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PRE-LISTING FIXES

That Quietly Add Thousands

Before Your Home Even Hits the Market
That Some Agents Don't Even Know



KATHYSCHOBER
REALTOR®

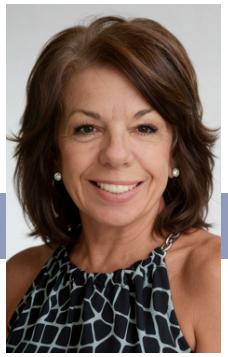
FREE Real Estate Prep Guide:

The Hidden Seller Checklist

Most Homeowners Skip Before Listing...
Then Regret

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Nice to Meet You!



I've Got A Boatload Of Information To Share With You!

Hi, I'm Kathy and having been in the real estate business since 1990 and spending 12 years in mortgage lending, I've been helping people just like you orchestrate one of life's largest financial transactions – the sale or purchase of a home. All through the years I've learned one important element that comes up again and again and that's what divides the average "Joe Homeowner" home sale from the exceptional one: *Preparation*.

Call it perceived value or level of excellence (or lack thereof!), but a lot of homeowners rush into selling without realizing that a few smart improvements, better planning and strategic preparation can make a significant difference in buyer interest, negotiating power, and ultimately, the amount of money they walk away with. Whether you're planning to sell privately or hire a real estate professional, my mission is to help you prepare before you ever hit the market so that you show outshines the rest.

Consider this reach out a virtual coach, if you will. Since you don't do this every day, you could need some guidance so you take the right direction in your preparation. I truly believe that with proper guidance, you can position yourself better so that you protect possibly one of your largest investments.

For these reasons, I created an entire resource center, and it's my collection of easy-to-follow guides, checklists, how-to's, suggestions that are designed to help you prepare smarter for maximum profits, all created from decades of real-world experience.

Whether you use one guide or the entire system, my hope is that these resources give you the knowledge, confidence, and organization to achieve your best possible outcome.

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Kathy

Prepare Smarter. Sell Better. Profit More.

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Before You Do Anything

Step 1: Walk Through Your Home Like A Buyer

Step 2: Declutter Everything

Step 3: Deep Clean The Entire Home

Step 4: Handle All Repairs

Step 5: Improve Curb Appeal

Step 6: Neutralize the Home

Step 7: Address Odors

Step 8: Maximize Lighting

Step 9: Prepare for Photos

Step 10: Organize Important Documents

Step 11: Prepare Emotionally for Showings

Step 12: Create a "Showing Ready" Plan

Conclusion: Final Pre-Listing Tips

INTRODUCTION

Before You Do Anything

Clarify Your Timeline and Goals

Before you begin cleaning, repairing, or preparing your home for sale, it's important to take a step back and evaluate your overall situation.



Many sellers jump immediately into projects without first determining their timeline, financial goals, or next steps. This can create unnecessary stress, rushed decisions, and emotional overwhelm later in the process. A simple plan from the beginning can help everything feel far more manageable.

Start by identifying your ideal moving date. Even if the date is flexible, having a target gives you direction. Are you hoping to move before school starts? Before retirement? Before purchasing another home? Your timeline influences nearly every decision you'll make moving forward, including pricing strategy, repairs, staging, and how aggressively you may need to market your property.

Next, think honestly about your financial goals. Determine how much equity you hope to walk away with after closing costs, repairs, and moving expenses. This helps you decide which improvements are worth making and which projects may not provide enough return.

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Sellers often overspend preparing a home for sale because they assume every upgrade adds value. In reality, buyers are usually looking for cleanliness, maintenance, and overall presentation more than luxury renovations.

You should also consider whether you'll need to purchase another home before selling your current one. If so, timing becomes even more important. Some sellers may need temporary housing, extended closing dates, or flexibility during negotiations.

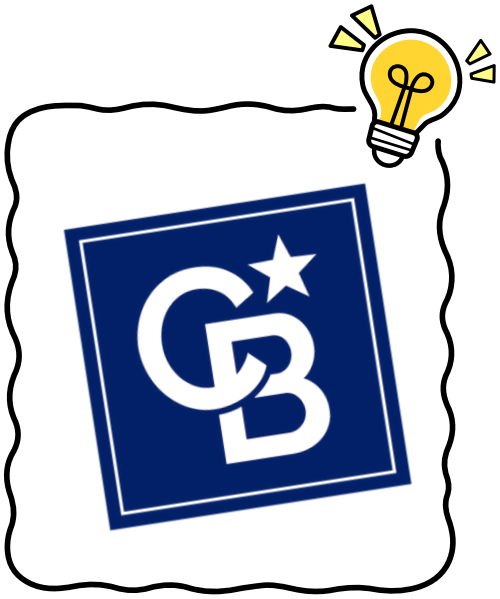
Thinking through these scenarios early reduces panic when offers begin arriving.

Finally, be realistic about how quickly you need the home to sell. A seller with no urgency has different options than someone relocating for work or managing financial pressure. Knowing your priorities ahead of time allows you to approach the process with greater clarity and confidence. The more prepared you are mentally and financially before listing, the smoother the experience often becomes.

TAKEAWAY

Get a physical notepad and/or folder that is dedicated to this project so that all family members who will partake will always be on the same page of your progress.





Clarity first—decisions about timing and money will always guide your preparation more effectively than emotional reactions later.

STEP 1

Walk Through Your Home Like A Buyer

View Your Home Objectively
One of the hardest parts of selling a home is learning to view it through a buyer's eyes instead of your own. As homeowners, we naturally become emotionally attached to our space. We stop noticing small flaws, unfinished projects, cluttered areas, and even odors because we see the home every day.



Buyers, however, ***notice everything*** – almost immediately.

Before making any updates, slowly walk through your home as if you were seeing it for the very first time.

Start outside at the curb and enter through the front door just like a buyer would. Pay attention to your first impression. Does the home feel welcoming? Bright? Clean? Calm? Or does it feel crowded, dark, outdated, or neglected?

First impressions form quickly, and buyers often begin emotionally deciding how they feel about a property within moments of entering.

As you move through each room, look carefully at the condition of walls, flooring, lighting, furniture placement, and overall cleanliness. Ask yourself whether the space feels open and functional.

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Buyers are constantly evaluating whether a home feels larger, brighter, and more maintained than competing properties. Even small distractions like:

- outdated or worn furniture
- excessive décor
- worn paint
- trendy room overloads
- cluttered counters

can prevent them from emotionally connecting to the home.

Buyers will also notice:

- Cleanliness - is every room deep cleaned, from the fans to the baseboards?

- Lighting - Is there sufficient lights in each room to fully illuminate the space? Are all the lighting bulbs the same hue? Are any bulbs burned out?

- Smells - be very careful here: any offensive smells from dogs, smoking, cooking smells, mildew, fragrances could negatively affect a buyer's experience almost instantly and be a deal breaker. Ask a trusted person who doesn't reside in your home to be completely honest and give feedback. Odors are one of the biggest issues sellers overlook because they become accustomed to them over time.

- Maintenance - If small things are not in good repair, buyers will think there are other, hidden items that too are not fixed.

- Space - Does the space "flow"? Are there excess pieces of furniture that could be placed in a different configuration to give a different feel to the home?

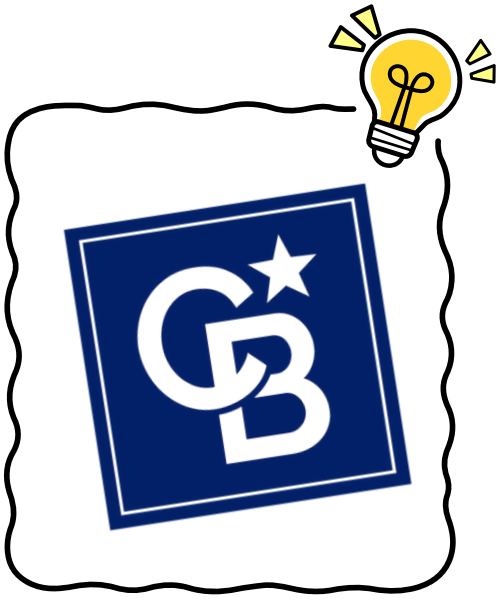
- More than expensive upgrades - Since buyers are comparing your home to others, are some of your finishes of an upper scale quality?

TAKEAWAY

Remember that buyers are not simply purchasing square footage — they are purchasing a feeling.

A clean, cared-for, welcoming home creates emotional comfort. That emotional comfort often translates into stronger offers and faster decisions.





Walk your home like a stranger, not an owner—your ability to detach emotionally will directly improve your pricing and presentation decisions.

STEP 2

Declutter Everything

Remove Excess Items Room by Room

Decluttering is one of the most important steps in preparing a home for sale because it directly affects how spacious the property feels.

Buyers will be trying to imagine themselves living in the home, and excessive belongings make that much more difficult. Even large homes can feel cramped when filled with too much furniture, décor, paperwork, storage bins, or personal items.

The goal of decluttering is not to erase your personality completely. Instead, the goal is to simplify the space so buyers can focus on the home itself rather than the belongings inside it.

Rooms should feel open, breathable, organized, and easy to navigate. Buyers emotionally respond to homes that feel calm and manageable.

Start by working room by room

Remove excess furniture that interrupts walking space or makes rooms feel smaller. Clear countertops in kitchens and bathrooms as much as possible.

Pack away seasonal decorations, stacks of paperwork, extra appliances, toys, visible pet items, and bulky storage containers. Simplifying surfaces immediately creates a cleaner and more updated appearance.



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A Good Closet Rule

Closets deserve special attention because buyers almost always open them. Overstuffed closets signal lack of storage space, even if the home actually has plenty of storage available. Ideally, closets should appear 50-60% full. This creates the impression of organization and abundance rather than overcrowding.

They should be well lit, organized, have shelving, and provide the buyer with the knowledge that they will have ample places to store their own items.

Overstuffed closets signal:

- lack of storage
- disorganization
- cramped living space



Family Photos

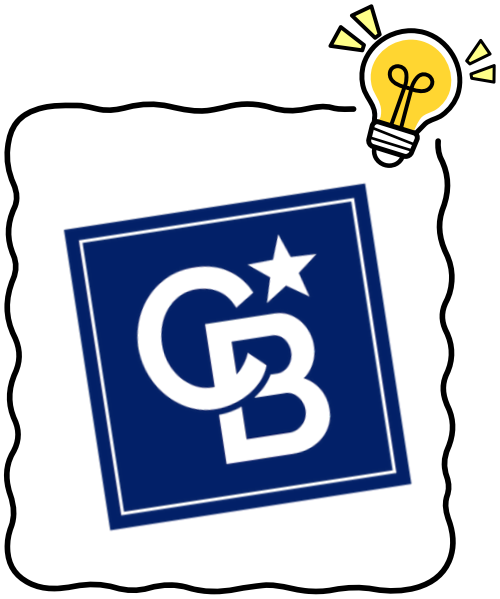
Family photos and highly personal items should also be minimized. Buyers need to emotionally picture their own lives unfolding in the home. Neutralizing some personal elements allows them to connect more easily to the space.



TAKEAWAY

If you are unsure whether something should stay or go, it is usually safer to remove it temporarily until the home sells.





When in doubt, pack it out—less “stuff” instantly makes your home feel larger, newer, and more valuable.

STEP 3

Deep Clean The Entire Home

Buyers Notice Cleanliness Immediately

Cleanliness strongly influences how buyers perceive the condition of a home. Even if a property is structurally sound and beautifully updated, dirt, dust, stains, and odors can create the impression that the home has not been properly maintained.

Buyers Often Associate Cleanliness with Overall Care

Focus first on the areas buyers notice most quickly: kitchens, bathrooms, flooring, and windows. These spaces tend to leave the strongest emotional impression.

Kitchens should feel fresh and organized, while bathrooms should feel bright, sanitary, and spotless. Dirty grout, stained sinks, soap buildup, or dusty corners can become major distractions during showings.

Pay Attention to Smaller Details Many Sellers Overlook

Baseboards, ceiling fans, light fixtures, vents, mirrors, and window tracks collect dust over time and subtly affect the overall appearance of the home. Clean windows also allow more natural light into the property, making rooms feel larger and more inviting.



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Flooring is Another Major Factor

Vacuum carpets thoroughly, mop hard floors, and address noticeable stains whenever possible.

Pet hair and odors deserve special attention because buyers who do not own pets often notice these issues immediately. If odors have built up over time, deep cleaning carpets and upholstery may be necessary.

A deeply cleaned home creates emotional reassurance. Buyers feel more comfortable purchasing a property that appears well cared for because it reduces fear about hidden maintenance problems.

TAKEAWAY

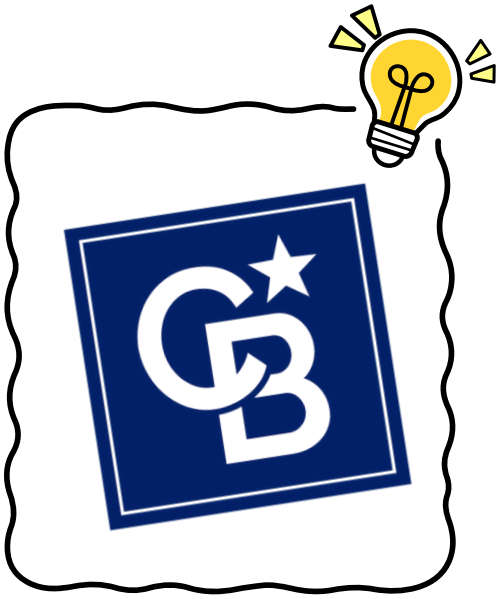
Cleanliness may seem simple, but it can dramatically influence how buyers emotionally respond to your home.











Clean for the camera, not just for yourself—buyers will notice details you've stopped seeing long ago.

STEP 4

Handle All Repairs

Fix Small Problems Before Buyers See Them

Small maintenance issues may seem insignificant to homeowners, but buyers often interpret them very differently. A dripping faucet or squeaky door may appear minor, yet buyers can subconsciously wonder what larger issues may have been ignored over the years. Deferred maintenance creates doubt, and doubt weakens buyer confidence.

Walk through the home carefully and create a list of visible repairs. Focus on simple fixes that are inexpensive but highly noticeable. Replace burned-out light bulbs, tighten loose cabinet handles, repair dripping faucets, fix running toilets, patch chipped paint, replace cracked outlet covers, and repair damaged screens or door hardware.

These repairs matter because buyers mentally add up problems as they tour the property. Even a collection of small unfinished items can make the home feel neglected. Buyers often overestimate repair costs emotionally, especially when they are already stretching financially to purchase a home.



Pre-Listing Fixes That Quietly Adds Thousands



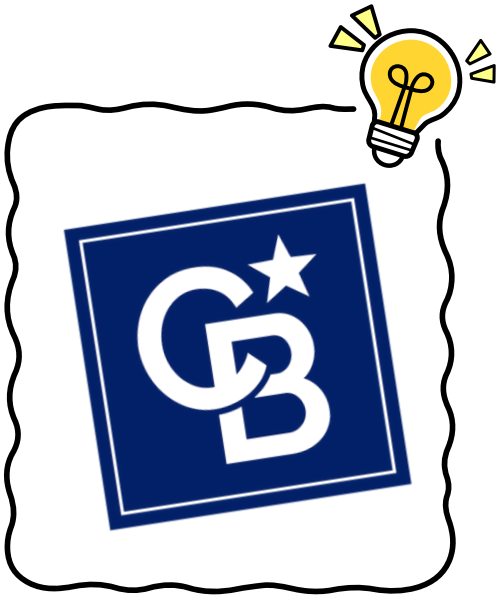
Addressing minor repairs before listing can also help reduce negative feedback during inspections and showings.

A home that feels maintained tends to generate stronger emotional trust. Buyers want reassurance that the property has been cared for consistently over time.

TAKEAWAY

You do not necessarily need to complete expensive renovations to impress buyers. In many cases, simply handling obvious maintenance items creates a cleaner, more move-in-ready appearance that helps the home compete more effectively against similar properties on the market.





Get a pre-listing inspection by a licensend, bonded home inspector. By providing this information up front will give any buyer peace of mind that your property is represented as you state.

This is a Key Feature to succeeding in your transaction.

STEP 5

Improve Curb Appeal





Exterior First Impressions Matter

The exterior of your home creates the buyer's very first emotional impression. Before they ever step inside, buyers begin forming opinions based on what they see from the street.

If the exterior feels neglected, cluttered, or poorly maintained, buyers may enter the home already feeling hesitant.

Fortunately, curb appeal improvements are often some of the simplest and most affordable updates you can make. Start with basic maintenance such as mowing the lawn, trimming landscaping, edging sidewalks, removing weeds, and refreshing mulch beds. These small tasks instantly create a more polished appearance.

Pressure washing can also make a dramatic difference. Dirty driveways, sidewalks, siding, fences, and entryways collect grime slowly over time, making the property appear older than it actually is. A freshly cleaned exterior immediately feels brighter and more cared for.

Pre-Listing Fixes That Quietly Adds Thousands

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Pay special attention to the front entrance because buyers naturally focus there first. A clean front door, updated hardware, a fresh welcome mat, and simple landscaping can create warmth and emotional appeal before buyers even enter the property.

Remove dead plants, old furniture, excess decorations, and visible clutter that may distract from the home itself.

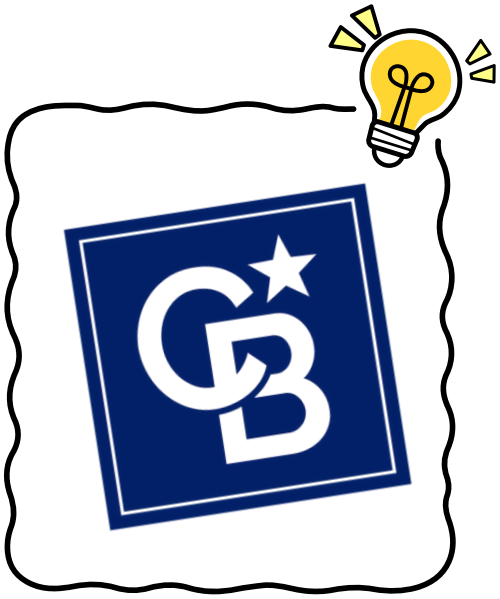
TAKEAWAY

Curb appeal is important because it creates anticipation. When buyers feel emotionally excited before walking through the front door, they often enter the home with a more positive mindset overall.

Small exterior improvements can significantly influence how buyers experience the home overalll.



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Curb appeal isn't decoration—it's the emotional handshake your home gives before anyone walks inside.

STEP 6

Neutralize the Home

Help Buyers Picture Themselves Living There

Every homeowner develops personal design preferences over time, but strong personal style can sometimes make it harder for buyers to emotionally connect with a home. Buyers need space to imagine their own furniture, routines, and lifestyle unfolding inside the property.

Neutralizing the home does not mean removing all warmth or personality. Instead, it means softening overly bold or distracting elements that may appeal only to a smaller group of buyers.

Neutral spaces generally feel calmer, cleaner, and more universally inviting.

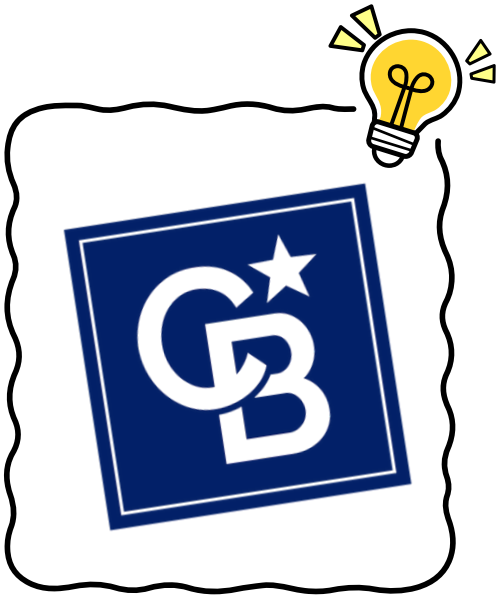
Start with Simple Adjustments

Consider using neutral bedding, lighter décor, simplified wall art, and minimal accessories. Bold collections, highly personalized themes, or bright accent colors can unintentionally distract buyers from the actual features of the home.

The goal is to create emotional flexibility. Buyers should walk into the home and easily envision themselves living there. The more mentally effortless that process feels, the stronger their emotional connection often becomes.

Remember that buyers are comparing your home to many others online and in person. A calm, welcoming, neutral presentation tends to photograph better, show better, and appeal to a wider audience overall.





Neutral spaces don’t erase personality—they expand a buyer’s imagination of living there.

STEP 7

Address Odors



Smell Matters More Than Sellers Realize

Smell is one of the most powerful emotional triggers during a home showing. Buyers may forget certain details about a property, but they almost always remember how the home smelled. Unfortunately, homeowners often become completely accustomed to odors over time and no longer notice them.

Common problem odors include pets, smoke, mildew, cooking odors, strong cleaning products, and heavy perfumes. Even pleasant scents can become overwhelming if they appear too strong or artificial. Buyers may worry that overpowering fragrances are being used to hide deeper problems.

Instead of masking odors, focus on eliminating the source whenever possible. Wash pet bedding, deep clean carpets, open windows regularly, clean garbage areas thoroughly, and address moisture or mildew issues promptly.

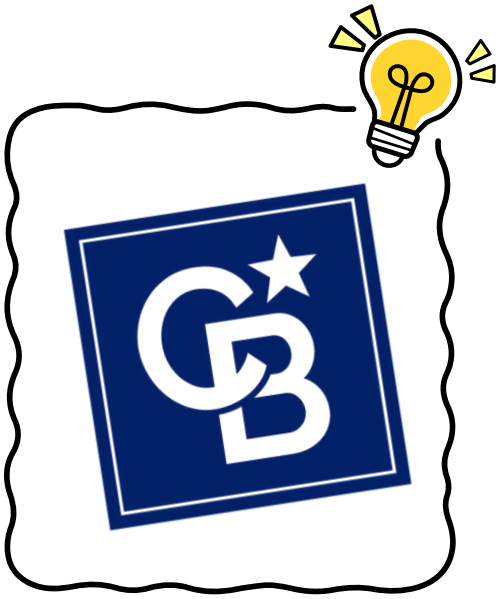
Air filters and HVAC maintenance can also help improve overall air quality.

If you are unsure whether odors exist, ask someone outside your household to give honest feedback before listing the property. A simple correction ahead of time can dramatically improve the buyer experience during showings.

TAKEAWAY

Fresh, clean air creates a calming emotional response for buyers.

Homes that smell neutral and clean tend to feel more maintained overall. Buyers subconsciously associate fresh-smelling homes with cleanliness and good upkeep.



If you can smell it, buyers will remember it—fresh air always outperforms heavy fragrance.

STEP 8

Maximize Lighting



Bright Homes Feel More Inviting

Lighting strongly affects how buyers emotionally experience a home. Bright spaces generally feel larger, cleaner, warmer, and more welcoming, while dark spaces often feel smaller, outdated, or closed off.

Maximizing light is one of the easiest ways to improve the atmosphere of your property.

Natural light is Especially Valuable

Before showings or photos, open blinds and curtains fully to allow as much sunlight inside as possible.

Clean windows thoroughly as dirt and film reduce brightness significantly more than many sellers realize.

Replace Dim or Mismatched Light Bulbs Throughout

Consistent lighting helps spaces feel cohesive and intentional. Turn on lamps in all rooms for showings, especially in darker corners and consider adding temporary lighting where needed to brighten shadowed areas.

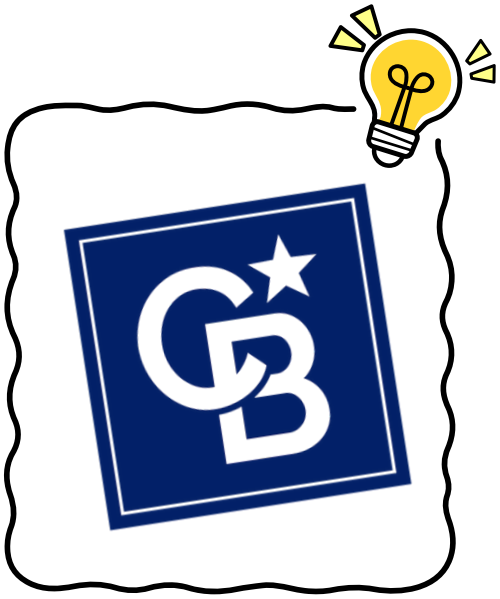
Pay attention to rooms that naturally feel darker, such as hallways, bathrooms, or smaller bedrooms. Simple lighting adjustments can dramatically improve how these spaces feel emotionally during a showing.

TAKEAWAY

Simple lighting adjustments can dramatically improve how these spaces feel emotionally during a showing.

Light the way....





Light doesn't just brighten a room—it increases perceived space, value, and emotional comfort instantly.

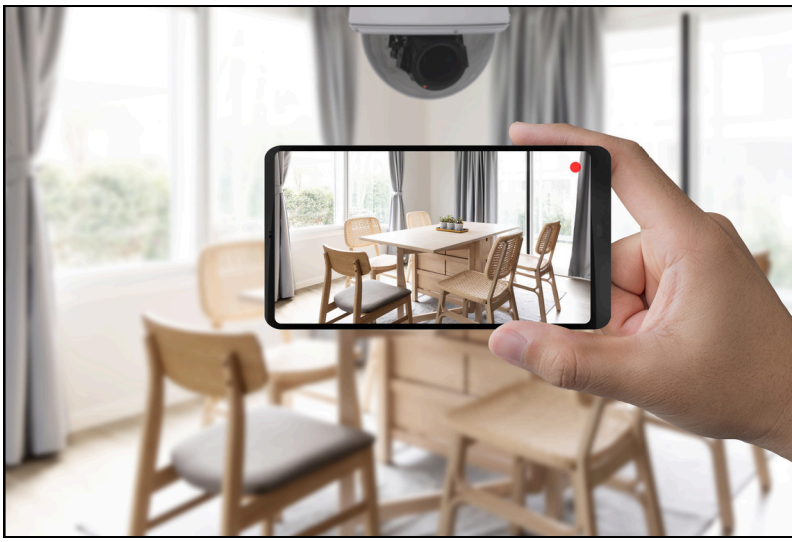
STEP 9

Prepare for Photos

Photos Are Your First Showing
In today's market, buyers usually see your home online before they ever schedule a showing. This means your listing photos create the first opportunity to attract attention, generate excitement, and encourage buyers to take the next step. Strong photos can dramatically increase interest in a property.

Before photo day, simplify every visible surface throughout the home. Remove trash cans, cords, countertop clutter, pet bowls, paperwork, refrigerator magnets, and unnecessary decorations. The camera tends to magnify clutter far more than homeowners expect.

Bathrooms should appear fresh, clean, and hotel-like. Remove toiletries, close toilet lids, hang clean towels, and clear countertops completely whenever possible.



Kitchens should feel open and simplified with clear sinks and minimal countertop items.

Pay Close Attention to Furniture Placement and Overall Symmetry
Straighten chairs, fluff pillows, smooth bedding, and align décor neatly. Buyers respond positively to spaces that feel calm, balanced, and organized in photographs.

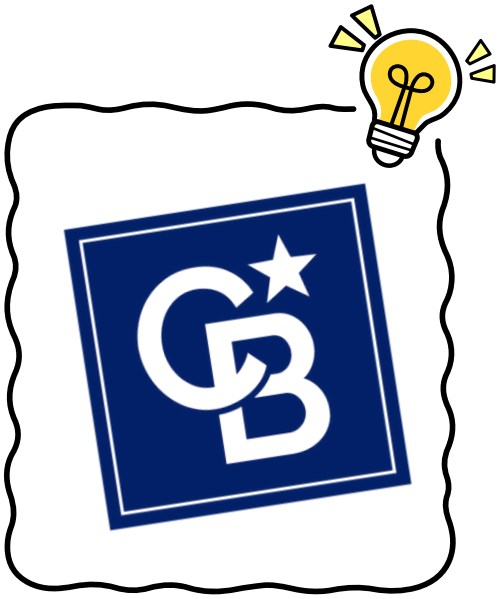
The purpose of listing photos is not to document every detail of the home perfectly. The purpose is to create emotional curiosity that motivates buyers to schedule a showing.

TAKEAWAY

Clean, bright, spacious-looking photos generate stronger online engagement and better first impressions.



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Online photos are your first showing —decluttering for the camera can double your initial buyer interest.

STEP 10

Organize Important Documents



Gather Helpful Home Information

Preparing important paperwork ahead of time can make the selling process feel far less stressful once buyers begin asking questions. Organized sellers appear more prepared, transparent, and trustworthy throughout negotiations.

Create a simple folder containing important information about the home. Include utility information, appliance warranties, repair receipts, renovation details, HOA documents, roof age, HVAC information, and any recent upgrades or maintenance records available.

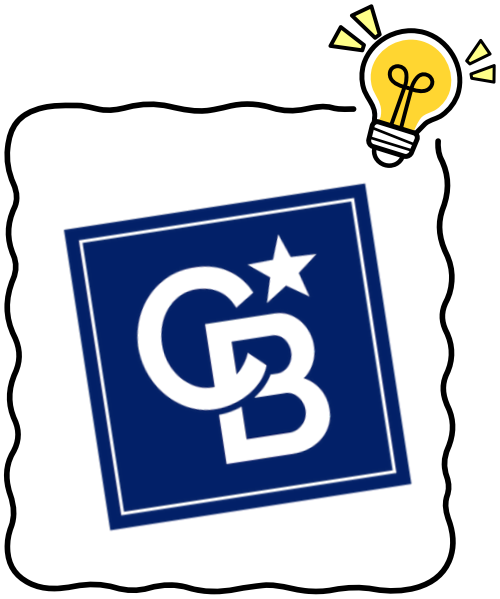
Buyers often feel more confident purchasing a home when they can clearly see that systems and repairs have been documented over time. Organized paperwork also helps reduce delays during inspections, negotiations, and closing.

This step becomes especially important if your home has received recent improvements or major repairs. Documentation helps support the value of those updates and reassures buyers that work was completed responsibly.

Even if buyers never review every document, your preparedness creates emotional confidence during the transaction.

TAKEAWAY

A smooth, organized process tends to reduce stress for everyone involved.



An organized seller signals a low-risk purchase, which quietly increases buyer confidence and offers.

STEP 11

Prepare Emotionally For Showings

Showings Can Feel Personal
Selling a home can feel emotional because buyers are evaluating a space filled with your memories, routines, and personal life. It is completely normal to feel vulnerable during showings and feedback discussions.

Buyers may comment on paint colors, finishes, flooring, furniture placement, or layout choices. They may open closets, inspect storage spaces, and point out flaws during conversations.

While this can feel uncomfortable, it is important to remember that buyers are evaluating a financial purchase — not judging you personally.

One of the healthiest ways to approach showings is to begin emotionally separating yourself from the property early in the process. The home is transitioning from being your personal space into a marketable product designed to appeal to buyers.

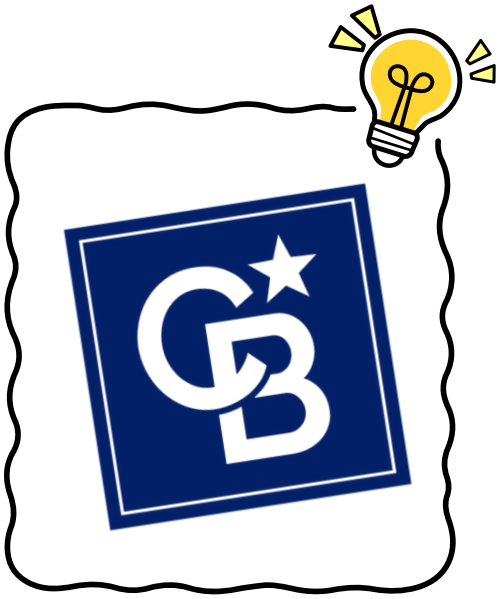
Try to remain flexible and calm when feedback arrives. Even critical comments can provide useful insight that helps improve your presentation or pricing strategy. Emotional reactions often create unnecessary stress during negotiations.

The more emotionally prepared you are before listing, the smoother the process tends to feel overall.

TAKEAWAY

Maintaining perspective allows you to make clearer decisions and navigate the selling experience with greater confidence.





Buyers are evaluating the house, not the homeowner—detachment creates emotional protection during negotiations.

STEP 12

Create a “Showing Ready” Plan

Showings Often Happen With Short Notice

Once your home is officially offered on the market for sale, showings may happen quickly and sometimes with very little notice. Without a plan in place, these moments can feel chaotic and stressful, especially if you have children, pets, or a busy schedule.

Prepare a simple routine ahead of time so you can present the property in its best condition whenever a showing is requested.

Decide where pets will go, how valuables will be secured, and what quick cleaning tasks should be completed before leaving.

Keep basic cleaning supplies easily accessible for fast touch-ups. Wipe counters, straighten pillows, empty trash, turn on lights, and do a quick visual scan beforehand. Having a repeatable system makes the process feel far less overwhelming.

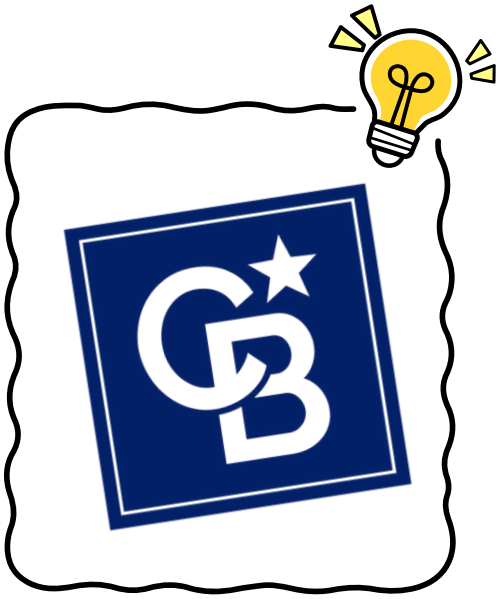
You may also want to prepare a small basket or bin where everyday items can be quickly stored during showings. This prevents last-minute scrambling when buyers are on the way.

A prepared routine reduces panic, frustration, and emotional exhaustion during the marketing period.

TAKEAWAY

The easier you make the showing process for yourself, the more manageable the entire experience becomes.





A simple exit plan removes chaos and keeps showings calm, even when they happen at a moment's notice.

CONCLUSION

Final Pre-Listing Tips

Your home does not need to be perfect to attract buyers but the closer you are to “perfection”, the more likely you are to get better offers.

Remember, buyers are searching for a home that feels cared for, clean, welcoming and move-in ready. Thoughtful preparation often matters far more than expensive renovations.

Small improvements made consistently throughout the home can dramatically change how buyers emotionally respond to the property. Cleanliness, organization, lighting, maintenance, and presentation work together to create confidence.

YRemember that selling a home is both a practical and emotional process. Preparation helps reduce stress, improve buyer perception, and position your home more competitively within the market.

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is helping buyers walk into your home and feel comfortable saying:

“This feels like the one.”

