

HOME PREPARATION GUIDE FOR HOMEOWNERS

To maximize the visual appeal of a property for real estate photography, both the interior and exterior require thorough preparation. The goal is to create an emotional connection with potential buyers, helping them visualize themselves living in the home. High-quality photos are crucial, as 90% of homebuyers find them to be the most useful feature in online listings, and they can lead to faster sales at higher prices.

Here are specific preparation steps for both outside and inside the home to ensure it is ready for a professional photoshoot.

General Principles for the Entire Property

Before focusing on specific areas, some overarching principles apply to the entire home:

- Lighting is Crucial:** Lighting is one of the most important aspects of photography. **Turn on all lights throughout the house**, including lamps, under-cabinet lighting, and exterior lights. Replace any burned-out light bulbs beforehand.
- Maximize Natural Light:** Let in as much natural light as possible by **opening all blinds, shades, and curtains**. Clean the windows inside and out to ensure the light is bright and clear.
- Declutter and Depersonalize:** The guiding principle is "**less is more**". Removing clutter and personal items helps buyers imagine the space as their own. This includes removing personal photos, religious symbols, calendars, and notes from all surfaces.
- Turn Off Moving Objects:** To accommodate HDR photography techniques, **turn off all ceiling fans, televisions, and computer screens**, as movement can look strange in the final combined image.
- Deep Clean Everything:** A foundational step is to ensure the entire property is clean. This includes dusting, vacuuming, and wiping down all surfaces, as dirt and grime can make a home appear poorly maintained.

Maximizing Exterior Visual Appeal

The exterior is the first thing potential buyers see, so its presentation is critical. Improved curb appeal is considered a strong selling point.

Landscaping and Yard Maintenance:

- Mow the lawn**, rake any leaves, and trim all landscaping, including bushes and trees.
- Remove dead plants and consider adding new, colorful flowers to brighten the space. Adding mulch to flowerbeds can also make them look more attractive.

Cleaning Surfaces

- Move all vehicles** (cars, RVs, trailers) from the driveway and the street in front of the house. If possible, you might ask neighbors to move their cars as well.
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- Hide all garbage cans**, lawn equipment, garden hoses, sprinklers, and pool toys out of sight, preferably in a garage or shed.
- Remove any for-sale signs from the yard before the shoot

Staging Outdoor Living Areas:

- Create an inviting atmosphere on patios and porches.
- Open patio umbrellas** (if it's not too windy) and wipe down outdoor furniture.
- Arrange seating areas as if you are about to entertain guests, using fresh pillows and flowers to add appeal.
- Remove the cover from your barbecue grill unless it is old and unsightly.

Maximizing Interior Visual Appeal

A clean, organized, and well-lit interior allows photographers to capture the home's best features and make rooms appear spacious.

All Rooms

- Furniture and Flooring:** Remove excess or bulky furniture to open up floor space and make rooms feel larger. Also, remove all floor mats and runners from entryways, kitchens, and bathrooms.
- Clutter and Personal Items:** Hide all kids' toys, pet beds, food bowls, and litter boxes. Put away shoes and jackets from entryways, as visible items can suggest a lack of storage space. Conceal all exposed wires and cables as much as possible.

Kitchen

- Countertops: Clear countertops of almost everything**, including small appliances like coffee makers and toasters, knife blocks, and decorations. Leaving a few select decorative items, like a bowl of fresh fruit, is acceptable.
- Surfaces:** Clean all surfaces, including countertops, appliances, the sink, and the backsplash. Ensure the sink is empty and clean, with no dishes, sponges, or soap visible.
- Refrigerator: Remove all magnets, photos, calendars**, and papers from the refrigerator door to create a clean, tidy look.

Bathrooms

- Surfaces and Fixtures:** Clean the sinks, tubs, and showers thoroughly. Put the toilet seat and lid down. Clean all mirrors.
- Remove All Personal Items: Clear countertops, showers, and tubs** of all personal products. This includes shampoo, soap, razors, toothbrushes,

medications, and kids' toys.

- Final Touches:** Remove trash cans, scales, laundry baskets, and bathmats from view. Display fresh, neatly folded towels on towel racks.

Bedrooms

- Beds: Make all beds neatly** with matching and properly fitting bedding. Use decorative pillows to make the beds look more inviting.
- Surfaces: Clear nightstands and dressers** of all items except for a lamp and perhaps one small decorative piece, like a book or floral arrangement.
- Storage:** Put away all clothes, shoes, and other personal belongings in closets.

Living, Family, and Dining Rooms

- Declutter:** Remove piles of newspapers, magazines, and TV remotes.
- Staging:** Fluff all pillows and neatly fold any throw blankets.
- Dining Area:** For the dining room, ensure the table is clean and chairs are arranged neatly. Consider setting the table with your best dinnerware or adding a colorful centerpiece. Remove any booster seats or high chairs.