



# The Ultimate Guide to Selling Your Home

by Roslyn Kay Parker

How to Prepare Your Property  
and Attract a Buyer







# So you're interested in Selling?

Whether you've already found your next place or you're just testing the waters, selling a home is a major financial and emotional undertaking. In this guide, we'll show you how to prepare your home to make a quick sale at the best price.

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# Important factors for Buyers

## 1 **Price**

Price is the bottom line, particularly for first time buyers. Getting it right the first time will ensure a solid offer (or several) without scaring anyone away

## 2 **Condition**

Whether replacing the roof or painting the walls, a slight home improvement can go a long way. Buyers will often pay a premium for move-in-ready turnkey homes. If you want to maximize the price you can get for your house, improving its condition is a great place to start.

## 3 **Presentation**

Use staging, photography, and a strategic marketing approach to find and attract the right buyers. High-quality digital materials will allow buyers to learn all about your house while you keep traffic in and out to a minimum.

## 4 **Location**

To buyers... but your house is where it is. While you can't do much about location, you can perfect the rest of these attributes with the right know-how and a few small investments.

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# Do I really need an Agent?

These days, there are tons of real estate guides, data, and tools available online. With all the information out there, it's tempting to think you can sell your home all on your own.

Nevertheless, 89 percent of sellers last year decided to work with an agent. Here are a few reasons why.



**Market  
Expertise**



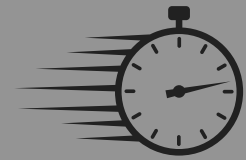
**Negotiation  
Skills**



**Legal & Contract  
Knowledge**



**Professional  
Network**



**Time**



## Market expertise

The average seller doesn't pay much attention to the real estate market until they're thinking about entering it. Then, they might spend a few hours each month looking at homes online and self-educating about home sales. Would you trust a doctor with that much experience? A mechanic? A hairstylist? Whether it's insight on pricing, building materials, or today's sought-after design touches, agents have down-in-the-trenches expertise you can't get from a casual web search.

## Negotiation skills

Whether you're selling your first, second, or third home, a good agent negotiates sales like these every day, giving them a deep bench of experience. They can almost always negotiate for a higher price than you ever could on your own. Plus, agents are contractually obligated to protect your financial interests.



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## Legal and contract knowledge

Buying a home is a complicated process, full of financial and legal obligations that no layperson can be expected to manage. Agents are required to know their way around a contract and keep up with changing regulations, ensuring that you'll be guided every step of the way by someone who can give you informed advice.

## Professional network

Because they're immersed in the real estate world, agents can tap into a more comprehensive network to connect you with buyers. They know what contingencies are likely to cause problems and what a strong offer looks like for you — and they can work with their fellow agents to try to find as many qualified buyers as possible for your home. Agents also have relationships with other professionals you'll need: lawyers, appraisers, home inspectors, and contractors, to name a few.

## Time

Chances are you already have a job, which means you'll be hard-pressed to find the time and energy for all of the necessary tasks in preparing and selling your home. Your agent, meanwhile, lives and breathes real estate and is prepared to handle all the calls, paperwork, scheduling, and legal work involved.

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# Price

Inventory (meaning the number of homes available for sale) has been historically low for years, and that means when homes are properly priced, they should draw offers quickly. In 2020, homes were listed on the market for a median of three weeks, but an astonishing 50% of all sellers accepted an offer from a buyer in two weeks or less.

However, if you aim too high, you'll likely be waiting much longer, and you'll be less likely to get your total asking price for the house.

Here are a few ways to pinpoint your magic number in your area, as well as listings with similar amenities and characteristics to determine what your home is worth.



**Market  
Analysis**



**Professional  
Appraisal**



**Online  
Valuation Tools**



**Being  
Realistic**

## Market analysis

Your first and best option is to have your agent compile a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA), which uses MLS data on active, sold, and expired listings in your area, as well as listings with similar amenities and characteristics, to determine what your home is worth.



## Professional appraisal

While it'll cost you a few hundred dollars upfront, hiring an appraiser will also give you the most accurate market value estimate for your home. Appraisers are licensed and regulated by state boards and programs.

## Online valuation tools

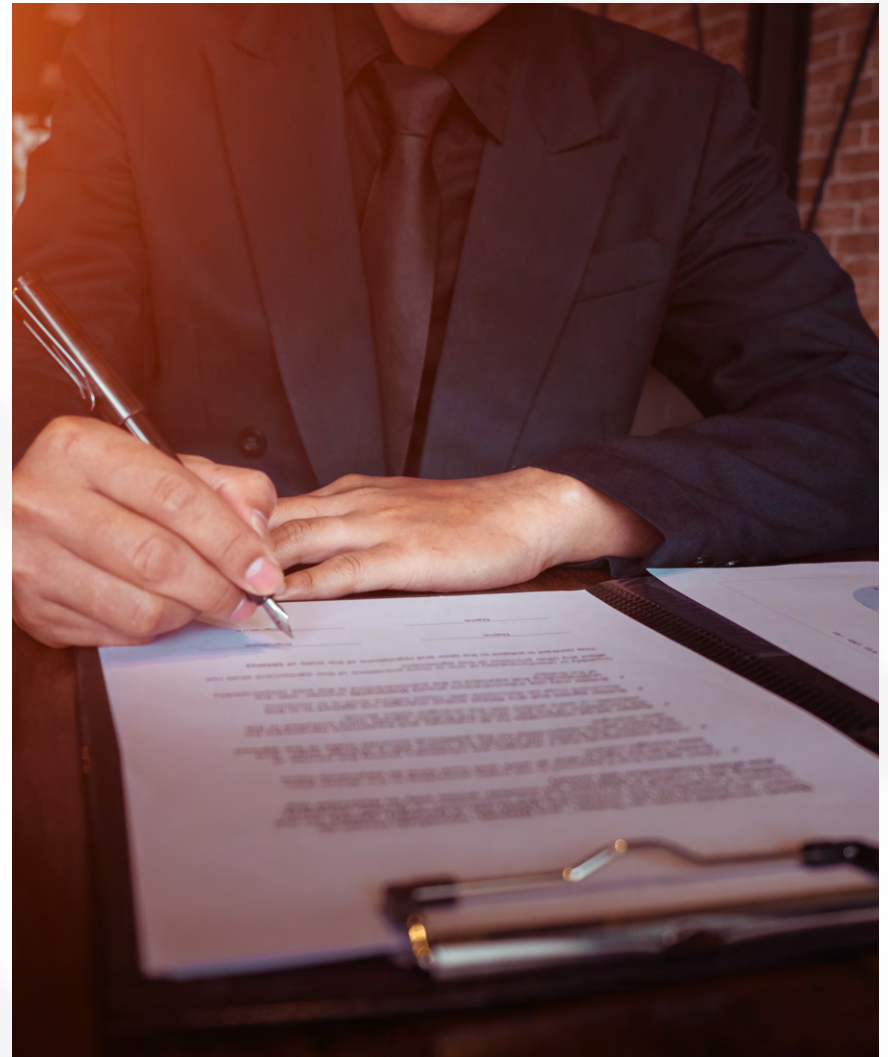
Most major real estate sites offer public data online valuation services, such as property records and tax assessments. (Zillow's "Zestimate" is a prime example.) Take such valuations with a grain of salt, as these tools often use old or inaccurate data in their estimates.



## Being realistic

If you've lived in your current home for several years, you've likely invested lots of time and money into maintaining it and hopefully made many fond memories. Nevertheless, it's essential to be realistic and approach pricing with an eye for current conditions. A seller should also be willing to offer incentives to beat the competition in a slow market, including home warranties, appliances, and repairs.

In 2020, 46 percent of all sellers offered incentives to help attract buyers. The most popular incentive offered was a home warranty policy; the second most-popular motivation was the seller assisting the buyer with closing costs.



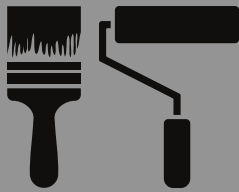
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# Condition

To fetch the highest price for your home, you need to reveal its inner beauty without investing in embellishments that could turn people off. While getting your home into selling shape, remember the three **R**'s: Refresh, Repair, Replace.

Buyers are always willing to pay more for a move-in ready house, but in today's market, that's truer than it's ever been.

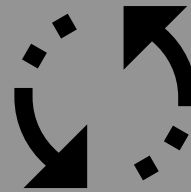
New homeowners don't want to think about roof repairs or hire a contractor to upgrade a living space, mainly when public health issues are potentially involved. Buyers who plan to work remotely won't want to put a lot of effort into getting an office space ready. All of these potential buyers will be ready and willing to pay a premium for homes that will allow them to move in and settle down immediately.



**Refresh**



**Repair**



**Replace**



## Refresh

A fresh coat of paint can work wonders on even the shabbiest rooms. Strip off any old wallpaper and fill holes from nails and picture hangers, then give your interior a fresh coat. Replace bright colors with safer shades of white or beige. Pay special attention to scuffed and dented baseboards, spackling, and repainting as necessary.

In addition to interior touch-ups, you should also take steps to maximize curb appeal. For instance, it's often a good idea to repaint your front door (as well). After all, it's the first detail buyers will notice. As for the rest of the exterior, a thorough power washing and window cleaning should suffice. When it comes to landscaping, pull weeds and seed any dead patches of grass.



Don't neglect the back of your home. Buyers are increasingly aware of how valuable space for kids or pets to run around and play. Keep the lawn neat and trimmed, stain your deck, and when the weather is nice enough, set up a lounge space where buyers can see themselves kicking back after work.

## Repair

Curb appeal isn't limited to ground level: A worn-out roof is a bad omen that will scare buyers away. Hire a roofer to replace any worn or missing shingles or roofing tiles. Have any moss or other plant growth removed. You should also ensure proper drainage by checking that your gutters are clear, clean, and freshly caulked. Inside, take care of any plumbing issues. Check and replace the seals on all of your toilets. Tighten leaky faucets and refurbish with new o-rings, gaskets, and other parts. Check the lines leading to your dishwasher and washing machine.

Be sure to address any faulty wiring and fix any problem sockets or switches to avoid potential embarrassment during a showing.

## Replace

Sometimes, it's better to completely replace a home feature instead of trying to fix or refurbish it. For starters, updating old light fixtures and window treatments can go far in making an old home shine like new. You may also want to replace carpets, particularly if you have pets. Even stain-free carpets can hold onto undesirable odors. (Depending on cost, consider substituting hardwood or laminate: they're easier to keep clean and fetch a higher price.)

Whatever you replace, be sure to opt for neutral colors and styles that appeal to a wide range of tastes and decor. Don't install anything too expensive, either-after all, there's a good chance your buyer will replace these themselves.

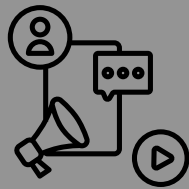




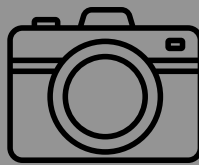
# Presentation

Once your home is in selable condition, it's time to spread the word to buyers and actively highlight its best qualities.

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**Marketing Basics**



**Photography**



**Staging**

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## Marketing basics

**Attack on all fronts.** Open houses, mailers, yard signs, digital advertising, all strategies, and media are fair game when it comes to letting potential buyers know about your home. Depending on public health rules in your area, you might want to dial back the in-person marketing events (open houses and in person home tours) and lean heavily into digital marketing opportunities. It's entirely possible to sell a house while keeping everybody safe!

**Use the internet.** The web is still the best medium for promoting your home search, and now more than ever, buyers are turning to the internet in their home search process. In 2020, a massive 97 percent of all buyers searched for a house online. It isn't a group you can (or should) ignore as a seller.

**Talk to your agent about their digital marketing plans.**

They should include posting your listing across all the real estate websites, as well as a listing page on your agent's website, and possibly social media or email alerts blasted out to the agent's network.

**Know your audience.** To get the best results, it's essential to speak the language of your buyer population. If, for instance, your home is in an area popular with seniors, more traditional marketing and advertising methods may yield better results than, say, a mobile application.

**Don't keep it a secret.** While your agent is marketing your property professionally, you should also be ready to contribute by spreading the word about the sale to family and friends.



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**Think outside the buyer's box.** The coronavirus pandemic caused people all over the country to rethink their lifestyles and where they want to live. What new groups of buyers might be interested in your house in particular — and where can you reach them? Your agent might have some good thoughts about trends you can follow to find qualified buyers.

## Photography

The vast majority of potential buyers will get their first impression of your house through online photo pictures. (Remember — 97 percent of buyers look for their house online.) It's no longer optional to pay close attention to your home's listing photos. Great photos bring out your home's inner beauty, while low-quality or uninspired photos send searchers running.

**Hire a professional.** While there's a lot you can do on your own as an amateur, hiring a professional photographer is the best way to guarantee your photos turn out amazing. A photographer will bring years of experience to bear, along with professional grade lighting, equipment, and editing software to brighten and beautify their shots.

**Use a great camera and accessories.** If you're more interested in taking your photos, you'll need a quality camera. Despite their manufacturers' claims, most smartphones won't cut it. Instead, invest in a high quality DSLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera with several specialty lenses, including at least one wide angle lens. You should also use a tripod to keep your shots straight and steady. (Maybe you're starting to see why hiring a professional with their equipment will save you time — and money!)



**Pay attention to light and perspective.** Take photos from the corner of a room to give the impression of more space. Take indoor photos from chest level and outdoor images from a higher vantage point, such as a ladder. Use natural sunlight whenever possible (mornings are best) in terms of lighting, and avoid using your camera's flash.

**More is better.** To give yourself more choices and searchers more insight, take as many photographs as possible. A great photo of a room or feature that needs work is always better than no photo at all, which may signal to searchers that you have something to hide.

**Consider video.** While it's more labor-intensive and requires some additional equipment, a video tour will provide interested buyers with an even more immersive experience of your home.

**Virtual tours are all the rage.** Talk to your agent about options for conducting virtual tours of your home. Zoom, Facebook Live, and other platforms can allow your agent to walk prospective buyers through the house in real-time or record a video that can be sent for later viewing.



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## Staging

Once you've connected with buyers where they live and attract them with quality visuals, it's time to stage your home for showing. Research shows that well-staged home averages spend just 23 days on the market and that most staged homes (85 percent) sell over list price.

When staging a home, it's important to remember that you're not just selling the property: you're selling a lifestyle. Because of this, it's often a good idea to hire a professional stager to sell your home's potential within that lifestyle. This person will typically remove all of the seller's furniture and bring in their own to create a clean, unified vision. Whether you choose to hire a professional or not, here are a few basic rules to live by when staging your home.

**Lighting:** Try to let in as much natural light as possible. Remove thick, heavy curtains and blinds, and avoid blocking windows with furniture. Use lamps with high wattage bulbs to illuminate spaces that don't receive much outdoor light.

**Space:** Accentuate the possibilities of your home by removing unnecessary furniture and clutter. It will make your rooms feel bigger and allow buyers to fill in the blanks on their own.

**Noise:** Ambient noise from outside your home can be a blessing or a liability. For instance, if you're in a city, you might consider closing your windows to minimize street noise. You can also use sound actively in your staging, playing soft, slow, classical music to provide buyers with a comfortable atmosphere to contemplate your space.



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**Cleanliness:** Even if your house has impeccable curb appeal and is one of the most desirable homes in the neighborhood... a little dust or pet hair in the wrong place can (and will) turn buyers off for good. It's not fun or easy, but keeping your house as pristine as possible during the selling process will go a long way toward getting it sold. Make sure all the surfaces in your home are spotless: there's nothing worse than putting your hand on a table, only to come away with grime or dust. The same goes for floors: buyers can feel the difference between a clean kitchen floor and a dirty one, even through shoes.

**Temperature:** If your home tends to get stuffy, open the windows to let fresh air in at least ten minutes before buyers arrive. Adjust the thermostat to ensure the temperature is perfect for your visitors.

**Smells:** Few things put off buyers more than a foul odor. If you have lots of carpets or rugs, make sure they've been steam cleaned thoroughly before you start showing your home. While a scented candle can have a positive impact, it's essential to keep your efforts subtle and simple. If you're a smoker or have pets and you're concerned about the effect that scent might have on your buyers, talk to your agent about taking steps to mitigate and eliminate the odors.



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## Be ready

Finally, it's important to remember that the right buyer could come along at any moment. As a seller, you need to be ready to show your home any time of day, any day of the week. That means keeping the house clean and uncluttered at all times.

It also means being ready to leave at a moment's notice to give the buyer comfortable and uninhibited access. To prepare for the unexpected, have some ideas about places to visit and spontaneous ways to kill an hour or two. It might not be easy to do, depending on public health regulations in your area, so talk to your agent about options for ways to spend your day while your house is on the market and buyers are walking through it.



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# For more information

My job is to make the process of buying a new home as easy and enjoyable as possible, and I have dedicated my career and livelihood to this goal. As your agent, I will be your tireless advocate, ensuring that you sell your home quickly and at the price you deserve. Please contact me for a free consultation.

I look forward to meeting you.

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