

# Top Home Showing Tips for Sellers

BY ELIZABETH WEINTRAUB



When you show your home, you want to engage the buyer emotionally because the decision to buy is based more on emotions, and less on logic. Give the buyer permission to say, "*Yes, I want to buy this home,*" by staging, accentuating your home's positive attributes, and do not draw any attention to the negative aspects.

Besides, there will be plenty of time after the deal is signed to talk about the drawbacks.

In many markets, it is customary for the buyer's agent to tour a listing without the listing agent present, and they ask the seller to leave the house. If you are selling your home as a for sale by owner, though, you will need to show the home yourself. Here are tips for showing your home that engage all of the senses.

## The Gracious Welcome

Although the buyer is a guest in your home, you want the buyer to imagine owning the home. You don't want to make the buyer feel like an intruder.

- Don't expect the buyer to remove her shoes, unless you are selling to a buyer for whom religious or cultural reasons mandate it. Otherwise, the presumption might be insulting.
- Leave the house. The buyer won't talk about the house in front of you or open doors with you standing there.
- Don't pressure or hurry the buyer. Tell the buyer to take all the time that is needed.
- Leave a bowl of wrapped candy or other treats near the front door with a small note thanking the buyer for coming to see your home.

## **Check the Room Temperature**

- Now is not the time to worry about your utility bill. If it's cold enough to wear a sweater to stay warm, turn on the heat. Don't make buyers shiver or wish they could roll up in your rug for warmth.
- If it's warm outside, turn on the air conditioning. It's better to heat or cool the house a degree or two warmer / colder than usual and then set the temperature at normal. This prevents the heat or A/C from kicking on when the buyer is present, because some HVAC systems are loud.
- You want the temperature inside to be comfortable and to give the buyer more of a reason to linger, especially on hot or cold days!

## **Create a Mood**

- Light a fire in the fireplace. Even if it's the middle of summer.
- Make it romantic by placing two champagne glasses on a nearby table with a bottle of champagne.
- Turn on soft music. I used to play 'Enya' until one day I heard it piped in at a mortuary. You don't want people thinking about death when they're looking at your home.
- If you have water fountains, turn them on. They are especially useful for drowning out traffic noise or the neighbours next door.

## **Play Down the Scent**

- Many people are allergic to certain scents and deodorizers, so don't spray the air or plug-in air fresheners.
- Don't burn candles or spray perfume in the bedroom for the same reason.
- If weather permits, open the windows -- if there is too much noise outside, close them.
- If you're going to bake cookies or simmer spices such as cinnamon in water on the stove, put out munchies so buyers aren't disappointed. More than one buyer has said, "Oh, darn, I thought there were cookies in here!"

## **Play Up the Visual**

- If you have seasonal photographs showcasing flower gardens, leaves bursting in colour or a snow-covered lawn twinkling from street lights, then display them in a prominent position.
- Open all the window coverings to let in light.
- Keep blinds partially closed that otherwise show undesirable outdoor scenery such as a dilapidated fence or a nearby structure that obstructs views.

## **Light up the House**

- Turn on every light in the house, including appliance lights and closet lights.
- Brighten dark rooms with few windows by placing spot lights on the floor behind furniture.
- Turn off TV, if you're playing music, turn off the monitor.

## **Encourage Touching**

- Drape sensuous fabrics such as velvet wraps or silk throws over chair arms.
- Leave doors slightly ajar.
- If you have carpeting, vacuum in one direction and don't walk on it again.

## **Provide Thoughtful Cards**

Attach printed cards to items and in rooms that provide further information the buyer might miss or might not know. You have so little time to make an impression.

- If you have an antique chandelier in your dining room, put a card on it that discloses its age and other important details.
- If you have removed the washer and dryer from the laundry room, attach a card to the wall describing the room.
- If your basement stairs are steep, attach a card to the railing that cautions buyers to watch their step.
- Take care when placing a card that says: "Not included in the sale." That will make a buyer want it, but you can play that later to your advantage.

## **Top It Off With Food**

The best way to entice buyers to linger and notice even more details about your home is to offer them food. You don't need to cater a lunch, but finger sandwiches, cookies, soft drinks, water, desserts, all are welcome. Buyers who are nibbling on snacks are not that eager to leave and might notice more of what your home has to offer.

- Set out serving utensils, if needed.
- Provide plates, cups and napkins. They can be paper products.
- In plain sight, provide a waste receptacle.

## **Encourage Buyer Feedback**

- Near the snacks, leave pens and a stack of pre-printed questionnaire cards or a guest book to sign.
- Buyers may very likely feel obligated to respond to your request after being fed.
- The showing feedback you receive will be invaluable.
- Allow buyer anonymity.

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