

Staging Your Home For Buyer Appeal

(Useful tips and tricks)

From **YOUR DALLAS HANDYMAN**

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CURB APPEAL:

The first impression you make with your home is easily the most important. That impression sets the tone for visitors and forms their expectation for what's inside. This happens the moment they pull in front of your house, long before they walk up to the front door. Here are some useful tips that range in cost from next to nothing to a few thousand dollars, but can make all the difference. It's not a bad idea to ask yourself the following questions and then determine how important each item is when selling your home or any time you want to create a favorable impression.

VIEW FROM THE STREET:

1. Are your trees properly trimmed?
2. Is there shrubbery or bushes that need trimming or removing? How about adding some?
3. Is the grass mowed and trimmed?
4. Are your sidewalks and driveway clean? Power-washing is not terribly expensive and can make a huge difference.
5. Are your curb address numbers in need of repainting?
6. Is your mailbox clean, in good repair, visible and properly numbered?
7. Is your fence in need of repair or cleaning?
8. Is the paint on your house cracked, peeling or badly faded? Power-washing might help or you can create the best impression with fresh paint.
9. Are the shingles on your roof faded? Do you know exactly how old your roof is? Does it leak?
10. Are your windows clean and weatherproof? (in need of caulking)?
11. Are the gutters all attached properly? Are there obvious or excessive dents or hanging pieces?

THE ENTRY:

1. Are there toys, shoes or other miscellaneous items cluttering up the entry?
2. Is your porch otherwise clean and free of dirt, dust and cobwebs?
3. Does the front door function the way it's supposed to? Does it need staining or painting?
4. Does the doorbell work properly?
5. Is your storm door clean? Are there fingerprints or built up grime on the glass? Does it operate perfectly?

GENERAL CHECKLIST:

Windows and Doors: Make sure there are no broken or cracked windows. Check weather-stripping, caulk and putty for gaps, cracks and raising. Check for smooth opening and closing operation, and faulty or hard to operate locks.

Window Sills: Check for cleanness and paint adherence. Outside, make sure they are clean and weather resistant.

Basement: If you have a basement, check for seal cracks and leaks in walls and floor. Look for signs of dampness and mold. Check joints between floor and walls for gaps or cracks.

Accessible Pipes: Make sure hot water pipes are properly insulated. It is even better when the cold water pipes are properly insulated as well, which helps prevent condensation and added moisture and/or drips and droplets. Insulated cold water pipes can deliver colder water in hot weather as well.

Wooden Porch, Patios and Decks: Check for clean, well-attached boards. Check for proper sealing of exposed wood. Check for signs of wood rot.

Walls and ceilings: Look for cracks, holes or bulges. Look for "popping" nails. Look for water stains in ceilings, especially in corners and along edges. Note the general appearance of the paint.

Floors: Inspect for loose or creaking floorboards, worn areas, cracked or chipped baseboards. Tiles should be properly sealed and none should be missing or broken. Make note of how clean or new looking the carpet is and especially if it has wrinkles or appears unevenly stretched. Pay closest attention to high traffic areas and doorways.

Fireplace: Make sure all the pieces are there and everything is clean. Check the flue for proper operation. Make sure the brick encasement does not appear badly burned and there are no cracks. If it's a wood-burning fireplace, make sure there is no excessive soot buildup. This may require a pro to clean, but may be well worth the expense.

Sprinkler system and exterior plumbing: Make sure the sprinkler system is operating properly and that it is buried with no exposed parts that can be broken or damaged easily. Make sure no outside water outlets are dripping.

Interior plumbing: Look under every sink and where there is a tap, like in the laundry area, for dripping and/or area damage, like to walls or surfaces underneath or behind where it comes in. There is no good reason for a wet area to be moldy or show any water damage around it. If there is an odor, look deeper.

Electrical outlets: Make sure that there is a GCFI outlet within 6 feet of any water valve, outlet or tap. A home will not pass a proper inspection without them. Make a visual check around all outlets for black or burn marks. It can be a sign of a short or possible insufficient line. If a light fixture flickers, it is probably just an old fixture and can easily be replaced for little cost. Consult a professional.

Bathrooms: Check faucets and showerheads for dripping, hard water or rust stains. Check for the same things around the drains. Check the toilet for a malfunctioning water release valve. Check behind the toilet for accumulation of dirt, rust on or near water intake, or cobwebs, which may simply indicate the general lack of pest control or expose poor upkeep habits. Make sure hot water supply is sufficient. Check caulking around sinks, toilets, tubs and enclosures.

Kitchen: Check all outlets for workability, making sure all plates are intact. Check wiring to stove and refrigerator to ensure code compliance. Check ventilator fan and filters for cleanliness. A "litmus test" for general upkeep is buildup of grease and dust around the stove and in corners. Check under sink for leaks or undue odors. Check the dishwasher for surface cuts, major stains or malfunctioning racks.

Here are some bullet-point references that can be very helpful when staging your home and preparing for a showing:

Outdoors

- Manicure lawn, trim shrubs and clean walkways
- Repair or replace damaged screens, glass panes, and door hardware
- Remove driveway stains and eliminate exterior clutter or distracting décor
- Place flowers or potted plants by the front door
- Be sure the doorbell works

Invest in a little paint:

- Paint improves a room and makes it clean and appealing
- Use white or neutral tones that are soothing
- Check walls for split or peeling papers and replace or repair if needed
- Polish woodwork and paneling throughout your home

Let the sun help you sell your home!

- Open curtains, shades or drapes on nice days
- Add sparkle to windows by washing inside and out
- Turn on lamps or accent lighting
- Replace missing light bulbs

Let your buyer see everything!

- Permit clients to see the value of your property from the attic to the basement and through to the garage
- Remove junk, cartons and unnecessary clutter
- Straighten, box and store cartons neatly
- Organize workbenches
- Lighten dark spaces with paint or additional lights
- Provide adequate lighting for stairs

Don't let a minor flaw chase away your buyer!

- Make sure windows and doors open and close easily
- Address plumbing problems and present facilities in working order
- Check doorknobs, drawers, and sliding glass doors for ease of operation; lubricate and adjust as needed
- Clean rust and soiled areas

Kitchens sell homes

- Clear counters of all items and make space in cabinets
- Clean cabinets inside and out
- Check and clean appliances, floors and walls

- Add green plants or bowls of fruit
- Create a comfortable atmosphere with colorful curtains, cup towels and placemats

Create an open and bright atmosphere

- Arrange furniture to create an open effect
- Straighten bookshelves
- Clean carpets
- Polish furniture and hardwood floors
- Put logs in the fireplace
- Add magazines, books and flowers to coffee table and discard excess papers
- Place a centerpiece on the dining room table
- Store games and sports equipment or arrange them in attractive containers
- Eliminate clutter
- Turn off all entertainment units and play soft music
- Place easy chairs and sofas in conversational group
- Showcase books and magazines; aesthetics are more important than functionality
- Deodorize the entire house, especially pet areas

Bedrooms

- Avoid a crowded look
- Remove excess furniture and personal items
- Attractive, colorful bed linens are important
- Arrange books or plants on night stand
- Place decorative pillows and shams on beds
- Keep room light and bright

Closets

- Make closets appear larger by having them clean, neat and well organized
- Remove old clothes and cartons

- Add a cedar block or air freshener for a refreshing aroma
- Use decorative storage boxes

During showings

- If possible, arrange to be away during showings
- Set household thermostat at a comfortable level before leaving
- Make a final check of every room and if time permits, do a quick once-over straightening and light dusting
- Turn on accent lighting
- Put your pet (s) in a secured area, preferably in the yard



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