

## Tips for Getting Your Home Buyer-Ready

When you decide to sell your house, the goal is to make it as attractive as possible to potential buyers. The most cost-efficient way to spruce up your home is to clean it thoroughly, advises The Soap and Detergent Association [www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)

### Getting Rid of Clutter

Many potential buyers may not see past dirt and clutter. If the house is crowded with the owner's "stuff," they will assume that the house is too small for their possessions. Too much clutter also poses a safety – *and buying* – hazard! A person who trips over items left on the stairs is unlikely to have a good feeling about the house. In addition, a clean, clutter-free environment is more attractive than a grimy, untidy one.

Begin by purging the house, including the basement, attic and garage, of items that are no longer needed. Things that are in good condition can be sold or donated to a charity. The remainder can be thrown in the trash. Rooms will appear more spacious, closets will look bigger and shelves will look roomier to potential buyers.

The Soap and Detergent Association recommends that clutter be kept under control on a daily basis. That way, if an unexpected buyer drops in, the house will be ready to show.

Clear off the kitchen and bathroom counter tops, sorting and storing non-essentials in boxes. Wipe all surfaces clean. Anything that will go back on the counter top should be wiped clean, too. In the kitchen, keep out only those appliances that are used every few days.

Don't let newspapers and mail pile up. Sort every day and discard what isn't needed. Place a few baskets in strategic locations around the house. When the real estate agent calls, the clutter that is an inevitable part of daily life can be quickly scooped up into the baskets and hidden away. And, get in the habit of making a nightly "sweep" just before bedtime.

### Time to Clean

Focus on the rooms that potential buyers are most interested in – living room, dining room, kitchen and bathroom. Look at each room as a potential buyer might and see what catches the eye first. Make that the starting point for the cleaning process. Then, follow the top-to-bottom, left-to-right rule for cleaning each room. That way, no surface is overlooked.

Give major attention to the kitchen and bathrooms. Check the labels on cleaning products to make sure they are appropriate for the surfaces to be cleaned. Abrasive cleansers provide extra cleaning power for hard-to-remove soils like food particles and

grease residue in sinks. However, they may be too harsh for surfaces that are easily scratched, such as laminate or solid surface counter tops. In general, liquid and gel cleansers are less abrasive than powders.

Spray cleaners are easy to use for small areas, such as counter tops, while powders or liquids mixed in a pail of water are more efficient for larger areas, such as walls and floors. Floors can become cloudy from cleaning solution residue, making them look dirty when they're actually clean. To prevent this, use a no-rinse product or rinse the floor well after each cleaning.

### *Combat Mold & Mildew*

Mold and mildew are especially problematic in bathrooms. With all the publicity concerning the illnesses that mold can cause, prospective home buyers are more sensitive than ever about its presence. Use liquid household bleach or cleaners with bleach to remove mildew stains from shower doors, shower curtains and grout between tiles.

Use a non-streaking cleaning product, such as a glass or glass and multi-surface cleaner, for shower doors and mirrors. A regular routine, including rinsing the tub after bathing, using a small squeegee on shower walls after each use, and drying faucets and handles to prevent water spots, will keep things clean.

### *Don't Forget to...*

Wash the windows, vacuum carpets and drapes and dust thoroughly. Use a dusting product so that the dust will be trapped and removed rather than dispersed in the air. Vacuum regularly, using long straight strokes.

If repainting is not in the budget, carefully clean surfaces to remove dust, grime and fingerprints. Painted surfaces are usually washable, but test the cleaning solution on an inconspicuous area first. Use a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner. To avoid streak marks when cleaning large vertical areas, start at the bottom and work up, overlapping areas and using a circular motion. Keeping on top of the cleaning chores will make your home look its best. And, once a buyer is found, it'll be easy to have the house "broom ready" for that final walk-through before closing day.

For more information on selling or buying a house contact Jean Webb, County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, 903/535-0885 or [j-webb@tamu.edu](mailto:j-webb@tamu.edu)