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Step Two:
Before you fix everything

A practical guide to getting your home market-ready



Clean. Repair. Edit. Update.



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Real Estate for Real Life

BecauseItsHuman.com

What Does "*Market-Ready*" Actually Mean?

Getting your home ready to sell does not mean making it perfect, brand new, or completely neutral.

It means making thoughtful choices that help buyers see the home clearly, feel confident in how it has been cared for, and understand the value that is already there.



CLEAN - HELP THE HOME FEEL WELL CARED FOR.

REPAIR - ADDRESS THE THINGS THAT CREATE QUESTIONS OR CONCERN.

EDIT - MAKE THE HOME EASIER TO SEE, UNDERSTAND, AND MOVE THROUGH.

UPDATE - MAKE SELECTIVE IMPROVEMENTS WHERE THE RETURN MAKES SENSE.



ONE HOME, ONE PLAN
Every home is different. Age, condition, price point, timing, neighborhood, and current competition can all affect what is worth doing before you list.
This guide gives you a framework. Our walkthrough turns it into a plan for your home.

**Think ahead: Projects affected by weather, contractor schedules, or lead times may need to move higher on the list.*

Clean. Repair. Edit. Update.

Four ways to think about preparing your home

Most pre-listing projects fall into one of four categories. Thinking about your home this way can help separate what actually matters from what simply feels like "something we should probably do."

CLEAN

HELP THE HOME FEEL CARED FOR.

Cleaning rarely changes the house itself—but it can change how buyers perceive its condition.

Focus on:

- Deep cleaning kitchens and bathrooms
- Floors, trim, windows, and glass
- Dust, pet hair, odors, and overlooked corners
- Appliances, fixtures, and frequently touched surfaces

Why it matters: A clean home makes it easier for buyers to notice the home instead of the dirt, buildup, or unfinished-feeling details.

Clean doesn't mean untouched. It means maintained.

REPAIR

TAKE CARE OF THE THINGS THAT RAISE QUESTIONS.

Small maintenance issues can sometimes create bigger concerns in a buyer's mind.

Focus on:

- Dripping faucets or slow drains
- Loose handles, hinges, or railings
- Doors that stick or don't latch
- Damaged trim or drywall
- Burned-out bulbs or broken fixtures
- Small unfinished projects

Why it matters: One minor repair usually isn't a big deal. Several visible ones can make buyers wonder what else may have been deferred.

Finish before you add. Complete the half-done projects before starting new ones.

EDIT

MAKE THE SPACE EASIER TO SEE.

Editing is not about stripping your home of personality. It's about removing enough visual competition that buyers can understand the rooms.

Focus on:

- Excess furniture
- Crowded surfaces
- Overflowing storage
- Large collections
- Rooms with unclear purpose
- Items you already know you won't need before moving
-

Why it matters: Buyers need to be able to see the size, function, and flow of the home—not just everything currently living in it.

Start packing, not "staging." If you won't need it before the move, this may be a good time to box it up.

UPDATE

CHANGE SELECTIVELY—NOT AUTOMATICALLY.

Not everything dated needs to be replaced. Updates make the most sense when they improve condition, solve a clear problem, or help the home compete more effectively.

Possible examples:

- Strategic paint
- Replacing visibly damaged flooring
- Updating an especially worn fixture
- Improving an entry or high-impact space
- Addressing something that noticeably dates the home and affects buyer perception

W
hy it matters: The goal is not to renovate for an imaginary buyer. It is to invest where the likely benefit justifies the cost, time, and effort. Dated is not the same as damaged.

A clean, functional, well-maintained space may not need to be changed simply because it isn't the newest style.

WHEN IN DOUBT, WORK IN THIS ORDER: CLEAN → REPAIR → EDIT → UPDATE

The first three often accomplish more than sellers expect—and may change what, if anything, is actually worth updating.

Where Should You Spend Your Time & Money?

Not every project deserves the same priority.

High Impact + Low Cost/Effort

$ START HERE

Examples:

- Deep cleaning
- Touch-up paint
- Replacing burned-out bulbs
- Fixing loose handles or small visible defects
- Removing excess furniture
- Cleaning up the entry
- Packing away obvious clutter

These are often the best return on your time.

High Impact + Higher Cost/Effort

$ $ DISCUSS BEFORE YOU DO

Examples:

- Replacing worn flooring
- Painting several rooms
- Exterior repairs
- Addressing visibly dated or damaged fixtures
- Larger landscaping work
- Repairing a significant unfinished project

These may be worth doing—but only if they meaningfully improve condition, presentation, or how the home competes.

Lower Impact + Low Cost/Effort

$ DO IF TIME ALLOWS

Examples:

- Small decor swaps
- Minor styling changes
- Replacing perfectly functional hardware
- Extra organizing beyond what buyers will really notice

Fine to do, but don't let these distract from more important work.

Lower Impact + Higher Cost/Effort

$ $ $ USUALLY SKIP

Examples:

- Full kitchen remodel before selling
- Replacing functional appliances just because they're older
- Changing finishes purely to follow trends
- Major updates buyers may prefer to choose themselves

This is where sellers are most likely to spend money they may not get back.



A project is worth considering when it does one of three things:

improves perceived condition, removes a likely buyer objection, or helps the home compete more effectively.

If it only makes the home more current or more like your personal taste, it may not be worth the investment.

THINK AHEAD

Weather, contractor availability, and lead times matter. If a project could become harder to complete later, move it up the list—even if it isn't urgent yet.



ROOM BY ROOM: WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

You don't need to redo every room. You just need to know what deserves attention.

AS WE WALK THROUGH YOUR HOME, WE'RE NOT LOOKING FOR PERFECTION. WE'RE LOOKING FOR THINGS THAT MAY AFFECT HOW BUYERS EXPERIENCE THE SPACE—MAINTENANCE ISSUES, VISUAL DISTRACTIONS, AWKWARD FURNITURE PLACEMENT, OR AREAS WHERE A SMALL CHANGE COULD MAKE A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE.

✓ Kitchen
Ask:
- Do any cabinets, drawers, or appliances look damaged or unfinished?
- Are countertops crowded enough that the workspace feels smaller than it is?
- Is there worn caulk, damaged flooring, or an obvious maintenance issue?
- Would a small repair improve the overall impression?
- Is something simply dated—or is it actually distracting from the space?

Watch for: over-improving a functional kitchen just because finishes aren't current.

✓ Living + Family Rooms
Ask:
- Is there too much furniture for the room?
- Can buyers understand the room's natural focal point?
- Does the layout make the space feel smaller or harder to move through?
- Are there unfinished wall patches, damaged trim, or visible wear?
- Could removing one or two pieces improve the flow?

Watch for: trying to "decorate" your way out of a layout issue.

✓ Bedrooms
Ask:
- Does each room have a clear purpose?
- Is oversized furniture making the room feel smaller?
- Are there paint colors or wall treatments that dominate the room?
- Is there obvious damage or wear that needs repair?
- Could packing away extra furniture or belongings create more breathing room?

Watch for: turning every bedroom into a staged showroom. Clean, functional, and understandable is enough.

✓ Bathrooms
Ask:
- Are there leaks, slow drains, damaged caulk, or loose fixtures?
- Does anything look neglected rather than simply older?
- Is there staining, peeling paint, or moisture-related wear?
- Would a deep clean make more difference than an update?

Watch for: remodeling a functional bathroom simply because it isn't trendy.

✓ Storate + Utility Spaces
Ask:
- Can buyers see how the space functions?
- Are closets, basement areas, or utility rooms so full that they appear smaller?
- Are there maintenance items here that have been easy to ignore?
- Can some seasonal or rarely used belongings be packed now?

Watch for: trying to make storage areas empty. They just need to feel usable.

✓ Exterior + Entry
Ask:
- Does anything immediately signal deferred maintenance?
- Are steps, railings, doors, gutters, trim, or exterior fixtures in good condition?
- Is landscaping helping or hiding the home?
- Are there loose items or unfinished projects that should be addressed?
- Will seasonal weather make any of this harder to tackle later?

Watch for: spending heavily on landscaping when basic cleanup, trimming, and maintenance would accomplish most of the goal.

Ask yourself:
Is this a problem with condition, function, presentation, or simply style?
Condition and function usually deserve attention first. Style is where we slow down and decide whether the investment is actually worth it.



Decluttering Without Losing Your Mind

Start packing—not staging.

Decluttering is not about making your home look empty. It's about helping rooms feel easier to understand while giving yourself a head start on the move.

If you already know you won't need something before moving day, this may be the right time to pack, donate, sell, or let it go.

A good rule:
If you won't use it in the next 60–90 days, ask whether it needs to stay unpacked.

Keep

THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT STILL SUPPORT NORMAL LIFE:

- Everyday cookware and dishes
- Regularly worn clothing
- Daily bathroom items
- Frequently used kids' items
- Essential home office supplies
- Pet supplies you still need

Your home still needs to work for you while you live there.

Pack

GOOD CANDIDATES:

- Seasonal decor
- Extra linens
- Books and collections
- Rarely used kitchen items
- Off-season clothing
- Sentimental items
- Extra furniture and decor

Packing early creates breathing room without making the home feel stripped.

Donate

LOOK FOR:

- Duplicate items
- Furniture you already planned to replace
- Clothing you no longer wear
- Toys or household items that have been outgrown
- Decor you know is not coming with you

Moving is a great reason not to pay to move things you no longer want.

Trash

EASY WINS:

- Broken items
- Old paperwork
- Empty boxes and packaging
- Expired products
- Worn-out household goods
- Anything you've been "meaning to deal with"

What Makes the Biggest Difference First? Start with volume before details. Meaning:

Remove oversized or excess furniture before worrying about small decor.
Clear floors and pathways before styling shelves.
Reduce what's in closets before buying organizers.
Pack boxes before rearranging every drawer.
Simplify the room before adding anything new.
That's very on-brand for the philosophy of this guide.

Before You Start a Bigger Project

Some improvements are worth doing. Some are worth discussing first.

Bigger projects can absolutely make sense before a sale—but only when the likely benefit justifies the cost, time, and disruption. Before you replace, remodel, or upgrade something significant, ask whether the project is solving a real problem or simply making the home more current.

A BIGGER PROJECT MAY MAKE SENSE WHEN

- Solves an obvious condition or maintenance issue
- Removes a likely buyer objection
- Helps the home compete more effectively with similar listings
- Finishes something that currently feels incomplete
- Improves a high-impact area buyers are likely to notice
- Can be completed cleanly and on time before listing



IT MAY NOT MAKE SENSE WHEN

- Is purely cosmetic or trend-driven
- Replaces something that is still functional
- Reflects your personal taste more than broad buyer appeal
- Costs more than the likely benefit
- Risks being incomplete by the time you want to list
- Creates a new project when there are more important basics to finish

SOMETIMES THE BEST PREP ADVICE IS: *leave it alone*

DATED DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN DAMAGED, AND "NEW" DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN A BETTER RETURN.

THINK AHEAD: SEASONAL CONSIDERATIONS

SPRING

Clean up winter debris
Check gutters and downspouts
Touch up exterior areas as weather allows
Start landscaping before growth gets ahead of you

SUMMER

Stay ahead of lawn and landscaping
Handle exterior paint or repair projects
Power wash if needed
Check decks, patios, and outdoor living areas

FALL

Clean gutters
Replace furnace filters
Finish exterior projects before cold weather
Trim back landscaping and clear leaves

WINTER

Keep walks and entries safe and clear
Watch for draft, moisture, or heating issues
Focus on interior repairs and organization
Plan spring exterior work early if listing later

THE EXACT PRIORITIES WILL DEPEND ON YOUR TIMELINE, THE CONDITION OF THE HOME, AND WHAT CAN REALISTICALLY BE COMPLETED BEFORE LISTING.

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Your Home Prep Plan

What we recommend for your home

Do first:

If time allows:





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