window cleaner round.

4. Inside Clean & Maintenance

Take care of all the maintenance tasks you've been putting off. Go through the property, room by room, and make a list. Open every door and window, oil squeaky hinges, tighten loose doorknobs and make sure windows and doors open and close smoothly. Repair leaky taps and noisy cisterns.

Rattles, squeaks and leaks leave the impression that your property needs a lot of work done on it, so get rid of them!

It's amazing how much better your property can look with a fresh coat of paint and how much value it can add, for little cost. You don't have to repaint everything, but do consider freshening up the rooms that need it most. Use neutral colours because dark colours turn off most buyers. Bright lights and white or off-white walls make rooms look bigger. So, as mentioned before, consider using higher wattage bulbs.

5. Inside Organisation

Get rid of everything unneeded and create the illusion of spaciousness. Do you have too much furniture in each room? You may need to store furniture if you need to move. Are your shelves and cupboards overcrowded? Remove all clutter from each room to visually enlarge them; just imagine a builder's show home.

Less is more when it comes to selling your property as when there is less clutter around, rooms look bigger and more inviting. Completely clear all surfaces. Once everything is cleaned off, you can put a few decorative pieces back.

If you will be moving, now might be a good time to start packing boxes. Rent a storage area if needed, or use the garage, if you have one. You're going to move anyway, so why not start now! Remove any excess extension cords and exposed wires. Depersonalise teenager's rooms and decorate in a more neutral manner. Remove posters and adhesive from walls and doors.

6. The Kitchen

The kitchen should be kept clean. Clear kitchen surfaces as much as possible and any clutter on the windowsill. Remove any small appliances you don't use daily. If your kitchen cabinets are glass fronted, reduce the number of items in them.

Clean the oven and all appliances. Clean all grease spatters and polish chrome fixtures and stainless steel surfaces. Repair or clean caulking around the sink. Tidy up pin-boards and fridge magnets.

Once everything is cleaned off, you can put a few decorative pieces back, such as a bowl of fruit or some fresh flowers.

7. Bathrooms

Should be kept clean, toilet lids down, no hair in the sink, bath or shower tray. Do not leave dirty towels out; wipe down shower glass after each use. Repair or replace broken tiles on walls, floors or in showers. Recaulk if the caulking is chipped and/or stained. Put out fresh towels and decorative soap for showings.

8. Presentation

Create a focal point for each room. Once your property is clean and uncluttered, walk around each room and emphasise its best feature. If the best feature is the view, then make sure when a buyer enters the room, there is a clear path to the windows. If the best feature is the generous room size, limit the number of items of furniture in the room - too much furniture can make a room look smaller. If a room doesn't have a focal point, consider creating one.

9. Cleaning

Clean your property thoroughly. If you're not the world's best housekeeper, consider hiring someone to do it for you. This will get you started and it will be easier for you to maintain it after they've finished. Shampoo all carpets and vacuum as necessary. If the carpet does not clean up well, you should consider replacing it.

Check for finger marks around doorknobs and light switches. When everything is clean - vow to keep it that way!

10. Outside

Hoses and garden equipment should be kept neatly out of sight. Store lawn equipment, toys and other outdoor items away neatly. Outdoor furniture should be kept clean. Balconies, patios and other extensions off the property should be kept uncluttered, swept and in good condition.

11. Last Minute

Make sure beds are made and dishes are done when your property is empty. Interested buyers might stop by on short notice.

Finally, if you are residing at the property, get yourself a box to throw clutter in. No matter how hard you try, you probably have several places where mail, newspapers, children's homework, invitations and other paperwork collects. Before a viewing, you'll need a place to quickly store this potential looking mess! Throw it all in your trusty box and hide it away until the visitors have left.