

PREPARING FOR AN OPEN HOUSE

We're REALTORS®
Real Estate Is Our Life.

An open house can be an essential part of the marketing plan your REALTOR develops for you when selling your home.

In real estate, there are generally two kinds of open houses. One type is solely for REALTORS. This is usually held when your home is first listed and gives other REALTORS an opportunity to assess your home against the needs of other buyers. The second is an advertised open house for potential buyers. These are usually held on weekend afternoons over a period of time (most of us are familiar with the roadside signs!).

If at all possible, you should stay away from the home during an open house. Let your REALTOR take care of all the details and act on your behalf. Your presence could be distracting for a number of reasons. Potential buyers may rush their visit to avoid disturbing you. They may be hesitant to comment on your home with you present. The best way to ensure potential buyers feel relaxed, ask questions and really see the property, is to avoid being there.

Not just your presence, but that of a dog or a cat could be a major distraction to some buyers. Your REALTOR may advise you to temporarily remove any pets from the property during an open house.

Since your home will be open to the public, your REALTOR will also offer suggestions on precautions you can take to make it a satisfying experience for all involved. You should remove or lock away any valuables, particularly small articles that can be easily removed such as jewelry, camera equipment, money, compact discs, valuable coins or other collections. As added security, your REALTOR should ask all visitors to sign in, leaving their name, address and telephone number. They should also make every effort to accompany all visitors through their tour of your home.

As the seller, you should attend to any potential hazards by removing any wires or furniture pieces people might trip over, ensuring stairs and floors aren't slippery and keeping all spaces well lighted. In winter or on rainy days, provide a place for shoes or coats near the entrance. Also, avoid cooking foods with strong odours (unless they are pleasant odours) before an open house.

Preparing for an open house also involves spending time with your REALTOR discussing your home's best features and the things you might do to help it sell more quickly. Your REALTOR will have knowledge of the local market and what will appeal to buyers interested in your kind of home.

He or she can offer a lot of advice on how to make your home warm and inviting for an open house.

Your REALTOR can also advise you on ways to beautify your home, or point out areas that could be cleaned or repaired. Use this handy checklist to assess what needs mending or changing around your home before the big day.

Q Floor coverings

- * Are they dirty, stained, worn or damaged?
- * Is there hardwood under carpeting that can be restored?

Q Walls, ceilings & baseboards

- * Any fingerprints, stains, holes, nails or residue?
- * Any cracks, chipped paint, ripped wallpaper or water damage?

Q Doors

- * Do they squeak?
- * Do the handles work properly?

Q Windows

- * Are they clean and crack free?
- * Do they open easily?
- * Are the coverings clean and easy to open?

Q Lighting

- * Is there sufficient light?
- * Any broken switches or exposed wiring?

Q Kitchen & bathrooms

- * Are all surfaces, including floors, sparkling clean?
- * Are countertops clutter-free?
- * Are all sinks and faucets working properly?

Q Other rooms

- * Have all areas been thoroughly vacuumed and dusted?
- * Has excess furniture been removed?
- * Are books, toys and clothes all neatly stored?
- * Do mirrors look clean?
- * Are window coverings open?

Q Outside the home

- * Are all exterior surfaces, including decks, walkways and driveways clean, clear of clutter and in good condition?
- * Are the lawns mowed, walkways clear of snow, trees pruned, gardens weeded and hedges trimmed?