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# The Definitive Guide to Selling Your Home

## What You Need to Know and What You Should Do

Nothing is easy about selling a house, even in a good real estate market. People are always on the hunt for the “dream” home, and they won’t settle for less. Small details like cleaning the home before a showing to pricing within market value can either push buyers in or out. And more than likely, you’re going to have a ton of questions about the process. This is why we’re going to cover simple keys to selling your house and show you how to keep it from becoming a dinosaur on the market.

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## I Want to Sell My Home. How Do I Get Started?

*It's a mistake to think a house will sell by itself. Large markets and city-wide competitions will make your home almost invisible unless you find the right agent and take careful steps to getting your home ready for a sell. Buyers want to see the "possibility" of living at your house, so it's important to keep them in mind during the whole process.*

***On the following page, there are a few tips to getting started.***

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## Do Research & Price It Right

Everyone wants to make a profit off of their home, but don't get too greedy. You can't list a 3-bedroom house for $800,000 when surrounding properties are being sold for $500,000. Buyers will always choose the other listing, simply because of the price and despite how many "fantastic" features you might have.

Thorough research into the real estate market is important to figuring out the correct price for your house. For example, if a waterfront home recently sold for $750,000 in a nearby neighborhood, then that is a starting point to consider your home's price. But remember, the house value is dependent on a lot of factors. In most cases, a good real estate agent and appraisal are excellent resources for further information on pricing your home.

One tactic that some sellers use are bidding wars. It can be a bit risky, however, it can bring high returns if you live in a "hot" market. What you do is simple: Offer your home below market value. Hopefully, multiple offers will come in (as buyers want to snatch your house up) and, as a result, they will start to compete against one another. You'll even get a quick sale out of it.

## Find a Realtor

Having a good real estate agent can get your home sold quickly, and this is where research is beneficial. Make sure your agent is qualified and active in selling your home. Some agents specialize in foreclosures while others have more knowledge over certain areas.

A professional real estate agent knows about the local housing market. Much of their information is experiential so it cannot be learned from other sources. They know how to look for the right house for families with regard to local schools and businesses. A good agent can also steer you away from a bad buy if a house is unstable or has other major drawbacks. Many agents also have a good working knowledge of the loan process and can walk you through it.

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## Getting Your Home Inspected Before Listing

One tip before listing your home for sale is get it inspected. Pay for a professional to inspect your home and see if there are any issues that need to be addressed. The reason we suggest this is that it can uncover potentially large problems that could be revealed during the closing inspection *(from the home buyer)*. If the closing inspection reveals major issues, like foundational problems, then you could lose the buyer's offer *(or they could ask you to drop the listing price considerably)*.

To avoid this issue, you can have your home inspected first, know if there is anything you need to fix, and make sure the buyer has no excuse to ask for a lower price on your home. Spending this extra money to get your home inspected could save you tons of money **and** time in the long run.

Here's what basic home inspections include:

- Mechanical and Structural Evaluations
- Tests for Radon Gas
- Tests for Wood-Destroying Pests
- Basic Roof and Foundation Structural Safety Checks

The benefits to getting a home inspection before listing are simple:
It gives you knowledge. If you know everything in your home is perfect and has no issues, then you can list your house at a good price point. If there are some issues, then you have time to fix them before listing -- allowing you to price your home at a decent range. You don't have to worry about negotiating with buyers over any problems they will have to fix. In a way, it leaves you with an upper-hand in the negotiation phase.

## Get Your Home Ready to Show

Buyers want to imagine that your house is a place they can live. If it's filled with chipped paint and broken fixtures, they'll be turned off from making an offer. Even the clutter of children's toys can play a negative impact on the sell, so consider keeping your house neat and clean ***all*** the time. Put on a fresh coat of paint in the rooms, have the carpets professionally cleaned, or fix up the gutters. Small details like this will win over potential buyers and get your home sold more quickly.

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# Things You Should & Shouldn't Do When Showing Your Home to Buyers

*As we mentioned before, getting your home ready for possible showings is one of the biggest deciding factors in selling your home. First impressions are key and making sure buyers stay in a positive mindset as they tour around the home can be difficult at times. So, in this section we're going to cover some easy things to do and not to do when showing your home to potential buyers.*

> ***FACT: Staged homes sell 2–3 times faster than non-staged properties, and on average sell at a 17% higher price.***

*Let's start with the good:*

### Things You Should Do

Showing your home can easily be divided into 2 stages: *the exterior and interior.* A lot of people put a ton of focus and cleaning time for the home interior, but forget about the yard. If you're looking to sell your home fast, start with what creates first impressions for home buyers: *the front yard and entrance.*

#### What is Curb Appeal?

Real estate agents often refer to curb appeal as "staging your yard," which is synonymous with maintaining the exterior of your property. When home buyers drive up to your house, the first thing they see is your front yard. If all they see is uncut lawn filled with weeds and dirt patches, they'll instantly be put off. Making sure the grass is cut would be a good call, but adding a few other details can drastically increase your chances of selling.

***ALSO TRY THESE:***

- *Hang a few flower pots on the front porch*
- *Give the front entrance or door a fresh coat of paint*
- *Cut your neighbor's lawn for him if it looks ragged (no one likes living next to a house that is unappealing)*
- *Clean the entryway*

#### Managing the Inside

Common terms real estate agents like to tell home sellers is "de-clutter" and "de-personalize" your home before selling. By getting rid of the clutter sitting around the house, your home will look more appealing to a buyer. No one likes seeing a ton of personal items cluttering up the bathroom sink, nor do they like navigating around dozens of children's toys on the floor. Clean it up and try to maintain it as much as you can. Non-essential items can be packed into moving boxes since you'll be leaving soon anyways.

When agents ask you to de-personalize your home, this generally refers to the over-excessive hanging of family photos or over-cluttering of personal items visible around the house. Seeing these items distracts the home buyer from imagining himself (and his family) from living there. Go ahead and pack those items since you'll be moving soon.

One thing you want to up-sale is your lifestyle though.
*For example, if you live close to a beach where surfers like to ride the waves, you will want to showcase your surfboard rack in the garage.* These particular points make people want to live in your house (and buy it immediately).

**Easy Tips to Earning More Cash for Your Home**

1. **Maximize Curb Appeal**
   Grab a notebook and stand in front of your home. Anything that jumps out at you or looks like it needs attention, jot it down. For your front yard you want it to be perfect, since first impressions are largely decided here.

2. **Get Rid of Odors**
   One of the biggest turn-offs for home buyers are strong, lingering odors, such as cigarette smoke and pet odors. To get rid of them, you can leave small bowls of Pine-Sol around the rooms and seal them off for a few days. After that, open the windows and air out the rooms. You can spray soft surfaces with Febreeze to remove any additional unwanted odors. On the day of your showings, you can bake some cookies or boil some water with apples & cinnamon to leave an inviting scent around the house.

3. **Remove Clutter**
   When touring through a home, no one likes staring at all your personal items clogging up space around the bathroom sink. If the kitchen countertops have a bunch of stuff lying across them, organize it and clean it off. You don't want to highlight your stuff. You want to highlight the spacious countertops, do you not?

   Do a quick run through of each room and make sure clutter is not a factor home buyers will notice. As a result, your house will look cleaner and more appealing to home buyers.

4. **Choose Paint Colors Wisely**
   If you're using bold, sharp colors to decorate your home's interior, you might want to reconsider painting them with warm, neutral tones. Soft grays and tan colors are among the most popular choices these days.

5. **Bring Light Into the Home**
   Few home buyers love dark, dreary houses with little light. They much prefer a home that has an inviting feel (which comes from more light). Pull back the blinds and curtains, let in natural light, and watch how your home portrays a warmer feel. More light also helps create a spacious feeling, which allows you to negotiate for a higher listing price.

**Things You *Shouldn't* Do**

You've got your home cleaned up, all the clutter is removed, and the closets are neatly packed. Conventional wisdom tells you to keep going -- do a little extra and get your home sold. However, sometimes the best ideas can actually be easy turnoffs for home buyers. One of the most notable things people think is best, but actually hurts, is the use of plug-in air fresheners. Of course you want your home to smell great, but sometimes those sharp odors might not be to the home buyer's taste.

Also, don't turn down unexpected showings. Everyone knows it's hard to keep the house always clean, but if an agent calls saying they want to show the home to a potential buyer right away, *let them in*. These type of home buyers (that move at the last-minute) are impulsive and are looking for a house *today*. If they like what they see, they'll make an offer immediately. If you're worried about these kind of events, have a system in place. Make sure you have somewhere to take your dog and a place to hangout. The best laid plans pay off the most.

Lastly, don't move out the furniture unless you absolutely have to.
A lot of people think the house will appear more "spacious" if there's no furniture blocking the view. However, this actually works against you. Home buyers need to imagine where they might be living, and without furniture that makes it really hard for them. They can't envision sitting on the couch, watching the television without an example. They don't realize how much space is in the master suite until they see a bed occupying the room. Furniture acts as reference points and allows their imaginations to run wild.

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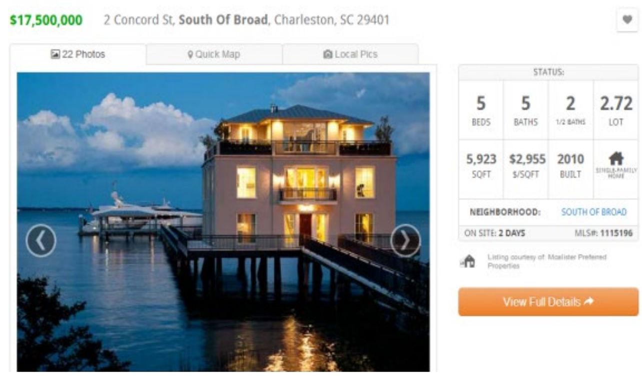
# Getting Offers

*If you've done all your preparation for selling your house, you might see some offers within the first couple weeks or maybe in the first month. And it's always easy to jump on the first offer a buyer gives, but always remember your own expectations. Be flexible but don't put yourself in a position to lose the benefit.*




### What to Expect After Listing

The first thing you probably will or will not see is the placing of your home on the local MLS (Multiple Listing Service). The online database will notify other real estate agents that your home is for sale and start the process. Maybe a few days later, your agent will set up a few open houses for potential buyers. They'll look around and judge the house for themselves. It'll usually happen on a weekday, so do your best to keep the house clean. And if some of the lookers are genuinely interested, they might make an offer.

### Negotiating a Price

Most of the time potential buyers will make an offer below the asking price, which in return, you should be ready to make a counteroffer. Your real estate agent will be a good guide on making the right response, but keep in mind to be flexible. If you notice the buyer constantly looking at your barbeque grill, consider sweetening the deal by offering it with the house. Small negotiations like this can win a buyer over sometimes. And lastly, don't lose sight of what you believe you should receive for the house. If the market is selling around $300,000, then you should be able to get a final offer around that range.

### Closing the Deal

During the negotiating process, try to close the deal quickly. If the buyer makes an offer you don't like, don't say no. Make a counteroffer. If the buyer doesn't see any benefit in the home anymore, they'll walk away, but you shouldn't. They can always find another house, but you might not be able to find another buyer. When each party has both agreed to the price, it's time for closing day.

Here's what to expect during the closing period:

- All parties will sign the papers, officially sealing the deal.
- The day before, gather all the necessary paperwork, like proof of title and contract.
- The buyer will probably do a last walk-through 24 hours before closing.
- Pay closing costs.
- Hand over the keys to the house.
- Notify utilities and homeowners insurance that you have moved.

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# Moving Out *Before* Closing Time

*As you reach the closing phase of the selling process, you'll need to start thinking about moving out. Soon the house will be the buyer's and you should already be on the hunt for your next dream home (if you haven't already found one). This is the time to get rid of unwanted materials – like that 20 year old stack of magazines sitting in the closet. If you need professional movers to help you relocate, make sure you do your research and get everything ready before the move out date.*

*What you should remember is that once the closing contracts to your home are finished, the house is no longer yours beyond the agreed date. Some contracts give you a grace period (a few days) to officially move out, but this can be troublesome. It's not easy to move out in just a couple days and could lead to further issues (especially if something gets broken in the house during this grace period). To provide a smooth transition, we suggest you move out before the closing phase is completed.*

**Tips on Moving**

Knowing what you have and where it belongs is an easy step to creating a stress-free move. That's why you should create an inventory of items, properly label boxes, and begin packing. In addition, have a packing plan in mind. Moving a whole house can be daunting when you look at it as a whole. Instead, divide up the packaging with your inventory list and do it by rooms.

**Packing Boxes**

As you go from room to room, package your boxes intelligently. Smaller items should go into large boxes and the large items should go into the smaller boxes (books are an exception). Pack the heavier objects at the bottom of the box and with the lighter items near the top. It will keep you from straining to pick up a box.

If you want to save on boxes, one trick you can try is leave the items in the drawer. If it's not containing anything fragile, just take the drawer out of the chest or desk. You can stretch tape across the top to hold things inside. For clothes, another easy trick you can use is pack them on the hangars. This makes for easy storage when you get to your new house.

Once everything is packed, make sure you label your boxes and get them stored on the truck. *Congratulations on selling your home and successfully moving!*

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# One Conclusion.
# One Sold House.

*In today's real estate market, sticking a "For Sale" sign out front isn't enough anymore. Competition is fierce at times and home buyers are looking for their "dream" home. Adding in and fixing small details has proven to go a long way in selling your home. Things like staging your home to pricing it right can leave buyers salivating and writing down offers. Knowing how to negotiate and listening to your agent's advice can keep a potential buyer interested. Overall, when you understand the selling process and implement some of the practices listed above, you'll rest confident that your home will sell quickly.*