

# Preparation Tips for Successful Home Photography

## **A LITTLE BIT OF PREPARATION GOES A LONG WAY**

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Your agent has wisely decided to hire a professional photographer to help your listing stand out in the crowd. Now what? Preview a model home and notice they have staged each area with "minimizing" in mind. You need to think the same and "minimize."

Many of these suggestions are not just for the photographs but to showcase your home.

We understand you are not living in a model. There are areas in your home that can be addressed to make your house shine. Hopefully the following information will provide general guidelines to maximize results. These guidelines are helpful not just for the photographer but also for the actual showings when the time comes. Addressing these suggestions will help insure the photos will highlight your property. Having great photos will likely increase traffic to your home and possibility command a higher price and a faster sale.

## **BEFORE THE PHOTOGRAPHER ARRIVES**

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### **BE PREPARED**

If your photographer arrives and sees the home has not been prepared for the photo shoot, you might be charged a cancellation fee. Or, the photographer might move forward with the photo shoot but results will be unprofessional and the photos will not enhance your listing. You should spend the time needed to be prepared so the photographer has something to work with. Prepare your home before the photographer arrives. The photographer has been hired to take photographs, not to vacuum, move furniture, clear off counters. The more you prepare, the better the photographs will look on the web and flyers. If the house is cluttered and a mess, buyers are more likely pass it by.

### **STAGING**

If you can afford it, consider hiring a professional stager. By rearranging furniture, changing or removing decor, a stager can make rooms look larger and more open. Your agent can probably suggest a professional stager. There will be a drastic difference for the photos and showing appeal utilizing a stager. This is not the time to get your feelings hurt. Yes, you are now a partner in the business of selling a house.

The first impression viewing your home will likely be the front exterior. This will make a difference in the prospective buyer wanting to seek more information or moving on to the next property. Curb appeal matters! Go across the street or stand at the curb and see what a prospective buyer is seeing.

#### **EXTERIOR:**

- Pick up any items lying around the yard, trash, tools, toys, empty pots including the ones with dead plants.
- Move cars out of the driveway and away from the front of the house.
- Trim and shape the bushes, trees and shrubs.
- Mow the lawn and edge the sidewalks and driveway.
- Pull the weeds.
- Roll up the garden hose and preferably place out of the site.
- Rake up the leaves.
- Refresh the mulch and or pine straw.
- Sweep the drive, porch and sidewalks and remove cobwebs from the porch and porch lights.
- Wipe down any outdoor furniture

#### **INTERIOR:**

When a buyer walks into your house, first and lasting impressions will be created. Be mindful of this when arranging your furniture. This is the time to create a positive impression when they are standing in the doorway or foyer. If there is a dining room or living room to the left, they will likely spend more time viewing the room from the side where the door is located.

From a real estate photographer's standpoint, he or she will take photos from the doorway area. People like to see how the natural light comes into the room.

Photographers will usually take photographs of the rooms at an angle. Those photographs will help highlight possible built-in features such as fireplaces or decorative pillars. Arrange furniture to compliment and highlight those features. Photographs at an angle are usually the way buyers will see the room first when they are actually there.

Follow these suggestions if you are not hiring a stager. Ask yourself, "If I were the person looking at this house, what would I do to change something or make it look better?"

#### **DEEP CLEAN:**

Some buyers will rush through a house and not pay a lot of attention. Some may take their time look closely and inspect everything. A quick wipe isn't enough to get rid of grime, and it is important that all areas are deep-cleaned. Windows, window sills, spider webs, it all matters.

#### **MINIMIZE:**

It is best to clear clutter out of every room, because a clean, open space is more appealing. Eliminate anything that is cluttering the room. When you finish, do more. This provides the impression of larger rooms.

- Minimize bookshelves, with photos, knickknacks, books, items on and around the fireplace. This includes numerous personal photographs adorning walls and furniture. Store them away until you move to your next place.

- Create a stylish, generic room the buyer can picture themselves living in. The buyer wants to imagine how their things will look in that space. They may not be able visualize their things with a lot of your personal items in that space. Eliminating and minimizing can increase the chances of selling your house.

#### LIGHTING:

- Open blinds and curtains, letting in as much light as possible. The photographer usually turns on lights as needed.
- Appliance lights such as those above the stove or built into a bookshelf and under cabinets are good accents.
- Replace burned out bulbs not just for the photographer but also for showings.
- Turn off the ceiling fans and televisions in all rooms.

#### LIVING ROOM:

If you have a formal living room, create a beautiful and comfortable space, where the buyer can imagine their family spending time there.

- The furniture should not look like it has been squeezed into the area. If it is, consider taking some away.
- A colorful coffee table book can be a simple decoration on the coffee table.
- No magazines, they often add to the clutter.
- If bookshelves are in the room, take out most of the books and arrange the remaining books in a nice pattern. Only keep the nice, hardback and colorful books on the shelf, and clear out the old books.

#### FAMILY ROOM:

Most people spend much of their time in the family room. There is usually a collection of various electronic items so:

- Try placing remotes, video game controllers, DVDs, or any other electronic items in a decorative basket.
- Try to hide the various cords out of sight.
- Clear out toys that may have been left in the room by the kids.

#### DINING ROOM:

- Make sure the dining table is dusted and chairs are arranged neatly around the table.
- You might consider adding a nice centerpiece such as bowl of fresh fruit, floral arrangement or a decorative runner.

#### KITCHEN:

- Clean off the counters. You want to show spacious counters so the fewer items you have on the counter the better, especially if you have limited counter space.
- Someone that likes to cook will open the oven and microwave so be sure those are clean.
- **For the photos**, if you have child-proof equipment that is visible on the outside of the cabinets or cupboards, it is better to remove them.

- Clear the school notices, crayon drawings, and magnets off of the refrigerator.
- Clear away dish racks, cutting boards, towels, dish-soap bottles, cleaning products, mops, brooms and garbage cans.
- Consider adding a little decoration with a nice bowl of fresh fruit or a vase of flowers.
- Replace damaged and discolored caulk or grout.

#### **BEDROOMS:**

- Hiding clothes, toys and items under beds can often be visible in real estate photos. Instead of trying to hide clothing and toys under the bed, move everything out of the room so the space is as open as possible.
- With teenager's bedrooms, there may be unique or unusual decorations to match their personality. Those decorations may need to be adjusted to make the space appear more generic and neutral. Remember, you want the buyer to imagine themselves as if they were in the room and not be distracted by items there.
- Look at pictures in magazines to see the way the beds are made. You want the bed to look beautiful and inviting. A nice bedspread, fluffy pillows arranged at the head of the bed.
- If anything is sitting on the nightstand, get rid of it! Common things that need to be moved include: tissue boxes, lip balm, water glasses, jewelry, or anything else that is kept at your bedside.

#### **BATHROOMS:**

In the bathroom, everything should be moved off the counter including:

- Makeup, razors, soap, toothbrushes, and beauty products.
- In the shower and tub, remove the shampoo, soaps, washcloths, and baby toys.
- Garbage cans, bathmats, laundry baskets, extra toilet paper, toilet brush, and scales should also be moved out of the room.
- Close the toilet lid and hang fresh towels.
- Do you need to do some caulking and deal with the mold?

#### **PETS:**

You love your pets but some people don't or have a fear or allergies to pets.

- Cages and pet toys should not be in the photos. If buyers see them in the photo they may pass on your listing. It is best to have them out of the way during the photo shoot.
- Don't let pets run around in the yard during the photo shoot.
- Indoor animals should be moved out of each room as it is being photographed.

*Courtesy of David Hape, Atlanta Realtor  
and Real Estate Photographer  
Revised by Randy Wilson Photography*