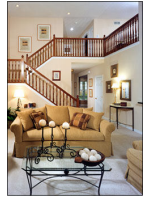


# Showing Your Property



There are not many people who will buy a home they haven't seen (although this did happen for one of my recent listings). Here are a few hints that will help you know what to expect when a prospective buyer comes to see your home:

## Have Your Home Ready...

It's a good idea to maintain your home in a constant state of readiness when it is on the market for sale. Try to keep things as clean and uncluttered as possible, so buyers may come to inspect your home at any time – even when you're not at home. Keep beds made and countertops empty (maybe this will be a start for some new good habits in your next home!) Readiness includes the exterior: Keep the yard well tended and make sure that access to the house is unfettered by nature, as in snow; or people, as in toys.

## Appointments...

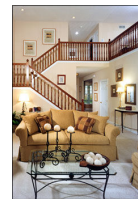
Agents will schedule an appointment before showing your home to their prospective buyers. Most agents plan their itinerary for showing property several hours, or even days, in advance. Consider yourself warned, however, that there might not be much notice between the time of the call and the knock on your door. It's not unusual for an agent to call for the appointment upon driving by your home with clients in the car – possibly en route from one house to another on their itinerary. When the client asks "What about that one?" the agent normally attempts to contact the homeowner, even though it means short notice. These situations sometimes turn into sales, so it's a good idea for you to be accommodating, if possible. My office employs Centralized Showing Services (CSS) to schedule appointments and obtain agent feedback, so don't be surprised to receive a call from them rather than my office.

## The Lockbox...

You have a life, and you can't be tied to your home from the moment you put it on the market until it's sold and settled. Your life-saver is a lockbox, a small device in which a key to the house is stored, often on or near the front door. Licensed and bonded agents affiliated with any member broker in the local Association of Realtors will have a key to access the lockbox so they can obtain a key to the property and gain entry. Most lockboxes are electronic and, therefore, provide an extra level of security by recording the identity of the person who accesses the lockbox, and the day and time of entry. There are some circumstances, however, when a mechanical lockbox is preferred even though no record is made of the user.

## Staging...

Many sales are made or lost by "staging" the property for sale, or failing to do so. It's very uninviting and unwelcoming to arrive for a scheduled appointment to a dark house. A negative impression is further entrenched by open food containers on the kitchen counter-top



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and dirty dishes in the sink, a vacuum cleaner in the middle of the living room, dirty laundry on the bathroom floor, and used condoms on the bedside table.

If you know a prospective buyer is coming for an appointment, start by opening the window coverings and turning on lamps in every room. Make a quick sweep of the house to remove clutter. Have potpourri or scented candles on hand to keep the house smelling fresh or, better yet, put some brownies or cookies in the oven. If you have a fireplace, consider burning a fire during viewings (season and time permitting). Turn on soft upbeat music. When I list your home for sale, I may have other suggestions for presenting your home to prospective buyers.

### **Should you stay or go?**

This is an age-old question for home sellers. There's a natural curiosity about seeing prospective homebuyers (beware of fair housing laws – if you never see the prospective buyer, you are not likely to make a selling decision based on the buyer's ethnicity, race, color, religion, sex, familial status or other protected class), and some homeowners doubt whether anyone else could possibly show off the special features of their home as well as they do.

The truth is that buyers may be uncomfortable when you are in the home because they can't imagine the home as their own. They will be more concerned about inconveniencing you than whether the home satisfies their wants and needs. You certainly don't want a prospective buyer to rush through your home without seriously considering it. For that reason, I recommend that home sellers request a showing window of no more than an hour, and encourage them to use that time for running errands.

Whenever possible, arrange for children and pets to stay with a friend or neighbor during showings. If that is not possible, please confine your pets and instruct children to play quietly or read while prospective buyers are in the house.

### **Follow-up...**

When a prospective buyer inspects your home, you want feedback and, as your agent, so do I. It may be hours or even days before we hear anything. If the buyer is interested in buying your home, most likely the agent will get in touch with us quickly – in other words, no news is probably not good news. One thing is certain: When I receive any feedback, good or bad, I will pass it on to you immediately.

Feedback can be very valuable, when we are fortunate enough to receive it. If the buyer says your home won't accommodate his king-size bed or baby-grand piano, you'll know that your home and this buyer are simply not a good match. If 3 out of 4 visitors mention that the



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house is dark, however, we know to add another lamp; if several people notice a cat odor, we know to deodorize it; if you repeatedly hear that the house needs too much work, we know that some work needs to be done by you to increase the salability of the house.

Showing your home can be nerve-racking, and I understand that. It's one of the reasons that I do everything possible to accomplish a quick sale, beginning with these home-showing hints. A quickly sold home means happy home sellers who have experienced minimum hassle and inconvenience – a goal that I take seriously for every client.

Showing Your Property  
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