

A smiling couple, a woman and a man, are shaking hands with a realtor, a man in a suit, in front of a large window. The scene is overlaid with a red tint. The couple is on the left, and the realtor is on the right. They are all smiling and looking at each other. The realtor is holding a folder or a set of papers. The background shows a view of trees outside the window.

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Home Seller's Guide

A white wavy line graphic, resembling a stylized wave or a decorative flourish, positioned below the title text.

A new job, growing family, or just looking for a better climate – there may come a time when you need to move from your current home. While the reasons for it are often exciting ones, the idea of selling your home can be overwhelming. Some sound strategy and the help of a real estate professional can help you go from “For Sale” to “Sold” in no time.

This guide is designed to provide first-time sellers like you, a detailed look at the home-selling process.

7 Steps to a Successful Sale:

1. Fix It First – Repair home wear and tear
2. Go Pro – Enlist a Real Estate Professional
3. Price it to Please – Pricing your current home
4. Market Your Home – Put your home out there
5. Dress to Impress – Prepare your home for showing
6. To the Negotiating Table – Accept, reject or counter
7. Closing Time – Completing the transaction



Step 1 - Fix it first

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Unless you don't mind getting a lower price for your home, you're going to need to address any wear and tear on your property. Doing so will not only help increase your home's appearance, but also its appeal and therefore value.

Carefully examine your home and take note of issues you can easily handle on your own such as fresh paint, landscaping, updating lighting, new doorknobs, etc. Then take stock of the more significant fixes such as heating, cooling, plumbing, mold, foundation, gutters, wood rot, and roof as problems with any of these can make the difference between "deal" or "deal-breaker".

Once you have a clear assessment of what improvements are needed, tackle the ones of highest priority. While this will cost you both time and money, it can help generate a faster sale at a higher price.



Step 2 - Go pro

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If confusion, mistakes, and headaches are to your liking, then go it alone. If you want to help sell your home faster, for more money, and with less hassle, then you're going to want to hire a real estate professional.

When finding an agent, asking friends and family for referrals is smart, but be sure to narrow it down by location. You'll want an agent with experience and expertise in your particular market.

In working for you, a professional agent should:

- ✓ Outline their professional responsibilities to you, including complete disclosure, loyalty, confidentiality and accountability
- ✓ Help you determine the best asking price
- ✓ Extensively market your home
- ✓ Offer expert advice on ways to prepare and show your property
- ✓ Assist you, if necessary, in finding any home-related services you need
- ✓ Provide feedback from all showings and open houses
- ✓ Update you on market changes that could affect your property's sale
- ✓ Be available to help potential buyers
- ✓ Promptly present and evaluate each offer with you
- ✓ Negotiate the highest possible price and best terms in partnership with you
- ✓ Manage contractual, title and transaction details
- ✓ Ensure that mandatory items are signed, sealed and delivered on closing day
- ✓ Assist you to arrange for a moving company and relocation agent, if needed





Step 3 - Price it to please

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Pricing your home right is all about finding the right balance between pleasing yourself and any potential buyers. Ask for too much and buyers won't even look twice, ask for too little and you could miss out on a better return on investment.

Research comparative homes

You'll want to obtain a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA). This is a document drawn from a local Multiple Listings Service (MLS) database that presents pricing information, property details, and photos of homes similar to yours that recently sold, failed to sell, or are currently on the market in your area. Generally, your real estate professional will provide you with a CMA and include a suggested price range for your listing.

Gaining a good understanding of what has worked and what hasn't in your area will help you to strategically price, position, and present your property to sell at top dollar in a reasonable time frame.

Allow room to negotiate

When pricing your home, it can be a good idea to add a bit of a cushion. Most buyers come to the table expecting a little back and forth negotiating, and providing a cushion allows for this. Your agent can help you determine the right amount of wiggle room. Another way to help seal the deal is offering to cover closing costs, while sticking to a higher asking price.

Step 4 - Market your home

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Nice job! You've followed steps 1 through 3 and are well on your way to selling your home. But it takes more than improvements and strategic pricing to have a successful sale. You need to reach the maximum number of potential buyers with your home listing.

Home buyers rely heavily on the Internet, mobile apps, and real estate professionals for information on properties. Other sources include yard signs, open houses, newspaper and real estate magazine ads, homebuilders and television.

Be where the buyers are

95% of all home buyers use the Internet at some point during the search process while **44%** start their search online.¹ Simply put, you'll want a real estate agent with a robust online marketing strategy.

When searching online buyers want to see:

- ✓ Property photos
- ✓ Detailed property information
- ✓ Virtual tours
- ✓ Neighborhood information
- ✓ Real estate agent contact information



¹Source: National Association of REALTORS, Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, 2018



Step 4 - Market your home

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Showcase your community

The look and condition of your home is critical, but don't discount the importance of where you live. Most buyers usually “buy” an area first, so the quality of a neighborhood is actually one of the most important factors.

Be sure to talk up what makes your community great – proximity to quality schools, parks, restaurants, shopping and other attractions. These are the type of things that impact quality of life and potential buyers will be interested in. Your agent has access to the kinds of detailed neighborhood and school information that buyers want and is skilled at selling the relationship between community and home.

A comprehensive approach to showcasing your home and community

When selling your home the name of the game is “more”. You want more serious buyers. More showings. More offers. Therefore it's essential that you don't rely solely on the Internet but rather a comprehensive advertising strategy to maximize your property's exposure. Some ideas include:

- ✓ Multiple Listing Service (MLS)
- ✓ Realtor.com®
- ✓ Company website(s)
- ✓ Personal website(s)
- ✓ Social media sites like Facebook® and Twitter
- ✓ Craigslist
- ✓ Local real estate papers and magazines
- ✓ Television
- ✓ Notifying potential buyers and referral sources in their database
- ✓ Open houses
- ✓ Direct mail and email campaigns
- ✓ Highlight info to all agents in their company's local offices
- ✓ Notifying the area's top real estate professionals
- ✓ Real estate professional tours
- ✓ For sale sign
- ✓ Networking within the local community
- ✓ Realtor.com® real estate search mobile applications



Step 5 - Dress to impress

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It's true that looks aren't everything, except when you're trying to sell your home. When you put your home on the market you need it to look its best and set the stage for an appealing first-impression.

Cut the clutter

Go through each and every room of your home and rid them of clutter, extraneous objects, and general messiness. You want each room to look organized and cared for.

Remove personal items such as framed photos, your kid's drawings, or even your collection of ceramic frogs. It's important that home buyers can picture themselves living in what will hopefully become their home.

But don't just stuff those things in the closet

Potential buyers will definitely be checking out the closet space and you don't want it crammed with ceramic frogs. Store those items neatly in the attic, basement or rent a locker at a storage facility.

Tips for showing your home:

- ✓ Add touches of color with accessories if you've painted in neutral touches
- ✓ Place fresh flowers where they'll stand out
- ✓ Open all doors and windows beforehand to circulate fresh air
- ✓ Pick up toys, remove all clutter, ensure beds are made, put clothes away
- ✓ Clean all the floors and vacuum carpets and rugs
- ✓ Ensure trash and recycling bins are tidy and odor-free
- ✓ Make your kitchen and bathrooms sparkle
- ✓ Bake cookies or put a pan of cinnamon in the oven to create a warm and inviting aroma
- ✓ Clean pet areas and make sure they are odor-free. Better yet, pets should be unseen. Not everyone loves animals and some may even be allergic
- ✓ Remove all cash, jewelry and small valuables from view



Step 6 - To the negotiating table

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It's happened! You've got a buyer. This is the point where negotiations between the buyer and you, the seller, begin. Often, the negotiating process is relatively painless, but should things get sticky, your agent should be your strongest ally and best resource for solutions.

The basic process

Generally, the buyer will make an offer on your home using a contract developed by your local real estate association. In this contract the buyer will set a sale price and include conditions for terms of purchase called "clauses." These clauses may include specific closing and possession dates, deposit amounts, home improvements, and a variety of other conditions.

When your agent delivers you the offer you have the option to accept it, reject it, or counter it. If you choose to counter, the negotiating process begins. This may include several rounds of successive counter offers, each with deadlines for responding and meeting various conditions set forth by either the seller or buyer. This will continue until either both sides reach a mutually satisfactory pending agreement or the negotiations collapse.

Basic principles for successful negotiation:

- ✓ **Disclose everything** – Smart sellers proactively disclose all known defects to their buyers. Most states have property disclosure forms. Use them.
- ✓ **Ask questions** – Offers may contain complicated terminology, sometimes three or more addenda. Your real estate agent can help to clarify.
- ✓ **Respond quickly** – When buyers make an offer, they are in the mood to buy. But moods change, and buyers are known to get buyers' remorse. Don't delay if you want the sale.
- ✓ **Stay calm and be patient** – At all times keep communication civil and agreeable.
- ✓ **Meet halfway** – If there are disagreements about relatively small expenses, consider splitting the difference.
- ✓ **Be cautious with contingencies** – When you've landed your buyer, your signed acceptance of a written offer becomes a sales contract. Except for removing any contingencies, this document is the binding basis for the sale.
- ✓ **Rely on your real estate professional** – It's your agent's responsibility to represent your best interests every step of the way. Your success is their success.



Step 7 - Closing time

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The negotiations have ended amiably and you and the buyer have followed through with your respective contractual obligations associated with finalizing the sale. Perfect!

The various contingencies and special conditions stipulated by the seller and buyer in the pending sales agreement must be met by the closing day which usually falls within 60 days after both parties have signed the agreement.

Common contingencies and conditions:

- ✓ The buyer's securing of financing
- ✓ A title search – a historical review of all legal documents relating to ownership of the property to ensure that there are no claims against the title of the property
- ✓ The purchasing of title insurance in case the records contain errors or there are mistakes in the review process
- ✓ A professional appraisal of the home, requested by the lender to ensure that the home's actual value justifies the loan amount
- ✓ Any additional contractual promises you have made in connection with buyer incentives, home improvements, etc.
- ✓ An independent inspection of the home's structural and functional condition (foundation, roof, electrical, heating, plumbing, etc.)
- ✓ An independent termite inspection
- ✓ A final walk-through by the buyer to verify that the home is in the same condition as when the sale agreement was signed

Carefully review the sales agreement with your agent to have a clear understanding of your obligations. Any shortfalls or mistakes at this point can be costly.



Step 7 - Closing time

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Completing the transaction

The closing agent – a third-party professional, a lawyer in some states, who conducts the proceedings – reviews the sales agreement and does the following:

- ✓ Determines the total amount due from the buyer and collects the check
- ✓ Determines all the adjustments (e.g. seller prepayment of taxes, utilities, etc.) and ensures that they're factored into the transaction
- ✓ Assures that the transaction costs (closing, legal fees, etc.) are paid
- ✓ Determines the seller's payments, credits and adjusted net proceeds
- ✓ Witnesses the seller's signing of the property title and all other documentation associated with the transaction
- ✓ Collects the keys and any other necessary items from the seller
- ✓ Provides the seller with the net proceeds as well as copies of the documentation pertaining to the sale
- ✓ Ensures that buyer's title is properly recorded in the local records office along with any mortgage liens

In most cases, the buyer's possession date will fall within a couple days of the closing date at which point your former home has a new occupant.

That's it! Your home selling journey is complete. Go ahead and take a bow, pump your fist in triumph, or jump for joy! You've earned it!

This information is deemed reliable but is not guaranteed and is not intended to constitute professional advice. For such advice, please consult professional advisors.

A photograph of a young couple and a realtor shaking hands in front of a large window. The couple, a woman and a man, are on the left, smiling and looking at each other. The realtor, a man in a suit, is on the right, shaking hands with the couple. The scene is reflected in a mirror below. The entire image has a red overlay.

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