Preparing Your Home for Showings

Low-cost solutions that can maximize the features and value of your home in the eyes of buyers.

Kirstin Kestner, Realtor®

Kubis Realty Group

Office: 732-957-0900

Cell: 732-221-6267

Web: JerseyShoreHomeGuide.com

Email: Kestner@jerseyshorehomeguide.com

Introduction

Homebuyers have more choices and options today than they have had for many years. Although pricing is the most important key to selling your home quickly for the highest price, how your home shows is also vitally important.

As an experienced Realtor, I have shown hundreds of homes. Using this experience, I have created this guide to help you understand and address the items buyers are most likely to notice about your home. These little things can have a great impact on how potential buyers perceive your home.

On the following pages, you will find simple, low-cost solutions that can maximize the features and value of your home in the eyes of buyers

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Curb Appeal

We've all heard the saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Unfortunately, in real estate, people do judge a book by its cover, so to speak.

Very often buyers will have ten or more homes to see on a Saturday afternoon. Realistically, they do not have time, that day, to look inside every home on the list. When driving from one house to another, quick decisions are made as to which homes to go into and which homes to pass.

The decision to look inside the home is often based on how the property looks from the back seat of a real estate agent's car. If the yard is unkempt, the fence is in disrepair, or there are other defects visible from the street, buyers will often assume that the inside of the home is in the same poor condition as the outside and thus choose not to look inside.

Your property's "curb appeal" can affect how many buyers stop to view the inside of your home.

- Mow the grass regularly.
- Try to eliminate weeds.
- Edge the grass around sidewalks, driveways, and paths, to give a well-groomed appearance.
- Clean up the yard. Remove any broken lawn furniture. Pick up any trash that may

have found its way onto your yard.

- Try to keep garbage and recycling bins out of site.
- Put toys away.
- Repair damaged fences.
- Fix any problems that are noticeable from the street or clearly visible to buyers as they walk to your front door.
- Depending on the season, keep the leaves raked and the snow shoveled.
- Also, remember to clean out the gutters. Buyers will notice leaf piles in the gutters and consider it a sign of poor home maintenance.
- Make sure there is plenty of parking. Buyers will sometimes come in two or even three cars. If they can't park, they may skip your house and move on to the next one on.

An uninviting exterior can result in fewer buyers viewing the inside of your home. The fewer buyers you have looking at your home, the longer it may take to sell your home. The longer it takes to sell your home, the lower the final selling price. Therefore, it is important to make the exterior of your home as inviting as possible.

Give yourself an idea of how your home looks to buyers as they drive up. When you drive up to your house, take a moment to see how your home looks from the street. Is the front door attractive? Are there any problem items that distract the eye?

A Grand Entrance

A clean and attractive front entrance welcomes buyers into the home. Here are a few tips for preparing your entranceway for showings.

- Sweep away any cobwebs, leaves, or debris.
- Polish doorknobs and replace any broken hardware.
- If your front door is not clearly visible from the street, create an attractive walkway leading to the door.
- Hang a tasteful wreath or welcome sign on the door.
- Wash the windows and trim.
- Give the front door a fresh coat of paint if needed.

Don't forget the inside either.

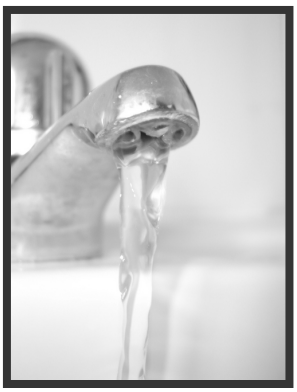
- Keep furniture and other items away from the front entrance or foyer.
- Remember, three or four people may be entering your home at the same time. Make sure there is plenty of room for all of them as they walk inside.

Maintenance Matters

In today's real estate market, buyers are paying close attention to all of the details. Small cracks in the walls, loose doorknobs, squeaky doors, or any other little problems can give buyers the impression that the home is poorly maintained and that larger problems may exist.

Take a walk through your entire home. Imagine you are the buyer. Look at every detail. If you see anything that looks broken or damaged, consider fixing or replacing it.

- A fresh coat of paint is often the quick fix that provides the most impact.
- Re-grout and secure any loose tiles.
- Replace broken tiles.
- Oil squeaky hinges on doors including cabinet doors.



- Make sure all doors open and close properly.
- Fix or replace loose or broken door handles.
- Repair any plumbing problems. Although some buyers may not notice plumbing issues at first, problems will turn up when a home inspection is done.

- Glue down any loose or pealing wallpaper.
- Replace broken light fixtures.
- Have broken electrical outlets and light switches replaced by an electrician.

Also, if you have older systems or appliances in your home, consider offering a home warranty. A one-year policy usually costs between $400 and $800 and can often ease the fears and concerns of buyers.

Clean, Clean, Clean

A clean home shows better than a messy one. If you're like most sellers, you need to *live in your home* while you are trying to sell it. This means it can be a little tricky trying to keep your home super clean all day every day.

Below you will find a list of helpful hints for keeping your home ready to show.

- Get in the habit of cleaning as you go- fix beds in the morning when you get up, wash dishes or rinse and put them in the dishwasher after you eat.
- Things can pile up quickly when you have a busy schedule, so try to stay on top of things as much as possible.
- If you have a large family, assign chores.
- Use a hamper or laundry basket with a lid to toss dirty close in.
- Schedule tasks for certain days, such as vacuum on Wednesdays.
- Make use of modern cleaning aids. There are a variety of cleaning short cuts thanks to new fangled quick mops, automatic shower cleans and much more.
- Plan for quick clean ups. Make sure you have bins and other discrete storage containers for toys and other items that can clutter up a room.

- Avoid hiding messes in closets or cabinets; buyers will usually look in those places when viewing the home.
- When cleaning for an open house, try to do the cleaning the day before. This allows the cleaning smells to dissipate. Buyers will wonder if there is a problem when they notice a strong cleaning smell such as the smell of bleach.
- Use scented fabric softeners for quick dusting that leaves a fresh scent.
- Clean fingerprints and smudges from walls and light switch plates.
- There are two rooms you want to sparkle and shine: the kitchen and bathroom. So if you have a limited time to clean, focus on making those two areas spotless.

De-clutter and Depersonalize

You want your home to appear spacious and clean to buyers. For a good showing, you also want buyers to imagine themselves living there.

- Limit wall hangings to a few decorative pictures or items.
- Remove furnishings that are oversized for a room and replace them with items of a more suitable size.
- Pack up extra knick-knacks. The general rule of thumb is no more than three items on any table, dresser, nightstand, etc.
- Pack away off-season items (such as sweaters and coats during summer months) to make closets appear less cluttered and cramped.
- Start some of your packing early. Box up the items you will not need for a while and store them in the attic or at a storage facility.
- Get rid of the items you do not plan on keeping when you move. You can donate the items to charity or, if the weather is nice, have a yard sale.
- Keep the counters clean. Tuck away the blender and other kitchen appliances that you do not regularly use. The less you have on the counters the larger the space will look.

Remember to do the same with the bathroom counters. Put personal items like hair care products, deodorant, and lotions under the counter and out of site.

- Don't forget to depersonalize. When buyers visit your home, you want them to be able to see themselves living there.
- Tuck away the family photos to make it easier for buyers to picture themselves in the home.

Let Your Home Shine

Lighting is an important element for a good showing. A dim lit room looks small and unwelcoming. A brightly lit home often looks larger and cleaner. Remember, you want your home to look clean, spacious, well maintained, and welcoming to potential buyers.

Natural light is best.

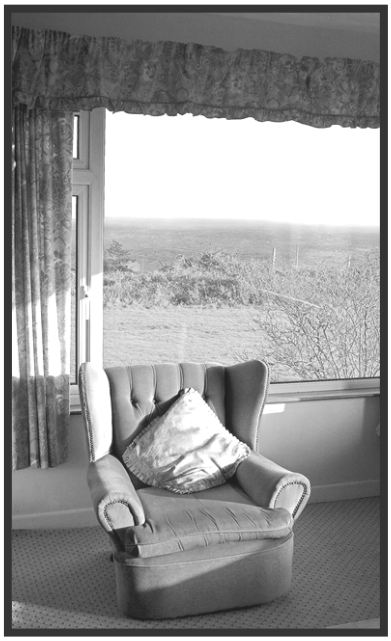
- Remove dark and heavy window treatments and replace them with neutral shears.
- Before showings, remember to open all the blinds and pull back the curtains to let in the maxim amount of natural light.

Interior lighting is the next best thing to sunshine.

- Keep your home warm and bright both day and night.
- Replace any burnt out light bulbs.

- Use the highest allowable (and safe) wattage in lamps and lighting fixtures.
- Place extra lamps in the corners of dim rooms to brighten the space.
- Dark walls can also make a room look dreary and uninviting. If you have very dark paint in a room consider repainting with a neutral color.

Focus on the Features



Let your home speak for itself. This means the features should stand out on their own without the showing agent even mentioning them. Every home has a few attractive features, whether it's a fireplace, large room sizes, beautiful view, up-dated bathroom or new appliances.

Try to think of what you find most attractive about your home and make sure those features are visible to perspective buyers.

- If you have a nice view or an abundance of natural light, make sure the windows are in full view. Remove heavy window coverings and replace them with modest neutral sheers that do not distract the eye.
- Don't hide features behind furniture. If you have a fireplace, make it the focal point of the room.

- Hardwood floors are very popular these days. If you have wood floors in good condition, don't hide them under the rug.
- Remove any furnishing or objects that distract the buyer's eye. Remember, you want buyers to notice the features of the home, not comment on your decorating choices.

- Tuck away the hunting trophies. Okay, this is a little bit of a silly one. However, on a serious note, many buyers won't even look in a room that has an animal trophy mounted on the wall.
- If redecorating, keep things neutral and modern.
- Avoid styles and colors that are generally associated with eras of the past.
- If you have a new heating system or hot water heater, make sure there is a clear path to it so buyers will notice.

Just remember what attracted you to the home when you bought it. Make sure those same features are visible to buyers who view your home.

Appeal to the Senses

Buyers use all of there senses when searching for a home. The tricky part of appealing to the senses is making sure you don't over do it. Buyers are often sellers also, so they know about all the "cover-ups."

Try to be discrete when addressing the senses.

- Eliminate pet odors as much as possible and clean up after pets, especially dogs. Buyers will wander around the yard without paying attention to where they are stepping.
- Playing music is a common tip, however it usually does nothing more than distract the attention of buyers. If you want to have music playing in the home during showings, keep the volume very low, so it is almost unnoticeable. Use a CD or other prerecorded music. Radio voices and commercials can be very distracting.
- Limit your use of scented candles and air sprays. Buyers are very keen to noticing cover ups.
- If possible, open the windows to let in fresh.
- Eliminate the sources of unpleasant odors. (Remember to freshen up the sink drains which are an often over looked source of odors).
- Burning one or two scented candles in the home for just a few minutes before a showing should be enough. Try using high quality candles, perhaps the kind that are made to smell like chocolate chip cookies. Remember to put out any candles before you leave the home.
- Keep the temperature just right. Generally, 68-70 in winter and 72-74 in the summer. If weather permits, turn the heat or air off and open the windows.

Listing & Marketing Services

You work hard to prepare your home for showings. Choose an agent who works even harder to bring more buyers to your home.

As a full service Realtor® at Kubis Realty Group, marketing your home is a full-time job for me. With so many homes on the market, you need an agent who works daily to promote your home to as many buyers as possible.

My comprehensive marketing plan is tailored to today's market. Just listing a home in the MLS is not enough anymore. The marketing strategy I use to successfully sell homes focuses on three key areas:

1. Extensive Online Exposure

   More and more homebuyers are turning to the internet as the primary source of their home search. These are just a few of the many websites your home will be listed on:

KubisRealty.com	JerseyShoreHomeGuide.com	Realtor.com
Google Base	Propsmart	Lycos
Backpage	Edgeio	Local.com
Vast	MOMLS.com	NJAR.com

2. Prominent Print Advertisement

   To maximize your home's local exposure, these are just some of the print sources your home may be advertised in:

New Jersey Lifestyles	HomeSource	Homes & Land
Asbury Park Press	The Independent	Home Shopper

3. Direct to Agent Marketing

   Agents sell homes. My ongoing email campaign, directed to agents who have buyers looking for property like yours, keeps your home fresh in the minds of local agents who can bring qualified buyers to your house.

To give your property the market exposure it needs and to receive a **FREE Comparative Market Analysis** of your home contact **Kirstin Kestner at 732-221-6267** today.

If your home is currently on the market, please disregard.