

How to sell your house without a real estate agent.

Six Steps To Selling Your Own Home

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Six Steps To Selling Your Own Home

Version 3

By Real Estate Expert Stockton Ellsworth



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Introduction

This guide was written for those people who would like to sell their house on their own without the assistance of a real estate agent. You will become knowledgeable in the step-by-step process of selling your home, and will see there is no great mystery in doing it on your own. That doesn't mean you don't have to take the process seriously; indeed, you do. The payoff on the other side, though, is the savings of a real estate commission. And with the cost of housing these days, that savings can be considerable.

Throughout this guide, we will use the term "house". The process is identical for a house or townhouse, and is only slightly different for a condominium.

This guide is based on real estate sales in Delaware. If you don't live in Delaware, it's no problem. Although the laws will vary from state to state, the basic process is similar.

House Preparation

One of the most important things this guide can do is to give you, the seller, a sense of confidence. It will be very important that you show a level of knowledge and confidence to potential buyers. Remember, some buyers, especially first-time buyers, may be reluctant to purchase a house without the perceived safety net of a real estate agent.

Before you plunge the sign into the ground, it is important to prepare the house for sale.

Depending on the condition of your home and how much money you expect to get out of the house relative to the housing market, preparation could be anything from vacuuming the carpets to rehabbing the whole place. Most of the time, prep work will fall somewhere in between.

We've all heard the terms "curb appeal" and "first impressions". You want your house to look bright, clean and inviting when people drive up. Go outside, walk across the street and take a look at your house. Does it have curb appeal? Don't just rely on your own opinion. Ask others to look at the outside of your house. Maybe they'll see things you don't.

There are some simple things that can be done that will, at the very least, increase both curb appeal and your potential buyer's interest. It might even do that plus increase the market value of the house. First, clean the house, inside and out. The carpets should be clean. If they are stained, rent a steam carpet cleaner. If there are pet odors, work as much as possible to get them out. Smells are a huge turnoff for potential buyers. Don't let a bunch of dishes pile up by the sink; keep them washed. Get the clothes off the floor. This is basic stuff, but it's amazing how many people don't do any of it. If you keep a lot of family photos out on display, pack them away! Remember, you want your potential buyers to see the house, and not be distracted by your personal belongings.

Keep the lawn trimmed. If it's nice weather outside, plant some flowers. You don't have to go crazy, but a few flowers will add a nice, homey touch. If you don't want to plant flowers in the ground, get a couple of hanging flower baskets. They have the same effect of adding color to your yard. Organize your basement and garage. Just because these two areas are not part of the "living space" of your home, they should not be ignored. Potential buyers will want to be able to walk through basements and garages to see what they would be buying.

Let's say your house needs some work. Maybe the carpet is old, and the walls need paint. Perhaps the kitchen and bathrooms are 50 years old. So, how much money do you invest into the home, and at what point do you stop? If you ask 5 people, you'll probably get 5 different answers. Since we're writing this guide, we're going to give you our opinion. If the walls need paint and you can do the painting yourself, absolutely do it. Good paint is \$20 per gallon, and a fresh coat of paint makes a huge difference. Paint the walls a neutral color using flat latex paint. Off-white or antique white is fine. Navajo White is great. It's very neutral, and has just a touch of yellow in it to brighten up a room. Stick with flat or eggshell finishes. Ceilings should be painted flat ceiling white. Carpet replacement is really subjective. If you have carpet that's really bad and you paint the walls, it probably makes sense to do something with the carpet. If you have hardwood floors under the old carpet and they're in decent shape, just pull up the carpet. Even if you have carpet over hardwood, be sure to let people know in your advertising that there are hardwood floors under there. New carpet will show off the house nicely, but be careful of color. Stay neutral. Be careful of your spending with new carpet. Unless the carpets are very worn, you might be better off just cleaning them. We believe that unless you can do the work yourself, old kitchens and bathrooms are better left alone. It's difficult to get back the money you put into those rooms. Sometimes, it's easier to sell a house that needs a little work at a lower price. Also, keep in mind that when you have your kitchen and bathrooms renovated and increase the market price to cover the work, you are now putting your house into a different market. Ask yourself how your house will compare with other homes in the higher-priced market.

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