

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BUYING NOW BY SELLING WITH SMARTS

With today's changing housing market, the opportunities to buy a home are tremendous. Interest rates are low, prices are competitive, and many builders and sellers are offering fantastic incentives and financing options. But if you're like two-thirds of people in the new home buying market today, you've got a home to sell first. On any given Sunday afternoon, hosts of lookers are visiting open houses across the country. How can you prepare for an open house? It's a question on many sellers' minds. Follow these tips, have a plan and you'll have happy new homeowners signing on your dotted line sooner than you know it!

"The home should be in the best condition you can make it," Niki Lamb, a San Jose-area realtor said, "The price however, will determine how fast it can sell."

An important thing to keep in mind about setting a price is to remain realistic. Some sellers are concerned that the value of their houses have declined and want to wait until prices have gone back again. Think about it this way: It's always better to trade up in a buyer's market, like the one we are in now.

Say your home value has dropped 10 percent, from \$300,000 to \$270,000. While the value of your house has fallen, the price of higher-end homes has also dropped. A move-up home selling for \$500,000 in the past has also dropped 10 percent in value, and now sells at \$450,000. If you sold your home today for \$270,000 and purchased the larger house for \$450,000, the difference in price would be \$180,000. But if you waited to recoup the 10 percent value on your home and sold it at \$300,000, chances are that same move-up home would also move up in price to at least \$500,000. That's a \$200,000 price difference between the two homes. So by selling today, you would actually save \$20,000.

While how much you ask for your home is obviously the key factor in many buyers' minds, presentation is crucial. The potential buyer needs to be able to see their things in your house.

Keep personal items like photographs to a minimum. Locate any clutter around your home and either throw it out or organize it neatly. Consider how often you use items in the clutter. If you haven't used it in over a year it may be time to toss it. Don't

forget that some items can be donated to various items in your community which may be a better option for some items than throwing them out.

Clean off your kitchen countertops and pack up small knickknacks. Not only will the house appear more organized but you may get a heads up on packing up for your impending move. Pack up essential items into a box that can be easily moved into a closet when not in use. You may want to remove most books from your bookshelves, leaving just a few with some nice decorative pieces.

Remember that potential buyers will like to look *everywhere* in the home. Organize all of your closet spaces and kitchen cabinets. Before the open house is the time to do a full and thorough cleaning of the areas in your home you've been avoiding organizing the past year.

Renting a storage unit may be helpful as well. Remove any furniture that blocks walkways or windows. Consider stowing away your now empty freestanding bookcases. Removing extra table leaves will make rooms appear larger and remember to leave just enough furniture to showcase the room's purpose. If you have already packed the majority of your furniture, talk to a staging company. Staging companies rent furniture at a low price for just these purposes. While it is essential the buyer be able to see their things in the home, a home that is too empty can appear cold and lifeless.

Make any minor repairs you can before potential buyers come through. Wash your windows inside and out. Polish up faucets and mirrors and don't forget to hang fresh towels in the bathrooms and kitchen. Overly worn rugs should be stowed away or replaced and the entire house should be vacuumed. Consider waxing tile floors and air out any musty smelling areas. Scent can make or break a sale!

Coldwell Banker, a national real estate broker, also offers some tips on making your home sell faster. These include turning on all of the lights to highlight the home's amenities and setting the dining room table for a "decorative appeal." Buy fresh flowers for vases throughout the home. Make sure the doorbell is working and children's rooms "are minimally personal." If potential buyers do not have children, you want them to see the room as a possible guest bedroom or office, while maintaining a possibility of children's room for those with kids.

Keep “curb appeal” in mind as well. Walk outside and see what your house looks like. How does the landscaping look? How about the front porch? The old adage “You can’t read a book by its cover” while true, doesn’t usually stick in the mind of home buyers. Make certain that your house number can be read from the street and remember to keep your sidewalks clear and your lawn mowed. Trim shrubs and trees and if possible, plant some flowers.

Selling your home doesn’t have to be a headache if you are prepared. And most of all remember to relax. Keep things in perspective. While it may take more than 12 hours to sell your home as was often the case during the boom years of real estate, with a little extra preparation, your home will be sold before you know it and you’ll be in your new pad.

For more information on selling your home, contact you local Home Builders Association at **[insert local HBA contact information]** or visit the National Association of Home Builders at www.nahb.org/timetobuy. To sign up for NAHB’s free consumer e-newsletter, visit www.nahb.org/housekeys.

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