



## The pre-listing seller checklist every agent should use

Help homesellers mentally and physically prepare to go on the market

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Preparing a home for sale requires both physical and psychological effort on the part of sellers. While the physical work is the most tiring, sellers can see progress and know that, even if they don't sell, they'll enjoy the benefits of their hard work.

But once your clients decide to sell and select you to list their property, they need to make a huge psychological shift — from homeowner to *homeseller*.

Fortunately, providing sellers one or more of the checklists listed below can assist both you and your clients in getting the home — and themselves — ready to sell.

**1. Outline the listing process, *and* define who their most likely buyer will be**

happens will freak them out.

So provide them a sample listing agreement along with an outline of each step you (and they) will take from the time you first agree to list the property through the moment the property actually goes on the market.

This document will include events like: continuous updating of existing valuations provided in [pre-listing appointments](#), agreeing on a [target list price](#), signing the listing agreement, a list of upgrades (provided by them) and filling out disclosures, [getting the property in top condition](#) and having it cleaned and ready for staging and photography as well as the timing of initial broker tours and open houses.



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Make a description of their target buyer the very last item on this list. Summarize what “their buyer” looks for in a home. And keep reminding sellers of their buyer’s wish list as the process progresses.

## 2. Have the [conversation about staging and photography](#)

Some agents stage every listing. Some stage only listings they believe may be harder to sell. Some stage listings only above a set price point. Some don’t stage at all.

By the same token, some agents [hire professional photographers](#); some use their own [pro-level cameras](#). A few use fuzzy, poorly lit photos hastily shot on their phones. (Don’t [be that agent!](#))

Let’s assume you’re among the agents who decide this client’s property needs to be staged to get the price they want and that professional photography will be required.

Let them know at what point in the process these things take place, and offer the resources they need to get to this point. Explain the difference between decorating and staging.

Tell them how important it is to stage for appeal to the target buyer. And leave behind a fact sheet [outlining these advantages](#) along with [statistics about staging’s positive impact](#) on price and time on the market.

## 3. Determine what changes are needed to make their property appeal to the target buyer

A careful walk-through of the exterior and interior — with the sellers beside you — will allow you to find out when the exterior was last painted, if the condition of the yard and house needs to be

— from fastest to slowest — is apt to be required between walk-through and the on-market date. You can also discuss the need to [declutter and depersonalize](#) the space so the target buyer can envision themselves living in the house. However, remind them that, once the property is in contract, the buyers' title company representative will be asking questions about their loans and payoff amounts.

So, they should keep whatever paperwork they might need to supply that information somewhere that's easily accessible.

**A word of caution:** Having the stager along for the walk-through can be very helpful to the agent, but it may antagonize sellers who don't understand or fully accept staging in the first place.

If at all possible, between your walk-through with the sellers and when you finalize a list of repairs/updates, walk through again with the stager — without the sellers present. The stager may have specific suggestions to add to your overview about condition, repairs and/or things to pack before the listing goes on the market.

The results of the original walk-through (and follow-up viewing with the stager) will allow you to provide a confirming email to the sellers with a checklist of tasks that need to be completed before the listing is finalized. Make it very detailed, right down to such items as “install new mailbox” and “buy new doormat.”

Coming to terms with this flood of what your clients will perceive as negative information is one of the hardest psychological moments for any seller.

At this point, you're “invading their home” and “criticizing their taste.” But it's imperative that sellers understand today's buyers pay top dollar only for homes that are flawless.

Getting there requires superb attention to detail. And your consistent focus on what their target buyer is likely to want will help them stop viewing the property as their home and start looking at it, instead, as a commodity you *all* want to sell.

## 4. Provide sellers a cleaning checklist

Every buyer likes different things, but *all* buyers hate the same things — houses that are sticky, dirty, cluttered, foul-smelling, messy, dark and dingy. Buyers take one look and practically bolt from homes like that.

Consequently, every seasoned [listing agent](#) has probably developed a cleaning list. If you haven't, google “cleaning a house to sell,” and you can take your pick of existing lists or glean the information to create your own.

Provide that cleaning checklist to your sellers, and suggest they hand it to professional cleaners to create a spic-and-span blank canvas for the stager and photographer/videographer to work their

You likely aren't going to want your sellers to be in the house for the events below, so let them know the expectation upfront.

- When the stager is there (timeframe TBD by stager)
- When the photographer is there
- When the broker caravan is scheduled
- When open houses are scheduled
- When showing appointments are set
- When inspections/appraisals are scheduled (if you prefer they be gone)

**Pro tip:** Make sure they understand they must take any pets every time they go.

## **6. Promise (and deliver) a contractual timeline when the property goes into contract**

You can also promise a list of resources (movers, utility contact information, etc.) to aid their exit. You promise these things solely to telegraph your expectation that their home will sell promptly and at a price they'll like. And that helps them keep their eyes on the prize!

Use this checklist to get your sellers ready to sell and move on to their next house. They'll appreciate the forethought and ease of getting ready to sell and tell all their friends and family, which means referrals for you.

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