



# SELLER'S GUIDE

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# PREPARING YOUR HOUSE FOR SALE

Try to look at your house “through the buyer’s eyes” as though you’ve never seen it before. Any time, elbow grease, or money spent on these items brings you back much more in return, and hopefully a faster sale. Potential buyers can be nosy - opening drawers, examining window sills, inspecting appliances - as they want to know every detail about one of the most significant purchases of their lives. Invite a friend to walk through your home to double-check the level of cleanliness.

## Living Areas

- Ensure all walls are in top shape. Repair all cracks, nail pops or visible seams in drywall.
- Check the ceiling for leak stains. Fix the source of the leak, repair the ceiling and paint.
- In painting or redecorating, avoid offbeat colors. Stick to white or easy to work with neutrals.
- Replace faded curtains or blankets.
- If you have a fireplace, clean it out.
- Replace burned-out light bulbs. Put in brighter light bulbs. Make sure light switches work.
- Remove distracting posters or other personalized decors.
- Clean the floors and vacuum the rugs.
- Straighten up the closets and get rid of excess items.
- Replace air filters.
- Use air freshener to eliminate musty or unpleasant pet or cooking odors.
- Fix any doors that stick.
- Remove papers from coffee tables and end tables.
- Keep the laundry area clean and organized.

## Living Areas

- Put unnecessary furniture into storage so the house seems spacious and uncluttered.
- Consider hiring a home staging company to consult on the furniture and decor that will help your home sell quickly.

## Bathrooms

- Repair any dripping faucets.
- Keep fresh towels in the bathroom.
- Remove any stains from toilets, sinks, bathtub, and shower.
- If the sink, bathtub, or shower drains slowly, unclog it.
- Clean floors and fixtures.
- Replace the shower curtain and put out guest towels.

## Before You Leave Each Day

- Make Beds.
- Open drapes and blinds.
- Turn off the TV and turn on soft music.
- Wipe down all countertops.
- Turn on lights in dark areas.
- Make sure rugs are clean and straight.
- Do a “once over” cleaning - vacuum, sweep, and dust.
- Clean and straighten up bathrooms.
- Put away dishes.
- Double-check the entryway.
- Empty wastebaskets and garbage.
- Final check every room.
- If possible, get pets out of the house.

## For Security

- Turn off home computers.
- Remove/reduce personal photos from walls.
- Disclose the use of home security cameras.
- Safeguard valuables.
- Safeguard or remove pets.

✓ *Realtor website for additional tips*





# CONSIDERING A FOR SALE BY OWNER

## What FSBO Sellers Need to Know About Real Estate Rules and Regulations

To sell your house by yourself, you must learn the legal rules that govern real estate transfers in your state, such as who must sign the papers, who can conduct the actual transaction, and what to do when issues are discovered that slow down the transfer of ownership. Review these questions before deciding to sell on your own:

- Are you experienced enough in real estate law to write a legally binding contract?
- Do you have experience with protecting your rights in a real estate transaction?
- Do you understand the escrow process and what is required of you and the buyer?
- Do you have a complete online and print marketing plan for your property and can be sure it is reaching your target audience for maximum exposure?
- Are you able to accurately explain contingencies and legal disclosure requirements?

Statistics show that selling your home with the assistance of a professional real estate agent will garner you a higher profit, enough to cover the commission as well as put more money in your pocket.

Most buyers today work with a buyers' agent to represent their interests. If you choose to sell your home on your own, you'll be negotiating with a professional and relying on your own skill to finalize a contract. Not only could you end up selling your home for less money, you could leave yourself open to potential legal problems unless you have the contract vetted by an experienced real estate attorney.

FSBO transactions can be successful, of course, but a majority of homeowners prefer to work with a professional rather than risk an unsatisfactory home selling experience.



## 7 REASONS TO SELL WITH A REALTOR®

For most sellers, a real estate agent's services, market knowledge, and network of industry experts are worth the cost. Consider the following benefits of using a REALTOR® before you decide to attempt to sell your own home.

- 1** A REALTOR® has access to market data about recent sales and other homes on the market that can be used to price your home appropriately. Studies show that homes priced right when they're first listed sell quicker and for a higher price than those that linger on the market.
- 2** A REALTOR® can show your home when you aren't available, respond to inquiries from potential buyers and their agents, and get valuable feedback from visitors - all things that save you time.
- 3** A REALTOR® can look at your home objectively and suggest ways to improve its appearance - from staging to minor repairs - so it appeals to more buyers.
- 4** Buyers typically prefer to look at a home without the seller present so they can feel more comfortable exploring the rooms and visualizing themselves in the property. At a FSBO listing, the seller must be present.
- 5** A REALTOR® can screen visitors to your home, which provides a measure of safety that FSBO sellers don't have. Also, by checking to see if the buyers are legitimate and can afford to purchase your home, a REALTOR® can help you avoid wasting time showing your home to unqualified buyers.
- 6** REALTOR® have professional marketing expertise, contacts with other REALTOR® who work with buyers, and the support of a brokerage that can market your home more widely than you can as an individual.
- 7** A REALTOR® can help you negotiate a contract that not only garners you an appropriate price for your home, but that meets your needs for a closing date. Additionally, a REALTOR® can make sure your contract complies with all local regulations.

✓ *NAR website for additional verbiage.*



## Q&A

### BEFORE LISTING YOUR HOME

#### **Q** When is the best time to list a house for sale?

**A** The simple answer is whenever you are ready to sell your home. While spring is typically when most homes go on the market, homes go up for sale all year long. During the spring, sellers will have more competition for their home because there are typically more houses on the market during this time. However, there are more buyers as well. Historically during the off-peak seasons of fall and winter, fewer homes go on the market and there are typically fewer buyers. But you can be assured that the buyers who are looking during these seasons are extremely serious. Every market is unique, so consult your REALTOR® to learn more about your local trends.

#### **Q** Should I fix my house up before it goes on the market?

**A** If you hope to achieve the highest selling price and the shortest amount of time on the market, you want to be confident that your home shows well. What work you do depends mostly on the price you're asking, the time you have to sell, and the present condition of the house. Certain home improvements are useful to almost everyone and can add value and speed the sale of houses. These include building a deck or patio; doing some kitchen remodeling (updating cabinets, countertops, or appliances); and adding new floor and wall coverings, especially in bathrooms. Potential buyers want to buy a home that appears to be well taken care of and may discount items that they feel need to be improved or replaced. On the other hand, major improvements that appeal to individual personal tastes that not everyone may share, like swimming pools or wet bars, generally return less than the cost of the project. If more significant improvements are required, consider making those changes only if the local real estate market will support the cost of the project.

#### **Q** What should I do to make the home show well?

**A** Regardless of the market, all sellers should make sure that their home has the curb appeal to draw in potential buyers by keeping the lawn mowed, shrubbery trimmed, trash removed, etc. On the inside of the home, the paint should be in good condition, the home is clean and de-cluttered with no strong odors, and that personal photos and mementos are kept to a minimum. Because the buyers should be able to envision themselves living in your home, it is best to limit distractions. Should improvements need to be made, make certain that you do not over-improve – start with simple improvements such as painting and carpet cleaning.

#### **Q** Once a home is listed, how will prospective buyers gain access to view it?

**A** Potential buyers gain access to a home through the assistance of their REALTOR®. The buyer's agent will make an appointment to view the home and receive all of the necessary information to gain access to the home. Buyers are not allowed to view properties without an escort.





## Q&A

# HOW TO PRICE YOUR LISTING

### **Q How do I determine my home's listing price?**

**A** Value is a relative term. You need some basis of objectivity – and you can find it by having your REALTOR® help you find it. Your REALTOR® will work together with you to factor in all the relevant essential aspects of your home and price your home effectively. Using the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), the REALTOR® will prepare a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) which involves a survey of homes that are on the market and those that have recently sold and are similar to yours. Your REALTOR® will then advise you on the additional value (or deficit) of your home's unique features, and factor that into the equation. Depending upon how anxious you are to sell (and how fast you need to close), your REALTOR® can suggest different strategies to help you get top dollar for your home.

### **Q Doesn't it make sense to price my home higher because buyers will negotiate the price down?**

**A** Because virtually 100% of today's home sellers have their home marketed on the internet, today's home buyers can shop online anonymously. When pursuing online, buyers can compare your home against other homes to see if they feel your home's price and features are a value. If you price a home too high, many buyers will decide not to bother to view your home in person. Your home could remain on the market for months, while you continue to pay your mortgage, basically eroding any profit you were hoping to make by pricing it higher. The best strategy is to price it correctly so those prospective buyers searching online believe that their offer will be considered.

### **Q Does it make sense to test the market with a higher price for a short period of time?**

**A** Because newly listed properties typically attract the most interest from buyers during the first three weeks, it is imperative that you price it correctly to attract buyers. When looking online, buyers are going to compare your home with other homes on the market. If they do not perceive your home's price and features to be a value, they will not make an appointment to see your home, thereby causing it to languish on the market. The longer the home stays on the market, the less you can expect to receive for a selling price because buyers feel that a seller will take less for a home that has been on the market for a long time. Additionally, if you do happen to get the higher price you want for your home, you run the risk of it not appraising for the full amount.

### **Q If I list my home at or below the market, won't buyers think there is something wrong with it?**

**A** Because buyers have access to a wealth of information online, they often have a keen sense of a home's real worth. Your home will presumably have some photos showcasing it to prospective buyers, and they will be able to see the quality of your home online. Additionally, buyer's agents will know the asking price is realistic and they will let their clients know.



# DISCLOSURE REPORT

## What is a Disclosure Report?

Disclosure reports are designed to assist sellers (and their agents) in legally disclosing required information to a potential purchaser in a real estate transaction in an easy to understand, economical format. Buyers can rely on the information to make a more informed decision regarding the property being purchased.

## Required Disclosure Information

There are six 'hazard zones.' The disclosure law requires sellers to inform all potential buyers to be told whether the property is in any of the following zones:

- A special flood hazard zone as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- A dam failure inundation zone
- A very high fire hazard severity zone
- A wildland area that may contain substantial forest fire risks
- An earthquake fault zone
- A seismic hazard zone
- Lead Paint
- Radon
- ✓ Check with your state Requirements

## Where to Order a Disclosure Report

FNF's own Disclosure Source is a premier provider for Natural Hazards, Special Taxes & Assessments, and Environmental Hazard information to safely comply with statutory requirements.

For more information, please call (800) 880-9123 or visit [www.DisclosureSource.com](http://www.DisclosureSource.com).





# 8 COSTLY SELLER MISTAKES TO AVOID

It's wise to follow others' good examples and to learn from others' mistakes. To ensure your home selling experience is set up for success, avoid these top eight common mistakes:

## 1 Buying a replacement home before selling the old one

The temptation may be great to buy a replacement home first. Because you'll know where you are going and how much you'll be paying, you won't have to worry about being rushed if your home sells quickly. However, the financial risks of buying first are significant. It's far better to sell your current home first and endure the inconvenience of moving to an interim rental than it is to end up owning and paying for two homes when you only want one.

## 2 Basing the list price of your house on the amount you want rather than on its market value

It's hard to be objective about the value of your home, which is why it is important to get a professional opinion before setting a list price. Over-priced listings often take a long time to sell and ultimately can sell for even less than market value after languishing on the market for months.

A buyer won't pay more for your home just because you want more money to purchase your next home. Find out the market value of your current home by having your real estate agent prepare a comparative market analysis or by getting an appraisal from a local appraisal firm. With this information, you can determine an accurate list price for the current market.

## 3 Skipping a home inspection before listing a home for sale

Home inspections disclose structural aspects of your house that may need work. Sellers who know the condition of their home before they enter the market are in a better position to negotiate a firm sale because they can disclose existing reports on the property to buyers before the buyers make an offer. Sellers are often required to pay for eliminating wood pest or termite infestations, and they may also be asked to correct other defects.

## 4 Neglecting to enhance the curb appeal of your home.

Buyers and real estate agents remember what they see. Their first impression is a lasting one. If a property looks a mess when it hits the market, that is how buyers' agents and potential buyers will remember it. Take the time to fix and touch up your home's exterior and yard before putting it on the market.

## 5 Refusing to counter an offer you feel is “too low”

Sellers want to sell high: buyers like to buy low. A low offer from well-qualified buyers could be better than no offer at all. A great offer from unqualified buyers only leads to disappointment. The amount of a buyer's offer is not what is crucial; it's what they are willing to negotiate.

## 6 Insisting on being present when the home is shown to prospective buyers

One way to discourage buyers from making an offer is to be present during showings. For buyers to decide to purchase, they first must discover and discuss all of its features, including any perceived flaws. Buyers are reluctant to say anything negative about a home in the sellers' presence. It is best to leave your home when prospective buyers are viewing so they have the freedom they need to picture your house as their dream home.

## 7 Setting up a complicated showing procedure that discourages showings

A home that can't be shown can't be sold. The easier it is to show a home, the more often it will be shown, and the quicker it will be sold. There is usually a direct correlation: the more showings a home receives, the less time it takes to sell.

## 8 Refusing to do anything to get your home ready to sell

The way most people live in their homes is usually very different from the way a home should look when it goes on the market. For someone to want to buy a home, they must be able to envision themselves living there. At the very least, most homes need a thorough de-cluttering and cleaning.

Often there is quite a bit more work that needs to occur before a home is ready to sell. When you sell a car, you have it detailed so it looks its shiny best, and you receive the highest price possible. The same concept applies to sell a home. Buyers pay a premium for homes that are in move-in condition.

### ✓ KEY TIPS

- Don't overprice
- Make it easy to show
- De-clutter



## CLOSING COSTS AND WHO PAYS WHAT?

Closing costs are what the buyer and seller will pay as part of the escrow transaction. Some fees are negotiable between the seller and buyer as to “Who Pays What.” Below is an example of some typical closing costs which may vary from state to state.\*

### Paid by Both or Either Party

- **Attorney Fees, Courier/Delivery Fees, Document Preparation**  
*For deed(s) and other legal documents required to consummate the transaction*
- **Escrow Fee**  
*Often split between buyer and seller*
- **Homeowner's Association (HOA) Dues and Transfer Fees**
- **Notary Fees**
- **Recording Fees**  
*To file legal documents with County Recorder*
- **Property Taxes**
- **Owner's Title Insurance Premium**
- **Lender's Title Insurance Premium**

### Buyer's Typical Costs

- **Appraisal**  
*One-time fee for new a loan*
- **Credit Report**  
*For loan application*
- **Homeowner's Insurance**  
*Paid by the buyer for fire/hazard insurance*
- **Loan Fees**  
*Origination and processing fees charged by a lender*
- **PMI**  
*Some lenders require Private Mortgage Insurance*
- **Prepaid Interest**  
*Prorated depending on the time of month the loan closes*

### Seller's Typical Costs

- **Real Estate Commission**
- **Disclosure Reports**  
*Natural Hazard Report*
- **Home Warranty and Existing Encumbrances**
- **Property Inspections, Pest Inspection/Correction**  
*Termite report*
- **Transfer Tax**  
*City/County conveyance tax*
- **Municipal & State requirements**





# MOVING CHECKLIST

## Address Change

- ☐ Give forwarding address to post office 2 to 3 weeks before moving
- ☐ Change charge accounts, credit cards
- ☐ Subscriptions: Notice requires 6 to 8 weeks
- ☐ Inform friends and relatives

## Banks

- ☐ Transfer funds, arrange check-cashing in new city
- ☐ Arrange credit references

## Insurance

- ☐ Notify company of new location for coverage: life, health, fire, and auto
- ☐ Make sure homeowners' coverage for your new house is in place.

## Utility Companies (transfer OR cancel)

- ☐ Gas & Electric, Water, Garbage
- ☐ Telephone (Land Line)
- ☐ Cable (Return all cable boxes and router)
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Alarm Service (if any)
- ☐ Landscaping Service (if any)
- ☐ Pool Service (if any)
- ☐ Pest Control (if any)

## Medical, Dental, Prescription Histories

- ☐ Ask Doctors and Dentists for referrals, transfer needed for prescriptions, eyeglasses and x-rays.
- ☐ Obtain birth records, medical records, etc.
- ☐ Arrange for medical services: Doctor, Dental, Veteranarian, etc.

## Pets

- ☐ Ask about regulations for licenses, vaccinations, tags, etc.

## Schools

- ☐ Get school transcripts (some districts require that they are sent directly from the prior school)

## Don't Forget To:

- ☐ Arrange for movers ahead of time
- ☐ Arrange for storage ahead of time
- ☐ Use up things that can't be moved - such as food in your freezer and flammable household aerosol cleaning products
- ☐ Hold a garage sale
- ☐ Carry enough cash or traveler's checks to cover the cost of moving services and expenses until you make banking connections in the new city
- ☐ Carry jewelry and documents yourself during the move

- ☐ Leave old keys, garage door openers, broiler pans, house plans and instruction manuals needed by the new owner with the real estate agent
- ☐ Have new address recorded on driver's license and car registration

### **On Moving Day**

- ☐ Carry enough cash or traveler's checks to cover the cost of moving services and expenses until you make banking connections in your new city
- ☐ Carry jewelry and documents yourself or use registered mail
- ☐ Plan for transporting pets; they are poor traveling companions if unhappy
- ☐ Let close friends and relatives know the route and schedule you will be traveling, including overnight stops. Use them as message headquarters.
- ☐ Double-check closets, drawers, and shelves to be sure you've left nothing behind
- ☐ Leave old keys, garage door openers, broiler pans, landscape/house plans and instruction manuals needed by the new owner with the real estate agent.

### **At your new address**

- ☐ Obtain certified checks or cashier's checks necessary for closing real estate transactions (check with the escrow officer or closing agent for details)
- ☐ Check on service of telephone, gas, electricity, water and garbage
- ☐ Check pilot light on stove, water heater and furnace
- ☐ Ask mail person/post office for mail they may be holding for your arrival

- ☐ Have new address recorded on driver's license and car registration
- ☐ Visit city offices and register to vote
- ☐ Register the car and get new license plates (if out of state)
- ☐ Obtain inspection sticker and transfer motor club membership
- ☐ Apply for state driver's license
- ☐ Register family in your place of worship
- ☐ Register children in school



**Realtors®, real estate brokers, closing attorneys, buyers and sellers** are targets for wire fraud and many have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because they simply relied on the wire instructions received via email.

A fraudster will hack into a participant's email account to obtain information about upcoming real estate transactions. After monitoring the account to determine the likely timing of a closing, the fraudster will send an email to the buyer purporting to be the escrow agent or another party to the transaction. The fraudulent email will contain new wiring instructions or routing information, and will request that the buyer send funds to a fraudulent account.

We are urging everyone to **INQUIRE BEFORE YOU WIRE** and to never rely solely on email communication. Always follow these two simple steps:

## INQUIRE BEFORE YOU WIRE.

When in doubt, always call our office or your escrow officer.

For the best in service, remember to always insist on



### STEP 1



Obtain the phone number of your Real Estate Broker, Realtor®, Closing Attorney (if applicable) and your Escrow Officer as soon as a title order is placed or an escrow is opened. Complete the information below and keep this flyer in your escrow folder. If you are reading this at one of our lobbies and you don't have a copy of this flyer, simply ask the receptionist for a copy.

### STEP 2



Prior to wiring, call the phone number you wrote down from step #1 above to speak directly with your Escrow Officer to confirm wire instructions. If you receive a change in wiring instructions supposedly from us or your Escrow Officer, be suspicious as we rarely change our wiring instructions.

**TITLE ORDER/ESCROW NUMBER**

**REALTOR'S NAME/PHONE**

**LENDER'S NAME/PHONE**

**TITLE OR ESCROW COMPANY**

**ESCROW OFFICER/CLOSING ATTORNEY'S NAME/PHONE**



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. In the bottom-left corner, there is a decorative graphic element consisting of overlapping translucent blue rectangles and squares, some of which have internal patterns or gradients. The overall appearance is that of a clean, unused piece of stationery or a template page.