

AN EXPERT GUIDE TO

Styling Your Home To Sell



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Introduction

When it comes to selling your home you won't get a second chance to make a first impression. That's why, before you list, it is important to walk through your property with fresh eyes and imagine that you are a potential buyer.

Think about how your home looks. Is it welcoming, bright and spacious? Is it clean and well cared for or cluttered and dusty? Can people easily picture themselves living there, or is it too full of your personal belongings?

Putting a tiny bit of effort into preparing your home for sale - whether the market is booming or not - can make a significant difference. Not only can it accelerate the process to sell faster, but it can also contribute to boosting the final price. That is why we put together this guide, full of hints, strategies and tips to help you achieve the best outcome possible.

And if you need help with arranging and styling your home, or once your property is ready, get in touch with your local real estate agent who will guide you through your selling journey.

Set The Tone With A Welcoming Entrance

Your property needs to look great from the street. As soon as prospective buyers arrive, they want to be excited about coming in and taking a closer look. Spending just a few hours on improving the entrance can create the right energy that will impress buyers from the moment they first see your home.

Neat, Clean And Functional

The first thing to do is to make sure that everything looks neat and well maintained. Check that roofing, gutters, windows, balustrades, driveways, footpaths, walls and garden areas are all functional and clean. They must be free of dirt and things like spider webs.

If you have a front gate, it will be the first thing that greets people. Knowing how crucial a first impression is, make sure it also is in good operating condition and quiet.

If possible, keep the garbage bins out of sight. Clear the letterbox each day and ensure no flyers or newspapers are left lying around.

Place a doormat outside your front door as this shows you care about keeping your property clean. Also, check that the street or unit number is clearly visible and that the doorbell and all external lights work (often people will take a peek at night).





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Pave The Way To A Successful Sale

You may want to guide buyers through to your door with a paved pathway. Plain white pavers look terrific against a green lawn. If the steps to your front door look a little shabby, a great trick is to tile the stair rises, rather than ripping everything out and starting from scratch.

A freshly painted front door will also help your home look fresh and inviting. If necessary, replace the handle with a new one. Potted plants on either side of the front door and neat landscaping can very much contribute to making your home more welcoming and memorable. Try and keep things symmetrical. The idea is to keep it simple and not clutter the space.

Step Inside And See The Light

If your hallway feels dark, try painting the walls white to lighten things up or add a skylight. A broad runner will make an entrance seem wider, while fresh flowers are simply a great way to welcome visitors.



Give Some TLC To The Kitchen

Often the kitchen is THE feature that can make or break a sale. It is usually the most expensive room in any house, so prospective buyers don't want to deal with one that would need a full upgrade. This doesn't necessarily mean a total refit (you don't want to overcapitalise and lose money). Still, there are small things you can do to make your kitchen more appealing.

Clear The Clutter

If you have more on your kitchen benches than in the cupboards, start clearing the everyday mess before getting onto anything else. You want your kitchen to look tidy and functional.



Add Or Update Appliances

Buyers know just how expensive it is to buy a new oven or dishwasher. They may shy away from your house if they believe extra money should be spent on buying new ones. So if your appliances are out of date, consider replacing them yourself. It will very likely be a worthwhile investment.

Freshen Up Walls And Doors

A fresh coat of paint can work wonders in a drab kitchen, especially if cooking splatters have become a feature. Don't forget your worn tiles, a little primer and paint can make a huge difference.

Swapping cabinet doors can also give your kitchen a whole new look. If entirely new doors are outside your budget, you can make a huge difference by simply replacing the handles of your cupboards and drawers.



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Lift The Lighting

The lighting in a kitchen is something buyers will notice. Installing fluorescent or spotlights under the top cupboard can enhance the look of benchtop work areas.

Fix Benchtops And Floors

Many people think that replacing scratched and stained counters is too costly, but not all benchtop materials are expensive. This small investment could actually save your sale.

Is your kitchen floor a little worse for wear? Consider lifting the lino or flooring. If there are floorboards underneath, and if they are in good enough condition you could polish them. Otherwise, lay vinyl flooring which is easy to clean. Alternatively, you may like to use tiles for a cool contemporary feeling.



When selling, the best advice is to keep things neutral so people can easily project themselves into your space.



Maximise The Space In Living Areas

Buyers like large living areas, so your priority should be to reduce the clutter and find ways to maximise the space.


Colour Can Help A Room Look Bigger

Today's buyers are generally looking for large living areas, and open plan living is very trendy. If your living room size is on the smaller side, you will need to show ingenuity to make the most of the available space. Colour can help. For example, blues and greens can make a room appear bigger.

How you organise a small room is also important, especially if it has low ceilings. Keep furnishings below waist height and limit the number of pieces, as too many items would make the room look even smaller.

Go With The Flow

Show buyers how easy it is to live in and enjoy your living space. These rooms are places for people to communicate and relax, so make sure you arrange your room to demonstrate this. Consider traffic flow, conversation areas, access from seating to coffee or side tables, and task lighting for work or reading areas.



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Watch Out Below

Floors are the most expensive part to replace in a living room. Buyers know this, so expect them to pay attention to what they are walking on. Replacing worn or inappropriate flooring before you sell may not be economical, so try to make the most of what is there. Have your carpets professionally cleaned. Marked or damaged timber floors could be re-sanded and polished.

Keep Things Neutral

Barbie pink striped walls might be the latest trend, but such a fashion statement could put off buyers. When selling, the best advice is to keep things neutral so people can easily project themselves into your space.

This doesn't mean living in a world of white. If your living area seems cold, try a colour scheme of rich neutrals. For a cooler feel, look at whites with a blue tinge.

Centre Of Attention

One of the golden rules of interior design is that rooms need a focus. It could be a fireplace or the view from your window or French doors. If your living space doesn't have a natural feature, why not create one? You could consider a feature wall, for example. Even if buyers don't buy your style, it will get their attention (and most won't have a problem repainting it).



A Clean, Stylish Bathroom Can Soak Up A Sale

Whatever condition your bathroom is in, or no matter how old, it must be clean. Nothing puts more buyers off than a dirty bathroom.

Make It Sparkle

Scrub your tiles and grouting, and make sure your windows, mirrors and shower screens are spotless and free of streaks. Ensure that the bath, shower, sink and toilet are gleaming before you open your home to buyers. Replace your soap bars with liquid soap as these are less messy.

Fresh As A Daisy

Make sure your bathroom is well ventilated. Open the windows, use the extractor fan, and add some potpourri or air freshener if needed. However, don't go over the top as buyers might think you are trying to hide something.

Fix The Fittings And Add A Touch Of Luxury

Cracked basins, toilets or tubs give the impression the room is unhygienic, so consider replacing them. It is not that expensive provided you don't change the plumbing.

Luxury spa bathrooms are trendy but can be very expensive. To add a little touch of glam to any bathroom, and create a nice, cosy feeling, rely on accessories. Fresh, plump towels, handmade soaps, a pot-plant or fresh flowers, and boutique bath products set out in your bathroom will do the trick.





Create More Space

If you have a small bathroom, don't congest the limited wall space with towel rails. Instead, put them on the back of the door. If you are renovating, consider wall-mounted sinks and toilets. Use big mirrors to make the room appear twice the size. Not only will they enhance the feeling of spaciousness, but they are also very convenient.

The bathroom will seem more spacious if you keep the colour scheme simple and light, and ensure that you have proper storage to hide all those bits and pieces.

A Fresh Coat For A New Look

Stained or chipped bathtubs and sinks can be easily fixed by enamelling companies that can give your fitting a whole new look. They can even enamel old tiles, so if your bathroom's colour scheme is straight out of the 1970s, this simple, inexpensive process could save or even maximise your sale. Add to this a fresh coat of paint on the walls, and you have a whole new bathroom.



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Bedrooms Should Feel Like A Sanctuary

When it comes to bedrooms, again, bigger is better. After looking at the number of bedrooms, buyers are most interested in their size. Use neutral colours to make your bedrooms seem larger and reduce the amount of furniture to maximise the feeling of space.

Also, be smart when arranging furniture. If you have a small bedroom, use a double bed instead of a queen or bunks in a children's room.

More Storage And Less Clutter

You can never have enough storage in a bedroom, and that is why you will see people peeking in cupboards and wardrobes at an open house. To reduce the demands on limited space in small bedrooms, consider having built-in robes installed, but keep the interior simple. Indeed, if you include all the bells and whistles, you won't recoup the costs.

Less is more. However large your bedrooms are, they will look small if cluttered with all your knick-knacks. When the time comes to sell, make sure to clear away all the personal items such as photos. But that doesn't mean your rooms need to look impersonal.



Create A Private Haven

Buyers want a bedroom where they can escape the worries of life. Lighting is crucial in creating the right atmosphere. To give a romantic feel, consider adding dimmer switches and bedside lamps. If you are having evening viewings, quality lighting is essential.

You can make your bedroom a sanctuary by adding a little luxury with fresh linen, puffed up pillows and extra cushions, a comfy chair, and a few unique features, like candles and perfume bottles. All these can contribute to making the room feel like home for potential buyers



Buyers want a bedroom where they can escape the worries of life.





Give Your Garden A Fresh Trim


Just like inside your house, your garden should be tidy and clear of mess. Weed your garden and keep the lawn trimmed when opening your home for inspection. Consider your plants – remove dead ones and replace with new ones, but make sure they suit the conditions in your garden. You don't want them to die before you sell.

Colourful Creations

The garden is one place you can have fun with colour. However, rather than introducing lots of different ones into a small garden bed, try sticking to one shade and perhaps use varying tones. You can also add instant colour with pots of whatever is in flower from the nursery.

Style Your Garden

You can give your garden a simple makeover before you sell by adding defining borders to your flower beds and adding a focal point. Timber borders are popular, but you can also outline your beds with small shrubs or grasses. Add a few larger plants as focal points, but keep them in proportion to the size of your garden.



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Make The Courtyard Look Bigger

Many houses today, particularly in the inner city, don't enjoy large gardens. Often there is only a small courtyard, so it is essential to maximise this space.

The first step may be to create a focal point like a water feature, statue or urn. This should be placed at the furthest point from the entrance. This way, your buyers' vision is drawn to a distance, giving a sense of space.

You can also create an illusion of space by covering the entire area with large pavers. It will make the ground look wider and less busy. Don't use any dark colours in your courtyard structures as these reduce the perception of space.





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Checklist

◆ Entrance and garden.

- Clean/repair gate and fence
- Clean/repair and empty letter box
- Move garbage bins out of sight
- Sweep/fix/clean driveway, paths and steps
- Mow lawn
- Clean, weed and trim garden
- Remove/replace dead or dying plants
- Clean/repair gutters and eaves
- Check/reseal/repair roof
- Tidy garage and shed
- Clean windows
- Add a welcome mat
- Clean/paint front door
- Ensure street number is visible
- Check exterior lights and doorbell
- Create an entrance and lighten the hallway

◆ General inside.

- Do a complete spring clean
- Scrub/clean skirting boards, walls, floors, windows, lights curtains and blinds
- Clean/repair flyscreens
- Remove clutter
- Install new light bulbs
- Buy fresh flowers
- Clean/polish/vacuum floors
- Remove/hide personal items
- Dust and straighten pictures
- Hide / unplug electrical cables

Checklist

◆ Kitchen and dining.

- Remove clutter from counters
- Check cupboards are not overflowing
- Freshen up walls and cupboard doors
- Create the right atmosphere with lighting
- Ensure tables and benchtops are clean and not damaged
- Clean outside and inside of the fridge, oven, microwave, etc.
- Replace out of date appliances
- Clean/repair the floor
- Clean drains and empty bins
- Ensure dishwasher is empty and clean
- Minimise decorations

◆ Living areas.

- Ensure colours are neutral
- Arrange room to emphasise best use of the space
- Highlight key features
- Ensure sofas are clean
- Replace older appliances (eg. replace old TV with a flat screen) to create more space
- Remove old magazines/newspapers

◆ Bedrooms.

- Make the most use of space
- Remove furniture that gets in the way and takes up room
- Ensure all cupboards are neat and clean
- Remove surface clutter on dressers, draws, bedside tables
- Put on fresh linen, puff up pillows add some luxury features
- Clean/dust all surfaces and mirrors
- Remove dirty laundry
- Remove dated appliances (eg older bulky televisions)

◆ Bathroom.

- Air bathroom well
- Use air freshener/candle to remove smells
- Clean bath, basin, loo, shower, mirrors, taps, etc.
- Ensure grout and tiles are free from mildew
- Use lighting and mirrors to create feeling of more space
- Check fan works
- Replace/repair cracks in bathtubs, basins, etc
- Remove personal toileteries
- Lay out luxury bath items and plump fresh towels

◆ Laundry.

- Remove clothes from washing line
- Empty washer and dryer
- Put clean laundry away
- Clean cupboards

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