

DO

1. **Be realistic.** You may believe your house is the best on the block – and it might be – but perhaps not in everyone else’s eyes. All you can do is make your appealing to as many people as possible. Consider another opinion from an agent, appraiser, inspector, staging consultant – all of them.
2. **Consider a pre-listing inspection.** You can get a third party perspective and put buyers at ease if your home has already been inspected and issues have been take care of.
3. **Create a bright space.** Clean windows, inside and out. Paint dark walls a lighter color. Open drapes and shades for showings. More light gives the impression of more space.
4. **Clear the clutter.** Pick up and dispose of old newspapers, garbage and magazines. Keep children’s toys and games in one location of the home or yard.
5. **Clean everything.** From cobwebs and baseboards to carpets and basements.
6. **Remove excess wall décor.** This goes for the refrigerator door, too. It will look cleaner without a hundred magnets and photos. Put away family photos. Buyers have a hard time picturing their family in the home when they see yours at every turn.
7. **Update fixtures and features.** Old carpet, outdate light fixtures, busy wallpaper and ancient appliance are big turn-offs.
8. **Arrange furniture properly.** Your furnishings should fit and complement the room size, lighting and natural traffic pattern.
9. **Create curb appeal.** A well-maintained yard and entry make a great first impression. Trim bushes and trees. Add flowers and greenery. Remove ice and snow. Your entryway is where buyers stand while they wait for their agent to open the door.
10. **Eliminate pet evidence.** Take care of any pet smells or messes. Put the litter box in an inconspicuous place and clean it regularly. You should also remove dog waste or toys from your yard/walkways and repair lawn spots.
11. **Keep and organize paperwork.** Assemble a binder that contains inspection reports, property disclosures, appliance manuals and receipts for any work done. Anything that shows you have meticulously maintained, cleaned, and cared for your home greatly diminishes fears that something major could happen.
12. **Keep the temperature at a comfortable level.** This means cooling it in the summer and heating it in the winter. If a buyer is not comfortable visiting your home, it will be harder for them to imagine being comfortable living there.
13. **Understand your responsibilities.** Be aware of the terms of your agent contract, so you’ll understand what each party is responsible for.
14. **Start packing now.** If you don’t use it on a regular basis, pack it, sell it or dump it. Remember that buyers are looking for storage space, too.
15. **Respond respectfully to every offer.** Let the buyer know that eve if their offer isn’t up to par, you are serious about accepting a better one.

DON'T

1. **Insist on overpricing.** Pricing your home higher than what it is worth so you can lower it if it does not sell diminishes your opportunities. Your home can appear unattractive, flawed or “stale” after it has been on the market a long time.
2. **Refinance to beyond the price of your home.** Doing so will just make it more difficult for you to provide prospective buyers with a price that’s in line with similar properties in your neighborhood.
3. **Try to hide imperfections.** Sooner or later, they’ll come to light. It’s better to take care of any flaws you can *before* you list.
4. **Keep collectibles on display.** Put away your special collections or arrange them in a special spot. This presents your items as a unique collection, rather than just clutter, and creates a focal point in the room.
5. **Stay in your home for showings.** Buyers will be more comfortable looking at your home and sharing their thoughts if you are not present to overhear.
6. **Make you home unavailable.** Requiring 24 to 48 hours notice for a showing can greatly diminish your opportunity to find the right buyer. Your home needs to be ready when prospective buyers are.
7. **Talk about repairs instead of performing them.** Sellers have a hard time picturing completed repairs. Doing them now will not only paint a better picture for the buyer, but prevent you from having to reduce your selling price.
8. **Keep pets in the house for showings.** Even animal lovers can find it difficult to enjoy a home tour with an unfamiliar pet following them around.
9. **Light scented candles.** Some potential buyers may have allergies or be sensitive to strong smells. You’re better off getting rid of offensive smells rather than trying to cover them up. Instead of candles, try a softer “childhood” aroma like cinnamon rolls or chocolate chip cookies.
10. **Assume buyer will not snoop.** A home is the largest investment most consumers will ever make and they want to see it all. Make sure your cupboards, closets, appliances and storage spaces are in order and don’t contain anything you don’t want others to see.
11. **Wait to get Truth In Lending info.** Delaying this important step can delay the listing, sale and closing of your home.
12. **Enter into negotiations with unqualified buyers.** Request that all negotiations take place after buyers can demonstrate pre-approval for a mortgage adequate to purchase your home.
13. **Fall behind on your mortgage or utilities.** Extra fees can appear at your closing if you are not up to date on all payments.
14. **Try to do it all yourself.** The experience and expertise of a professional real estate agent can be invaluable and are well worth any commission you might pay.
15. **Leave it all to your agent.** Working with an associate is like marriage. Both parties need to share responsibilities or the partnership will never be successful.