

99 Ways To Sell Your Home

Home buyers won't just be looking at the physical structure of a home; they'll respond to how it makes them feel. You want people to walk in and imagine themselves living there. You want the house to have emotional appeal. Here are 99 ideas – some quick fixes, some changes that involve more time and investment – for making your home stand out from the competition. The key is to make strategic improvements with maximum impact.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT! Your house has to have curb appeal. First impressions are powerful ones, and every detail counts.

1.) **REPAINT THE EXTERIOR** - Does the house sparkle, or is it looking a little tired? If you don't want to tackle an entire paint job, at least spruce up the window frames, shutters and front door – and perhaps a faded southern exposure – with a fresh coat of paint.

2.) **GIVE THE HOUSE A BATH** – If the exterior seems more dirty than worn, rent a gas powered pressure washer (\$50-\$75 a day) from a local tool center and, working from top to bottom, hose down all the outside surfaces.

3.) **REPLACE SIDING** – If your siding shows more wear and tear than a paint job can fix, consider replacing it. A house that looks good from the outside sells faster and for a better price.

4.) **CHECK THE ROOF AND GUTTERS** – Missing or torn shingles, sagging gutters and loose downspouts make a house look unkempt. Worse, they can cause costly damage to your foundation basement and interior walls. Unclog and resecure gutters, repair the roof (check flashing joints), and replace broken downspouts.

5.) **CLEAN WINDOWS UNTIL THEY SHINE** – This is a must. Scrape off any paint splatters with a razor blade, wash windows with ammonia and water, and then buff them till they sparkle. (And don't forget to replace any cracked panes.)

6.) **PUT IN WINDOW BOXES** – Filled to overflowing with red geraniums, ivy and white petunias, window boxes are one of the cheapest and easiest ways to add pizzazz to our house.

7.) **INSTALL SHUTTERS** – If your house seems plain, adding exterior shutters in a color that's one tone lighter or darker can make it more distinctive. Consider a color that matches your trim and doors. Make sure, of course, that the shutters are appropriate to the style of your house.

8.) **ADD WINDOW PANES** – Divided panes give a friendly, welcoming feeling and are another way to add interest to a plain-Jane house. Getting this look needn't mean tearing out your existing windows; you can buy snap-in mullions made of wood or plastic.

9.) **WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR LAWN, THINK PUTTING GREEN** – Use a quick-greening fertilizer (ammonium sulfate, urea or ammonium nitrate). With proper application and watering, you'll see results in two or three weeks. Trim the edges by cutting into the turf in a straight line with a spade or edger. Get rid of any weeds around shrubs or in flowerbeds. Reseed or re-turf and bald spots and keep the grass watered.

- 10.) LAY A BRICK OR STONE WALKWAY – It's much more attractive than concrete and leads the eye enticingly to the front door.
- 11.) RESEAL A PATCHED-UP DRIVEWAY – With asphalt sealant from a building-supply store and a stiff broom, this is a relatively easy do-it-yourself job that leaves your driveway looking spanking new.
- 12.) CHANGE YOUR FRONT DOOR – By replacing a standard flat door with a premium quality, raised-panel solid hardwood one (\$500-\$600) or a painted pine or fir door (\$300, unpainted), you immediately give your house an added touch of class.
- 13.) ADD DISTINCTIVE DETAIL WITH A HANDCRAFTED WOODEN SCREEN DOOR – For instance, The Old Wagon Factory in Clarksville, Virginia sells Victorian or Chippendale styles. Make sure it's appropriate to the style of your house.
- 14.) GIVE YOUR DOOR A TOUCH OF BRASS – Install a shiny brass knocker, doorknob and kick plate (under \$120). The message: This is a doorway where you'd be proud to welcome friends.
- 15.) GET A NEW MAILBOX – You don't want prospective buyer's to fall on a shabby old aluminum mailbox as they're waiting for you to answer the door. Get one they'll notice – admirably.
- 16.) CREATE A DISTINCT AND SEPARATE ENTRYWAY – Few people like to enter directly into the living room. If you're not lucky enough to have a distinct entry, create one by using a bookcase, screen or cabinet as a divider. Add a lush plant for height if the bookcase is low. Or create the illusion of a separate foyer with different flooring (black and white tiles laid on the diagonal, for instance, or even an area rug.)
- 17.) MAKE THE FLOOR SPOTLESS – When people wipe their feet, where else do they look? If you use a carpet remnant here, get rid of it. Replace existing carpeting or flooring, or simply use a plain sisal doormat.
- 18.) ELIMINATE ODORS – Whether they are from pets or the kitchen, they're sure to offend visitors. Avoid sweet smelling sprays or potpourris.
- 19.) DRESS UP A HO-HUM FOYER – Add an elegant overhead light or wall sconces. Choose one decorative element and highlight it: a vase of colorful fresh flowers, a spot lit painting, a large ceramic plate, a framed mirror.
- 20.) MAKE SURE THERE IS A PLACE FOR COATS AND UMPRELLAS – Too many coats and umbrellas make the entrance seem cluttered.

BIGGER IS BETTER This average house built today is 250 sq ft bigger than in 1980. Buyers like spacious, bright, airy places. Here are some ways to make any house seem bigger than it really is.

- 21.) PAINT ROOMS IN LIGHT, NEUTRAL COLORS – White is the most popular color for walls. Especially in small spaces such as entryways and bathrooms, it expands the feeling of a room.

22.) DECORATE ROOMS IN TONES OF ONE (NEUTRAL) COLOR – Harmonizing draperies; walls, furniture and accessories make a room look less busy and therefore larger.

23.) RENT SPACE AT A MINI-STORAGE WAREHOUSE – And, fill it with bulky unnecessary pieces of furniture; junk from your closets, garage and attic; extra chairs from the dining room; your knickknack collections; any thing that adds clutter to your house.

24.) HAVE A YARD SALE – Or, get rid of the clutter from the basement to the attic; by holding a yard sale, and make a little extra money to boot!

25.) PLACE MIRRORS IN STRATEGIC SPOTS – This is especially effective in very small spaces like entryways or bathrooms. Make sure there's something beautiful reflected in the mirror. If your kitchen or dining room has open shelving, mirrored backs on the cabinets where you display your glassware and china expand the room.

26.) KEEP WALLS SIMPLE AND ELEGANT – An excessive amount of small pictures dotted around a room tends to make it feel crowded. Instead group small pictures or choose a single large one.

27.) CLEAN OFF ALL COUNTERTOPS AND TABLETOPS – Clutter throughout the house gives the impression that there's just not enough room for everything. Aim for simplicity.

28.) PUT IN HIGHER WATTAGE BULBS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSES – The brighter the rooms, the larger they look.

29.) STORE HALF YOUR KID'S TOYS IN THE ATTIC – This is a chance to involve your kids in the house sale. If they're reluctant to part with some of their favorites, perhaps they'll be agreeable to doing it just while you're actually showing the house.

30.) TAKE THE LEAF OUT OF YOUR DINING TABLE – By shrinking your table and removing extra chairs, you'll expand the space.

31.) ADD A SKYLIGHT TO A SMALL, DARK ROOM – To a bath, a hallway, even a small kitchen. A fixed one will cost \$500-\$600 installed.

32.) MAKE TRAFFIC FLOW SMOOTHLY – Often there will be at least three people touring your house. If they're constantly bumping into furniture or having to walk single file, they'll feel cramped. Arrange furniture differently; clear paths.

KITCHEN HELPINGS – This is the room that can really make or break the sale of a house – buyers often head there first. They look for cleanliness and efficiency above everything.

33.) HAVE IT CLEANED PROFESSIONALLY – You may not have time to do a thorough cleaning. It's worth the money to call in a professional to scour behind the refrigerator, under and in the stove – in other words, a top-to-bottom overhaul.

34.) CLEAR WORK SURFACES – One of the first things people look for in a kitchen is counters can give the impression there is no room to work. Put away small appliances.

35.) ADD STORAGE – To free up counter space, give everything a place. To ease crowded cupboards, get an overhead rack for saucepans. Add a moveable cart with butcher-block top if there's room. (You can take it with you.)

36.) CLEAN OUT DRAWERS – Crammed, messy drawers (and cupboards) will simply trigger too-little-storage fears.

37.) FIX LIFTED CORNERS ON PLASTIC LAMINATE COUNTERTOPS – Hold a heat gun, set on "low", about 6 inches above the surface to warm the glue on the laminate; once it feels tacky, remove heat and roll down the edge with the seam roller. If laminate still pops loose, scrape off the old adhesive, then re-secure the edge with contact cement, applying it to the underside of the laminate and to the substrate, per manufacturer's directions.

38.) REPLACE OR REFINISH CABINET DOORS – Today there are specialists who offer facelifts for cabinets. Look for them in the Yellow Pages. Choose new doors (or repaint old ones) in a light color.

39.) CHANGE CABINET HARDWARE – High-quality drawer pulls and door handles can transform your outdated cabinets.

40.) NO ROOM FOR PETS – The kitchen, of all places, should be free of any evidence of pets. That means litter boxes, rubber toys and food dishes.

41.) TONE DOWN HARD-TO-CHANGE ELEMENTS – You may not want to make the investment in new ceramic tiles of flooring. But you can paint the walls white to simplify the look of your kitchen.

42.) MAKE ENAMEL-COATED APPLIANCES LOOK NEW – Remove stains with undiluted bleach and a stiff brush, if needed. Hide any nicks with appliance touch-up enamel, and then polish with a soft cloth and auto body polish.

43.) HAVE APPLIANCES REFINISHED – Coppertone or avocado appliances may have been all the rage a t one time, but they certainly aren't now. Don't buy new ones; have them refinished white instead – on site for approximately \$200 an appliance. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Porcelain"; some of the same companies that refinish old bathroom fixtures also redo appliances.

44.) ADD TASK LIGHTING FOR INDIVIDUAL WORK AREAS – In addition to bright overall lighting, illuminate work surfaces with separate under-cabinet lights.

45.) BRING LIGHT IN – An open, airy look is desirable throughout the house, and especially in the kitchen. If you have full curtains or shaded, consider removing them altogether. At most, add a white lace valance.

BATHROOM BASICS – More than for any other room, the rule for bathrooms is clean, clean, clean – and that means from floor to ceiling. A musty one can kill a sale.

46.) CLEAN UP CERAMIC TILES AND GROUT – Use a strong anti-mildew cleaner such as Tilex or a solution of white vinegar and water, and stiff brush. Try household bleach on grout stains; scrub and

scrub until you succeed. On the other hand, if grout is damaged, missing or badly stained, carefully removed the old grout with a putty knife, scrubbing the joint clean. Press new grout into the joint with your finger (use rubber gloves), smoothing out bubbles. Remove excess grout by carefully wiping a damp sponge over the tiles.

47.) REPAIR CRACKED OR LOOSE CERAMIC TILES – A cracked or chipped tile, especially in a highly visible spot, can ruin the look of an entire bathroom. If you have matching tiles, it's worth replacing the sore thumb. Use a cold chisel or old screwdriver to break and pry off the pieces of the bad tile, then remove any leftover mortar, adhesive and grout with a stiff putty knife. Coat the back of the replacement tile with tile adhesive or thin-set mortar; use enough so that the surface will be flush with the existing tiles. Set in place; on vertical surfaces, use masking tape to hold the tile in position while the adhesive or mortar dries. Finally, apply grout and clean, as stated above.

48.) RECAULK FAULTY JOINTS – Don't confuse caulking with grout. Caulking is the sealant where the bath joins the wall. Damaged caulking looks messy and, more important, can cause leaks and water damage to rooms below. Replacing it can take less than an hour.

49.) NEUTRALIZE AN OUT-OF-DATE COLOR SCHEME – If you're stuck with maroon or flamingo-pink tiles, downplay them by painting the walls white or cream, and putting out plain white or gray towels. Keep a stock of freshly laundered ones ready in your linen closet.

50.) BUY A NEW (WHITE) SHOWER CURTAIN – Avoid patters; they make the room seem smaller.

51.) SHINE UP CHROME FIXTURES – Use a stiff-bristled brush dampened with white vinegar – never a metal cleaner or an abrasive. Dry and polish immediately with a cloth.

52.) REMOVE STAINS FROM A PORCELAIN SINK – For common stains, use a paste of cream of tartar and hydrogen peroxide. For stubborn stains, line the surface with paper towels and saturate with household bleach. After 30 minutes, remove the towels and rinse with water.

53.) REPLACE A BADLY CHIPPED ENAMEL SINK OR HAVE THE BATHTUB REFINISHED – A professional job, which can be done on site for \$150-\$300 (sink), \$300-\$400 (tub), will get the best results. It takes from 3 to 5 hours and needs another 48 hours to cure. Look under "Porcelain" or "Bathtub Refinishing" in the Yellow Pages.

54.) FIX LEAKY FAUCETS – You may have become accustomed to a dripping tap, but it will scream neglect to a prospective buyer.

55.) INSTALL BRASS TOWEL RAILS, FAUCETS AND OTHER HARDWARE – Luxurious extras like these are real crowd-pleasers.

56.) CLEAR AWAY CLUTTER – This means on top of the toilet, on countertops, inside the medicine cabinet and on the walls. Buyers don't really want to see your personal toiletries on display (or your favorite old terry-cloth robe).

57.) SECURE WALLPAPER – Glue down curling or loose wallcoverings with seam sealer found at hardware stores.

58.) GIVE MAGAZINES AND BOOKS A PROPER HOME – A beautiful basket is perfect or put them in the garbage

59.) LIGHT SCENTED CANDLES OR POTPOURRI – Make sure you use one scent throughout the house.

60.) REPLACE THE TOILET SEAT – Choose white, of course.

61.) INSTALL A FAN – Check the ventilation; if it's inadequate, have a fan put in. It's worth the expense.

LIVABLE LIVING ROOMS help people see beyond your particular furnishings and imagine themselves living there. In a very basic sense, make the living room seem usable.

62.) ESTABLISH A FOCAL POINT – It pulls a room together. If you have a fireplace, that's a natural. Group furniture around it. An impressive wall of books or a piano are good, too. Play up a focal point with light to color to distract from possible shortcomings.

63.) GROUP FURNITURE – Couches, chairs and tables scattered haphazardly around a room give it a cluttered and disorganized feeling. Instead, think of arrangements that encourage conversation and conviviality. Pull the pieces of furniture toward one another in a group to give the space a more airy feeling and more walking room.

64.) REJUVENATE THE FLOOR – Strip, re-wax and buff a waxed wood floor. If polyurethaned floor looks a little scratched and dull, you may not need to go to all the trouble of stripping and sanding it. A simple buffing with a screen and one coat of finish will make it glow. You can rent a buffer and screen for \$250 - \$30 a day. A good wax and buff can work wonders, too. Another option is to paint old vinyl or wood floors, adding stenciled details and several coats of polyurethane for durability. (This can be especially effective in a dining room, too.)

65.) SILENCE A SQUEAKY FLOOR – For an easy, temporary repair, locate the offending boards, and squirt some powdered graphite lubricant into the seams between them. Step on and off the boards to work the powder into the joint. Simply repeat the application if the floor starts making noise again.

66.) FLATTEN OUT WRINKLES IN WALL-TO-WALL CARPET – Use a carpet layer's tool called a knee-kicker, available from tool rental centers or carpet stores.

67.) GET RID OF OLD PRESSED WOOD PANELING – If the wall is less than perfect, try a painting technique such as sponging to cover any uneven surface and give a soft, elegant look.

68.) ADD ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL – "Crown moldings, chair rail and tall baseboards can transform a boxy living room. If your house came with these details already, be sure to showcase them, doing any repairs or refinishing necessary.

69.) PUT AWAY YOUR COLLECTIONS – Religious and political mementos are particular no-nos. So are animal rugs and big-game trophy heads. But don't overdo family photos either. Remember, you want

to provide visitors with a blank canvas on which they can fill in their own details.

70.) REVIVE AN OLD COUCH AND CHAIR WITH NEW SLIPCOVERS – Or simply flip the cushions. A colorful throw or pillows can also hide a multitude of sins on dad's favorite old chair.

71.) REVIVE THE WHOLE ROOM WITH NEW WINDOW TREATMENTS – And there are inexpensive alternatives – neutral colored sheers or mini blinds, or bamboo shades.

72.) DISGUISE A BAD VIEW – Don't put up heavy curtains to cover it; people will naturally be curious to see what's behind them. Instead, hang a half curtain or a beautiful green plant that stops the eye short of the construction site beyond. A simple no-sew valance might do the trick, too.

DINING ROOM DRAMA - Because a dining room isn't used as often as other rooms in the house, it can seem a little like a showroom. Here's how to make your own appear lived in, warm and inviting.

73.) HAVE THE TABLETOP REFINISHED OR POLISHED – The table is usually the focal point of a dining room, so make it gleam.

74.) DRESS UP THE TABLE – Buy a handsome new runner or placemats.

75.) HANG A SWAG OVER A BARE WINDOW – It will add warmth and some visual interest.

76.) USE A CENTERPIECE – Perhaps a bowl of fresh fruit or a soup tureen.

77.) ADD A LIVED-IN LOOK – Briefly light the wicks of candles so they don't look like "props" you never use.

78.) MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR CHANDELIER – The light it casts highlights your tabletop. Wash bulbs and dust it regularly.

79.) COMFY BEDROOMS – While homeowners want kitchens to be spotlessly clean and efficient, they look for a little more softness, even a touch of romance, in a bedroom.

80.) SPLURGE ON NEW BED LINENS – This is a relatively low-cost way to create a big visual effect. Concentrate on the part that shows, and don't forget throw pillows. (They don't need to be in an identical pattern; they just need to harmonize.)

81.) MAKE THE FLOORING SOFT – Softness underfoot always conveys a feeling of comfort and refuge. Wall-to-wall carpeting is the most popular bedroom flooring. It's warm, easy to maintain and inviting to bare feet. But remember to stick to one color for all the bedrooms and adjoining hallway. Otherwise, the result can look like patchwork.

82.) TONE DOWN KIDS' ROOMS – It's easier than you think! You want buyers to see beyond the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Ghostbusters posters. By simplifying the décor, you'll help those prospects imagine how they could use the room. For those blemished walls, fill holes and repaint them if necessary. For the kid's sake, you could put one poster back up.

83.) PUT AWAY KIDS' TOYS – In brightly colored plastic crates with lids. Store these under a shelf or bed.

84.) CLEAN OUT YOUR CLOSETS – Of course people will look in them, so do now what you'll have to do in any case when you move. Jam-packed, messy closets will make people worry there isn't enough storage space. Invest in a closet organizing system; pack out-of-season clothes away. Make the closet look as if there's room to spare.

LANDSCAPING MAGIC – The wild look is out – at least when it comes to selling your home. Strive for neat, well-manicured and inviting outdoor spaces.

85.) TRIM ALL HEDGES AND SHRUBS – Prune dead tree branches while you're at it.

86.) PLANT ANEW – Replace overgrown, leggy foundation planting that are typical of so many homes.

87.) MEND FENCES – Replace wobbly posts, mend broken sections, repaint if necessary.

88.) BEAUTIFY A PLAIN WALL OR FENCE – Select a climbing plant that will bring color to the area and also cover up an unsightly space; morning glories are always a good choice.

89.) PLANT COLORFUL ANNUALS - While neutral may be the by word the interiors, in the garden you can afford to be bold with color. A mass of red impatiens looks dramatic in a shady spot; zinnias provide a pleasing riot of color in a sunny one.

90.) SHOW WHAT THE GARDEN IS LIKE IN ALL SEASONS – If you have established perennials or bulbs and it's not their blooming season, have pictures available for the prospective buyers.

91.) DEMONSTRATE HOW THE GARDEN CAN BE USED – Showcase an outside eating area with attractive outdoor furniture. Invest in a new umbrella. Arrange two chairs invitingly under the shade of a tree, or, if you can, string a hammock between two trees.

92.) ALLAY WORRIES ABOUT A POOL – No, a pool is not usually a selling point. Some people worry that it will be too expensive and time consuming to maintain. Set the record straight by providing a fact sheet with all the pertinent details, including specifications, what's involved in routine upkeep (including costs and time it takes.)

93.) PLANT A TREE – Founder's oaks don't grow overnight, of course, but for \$300 to \$400 you can get a professionally planted tree that's decent size – a quick way to beautify a barren landscape.

94.) BANISH RUSTY SWING SETS – Shiny painted ones are fine. Deep-six any decrepit lawn furniture too.

GARAGE & BASEMENT – Even when it comes to the more functional parts of your home, clean is beautiful.

95.) REMOVE OIL STAINS FROM THE GARAGE FLOOR – Try a commercial degreasing liquid

(available at most hardware stores). If that doesn't work, take a tip from Fixing Your House to Sell: Make a thick paste of 1 part TSP (trisodium phosphate), 6 parts water and enough talcum powder to thicken; spread a ½ inch-thick layer on the stain and cover with plastic sheeting held down with duct tape. Allow the paste to dry (12-24 hours), scrape off, and then rinse with clean water. If you want the floor to look really great, roll on a coat of gray floor paint after cleaning.

96.) STORE JUNK OVERHEAD – What won't fit on joists overhead, put neatly on shelving along the wall of the garage.

97.) MAKE THE BASEMENT SPOTLESS – Aspire to the submarine-control-room look functional, well organized, clean, giving the impression that everything is impeccably maintained. Buy shelving for neat storage. Wash (and repair) any windows. Repair cracks in concrete walls and floors; if necessary, wash or repaint them.

98.) CLEAN THE FURNACE – Wipe down the furnace and water heater with a damp sponge. They'll look newer. (Turn the furnace off first, for safety's sake.)

99.) MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A HEALTHY BASEMENT – Check for radon and asbestos. It can be detected quickly and easily with a do-it yourself test kit (a good one made by Niton Corp. is available from Seventh Generation, Products for a Healthy Planet, 800-456-1177). Once detected, radon can be eliminated with no lingering health effects.

Get Busy and Let's Sell Your House Fast !!!