

PHOTOGRAPHY PRE-SHOOT CHECKLIST

Most buyers and agents agree that nearly 80% of homebuyers begin their search for homes on the Internet. High quality professional photos will make the best possible first impression. Congratulations on selecting an agent with the marketing savvy to start the process with a professional photo shoot.

In order to get the most from the photo shoot, please take time to review this checklist and complete it to the fullest extent possible. It is not only necessary for the shoot, but completing this list will enable your agent to show your home in its best light. Once completed, your home will be ready for your real estate photographer to arrive and your home will be ready to show. Many of the points listed here may be obvious, but experience has shown that a gentle reminder and a detailed list are often helpful.

Your photo shoot will last up to two hours, depending on your property size. All major furnished rooms of the house will be photographed, including all bathrooms. No unfinished areas will be photographed unless otherwise requested by your agent.

Thank you for your time and effort in reviewing and completing this list. The effort will make a world of difference in your overall property photos and the marketability of your home. Get ready... selling a home fast takes hard work. You may also want to read the companion article, *PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SALE*.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

The exterior photo of the home is the first image on the MLS and usually leads the listing. For this reason, it is one of the most important photos. Most buyers select homes to view by a process of elimination when reviewing the online listings. You don't want the property eliminated before the potential buyers see the other pictures or read about the property's attributes. Check off as you go. By doing so, you won't miss anything and will achieve better results.

- The yard should be cut and trimmed. The lawn should be well manicured and freshly mowed the morning of the shoot, or the day before. Be sure to edge along driveways, sidewalks, patios, and do not forget to rake and bag the clippings.
- Grass or vegetation growing in the driveway, patio, or sidewalks should be removed and flowerbeds should be weeded.
- Clean off and arrange outside furniture to highlight the outside living area.
- Sweep or spray off driveway, sidewalks, decks, and patios so it looks clean and inviting.
- Place outside trashcans in the garage or along side of the house so that they will not be in the photos.
- Clear the roof and gutters of branches, twigs, leaves, and other debris.
- All windows should be clean and free of dust, dirt, or streaks.
- Clear away all trash or items that would make the property look cluttered.
- Move hoses and their storage containers out of sight.
- Children's toys that can be stored elsewhere should be moved. Swing sets and playground-type structures obviously should stay, if they are in good condition.
- The sidewalks, stairs, driveway, patio and roof should be free of stains. This is most easily accomplished with a power washer. At a minimum, all surfaces should be broom clean and swept.
- Pools and hot tubs should be uncovered and freshly cleaned of leaves and debris.
- Be sure the letters on the mailbox and house are straight and in good condition.
- Check the doorbell and front entrance. They should be in perfect condition.
- The day of the shoot, please be sure that all vehicles are removed from the driveway and from the front of the house.

INSIDE YOUR HOME

Remember to think of your home as a model home. By adhering to the following checklist, you will ensure that your home is in optimal condition for photographing and showing. Show them how proud of this property you are, and how lucky they are to have the opportunity to purchase it.

- The house should be free of clutter.
- All repairs to walls and fixtures should be made prior to listing.
- The home should be freshly cleaned, making sure to get rid of cobwebs and to clean the light fixtures. All surfaces should be freshly dusted or cleaned.
- Items unrelated to the typical use of a room should be removed to give your home a spacious look.
- All surfaces should be free of an excessive amount of clutter. This includes family photos, paperwork stacked on desks or tables, etc.
- Kitchen counters should be cleaned off and free of ALL appliances. You may add accent pieces or plant arrangements, vases, or simple decorative items for decoration or to add color.
- Remove all magnets, schedules, calendars, etc from the refrigerator.
- Bedrooms look best when pared down to just window treatments, bedroom sets, and wall decorations. Too much furniture, or oversized furniture, can make rooms look small. This applies to family rooms and living rooms as well. To make these areas look spacious, move extra furniture off site or to an area that will not be photographed.
- Be sure that all beds are made and bedrooms are tidied.
- Bathrooms are an important part of the presentation. Their counters should also be free of clutter. Check bathroom towel racks and arrange towels in a neat and orderly fashion, making sure the towels are clean and matching.
- Make sure all light fixtures, including lamps, are plugged in with working light bulbs.
- Turn off all ceiling fans. **Turn on all lights.**
- Check all light fixtures for burned out bulbs and replace if needed.
- Remove any trash that may be left over from the morning or afternoon family rush.
- All pets need to be confined in a room with a note on the door alerting the photographer. Please do not put them in a room that needs to be photographed, as the photographer will not open any "off limits" rooms.
- Items belonging to pets (toys, food, beds, and water bowls) should be moved out of sight.
- Small children should be monitored so as not to be in the way of the shoot. There is nothing about this process that is worth risking the safety of a child. Please put away as many toys as possible (I have two children and realize what a task this can be.)
- Please make sure to draw all the window coverings that face the front of the house, as well as those on any windows that may have an undesirable view.
- Remember, this is about the pictures and the showings. If you have a lot of possessions, please consider a phased moved (temporarily put the excess in off site storage) or designate one room for this purpose and keep it off limits.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WINTER

While most homes are listed in the spring, occasions arise when a home must be listed in winter. Gray skies, snow on the lawn, etc. can pose special challenges. This is all the more reason to let a professional take care of it for you. In addition to the above, please consider the following.

- Please have the driveway neatly shoveled so it can be seen exactly where it is.
- Try to schedule the shoot as close to noon as is possible considering the direction of your home. The sun should face the front of your property, if at all possible.
- If near the holidays, break out the decorations. The more the merrier, *as long as they are tasteful.*