
DWELLING ON DWELLINGS



A Sellers Guide to Making Buyers Feel At Home

By **Brad Boisvert**

From finances to fine print, home buyers have a lot of worries. So when they decide to go over your house with a fine-toothed comb, how can you help ease their minds?

As a seller, you want visiting buyers to be as comfortable as possible in your house. If they feel at home in your house, they will be much more likely to make it their home.

In a recent column, we discussed ways to fix up a house for showings, making a good first impression on buyers. Today, let's discuss how to make buyers comfortable at showings.

First and foremost, buyers must feel welcome. They must feel free to scrutinize all rooms and inspect every aspect of your home. By simply turning on all lights and opening all doors, you'll let buyers know that they are not intruding. It's a tacit invitation to check out the entire house.

Of course, every room should be kept clean, too. This is often easier said than done when you have children. But rather than closing doors to children's bedrooms or bathrooms because of a mess, encourage and recruit your kids to help keep those rooms clean. And keep those doors wide open at showings!

Keeping a house clean is an essential element of helping visitors feel at home. If buyers have to walk through kitchens cluttered with stacked dishes or basements piled high with dirty laundry, they will feel like they are sneaking into a house uninvited. More important, the agents who schedule the showings will be less eager to present a messy house to other prospective buyers.

In the real estate business, cleanliness is next to offer-worthiness. So try to keep your house clean everywhere - even behind those doors that you would normally keep closed: closet doors and cabinet doors and drawers. The cabinet under the sink, for example, can be a critical place. Make sure the space beneath the sink is as clean as possible. Remove all those cleaning supplies you've collected over the years. Leaving them there may only remind a buyer of how much work your house is to clean ... or how many dangerous chemicals their kids and pets might get into.

To make them more comfortable with your home, let them see as much empty and extraordinarily clean storage space as possible. And that means you're better off getting rid of your junk than hiding it.

Another way to make a buyer feel comfortable in your home is to depersonalize it; try to clear out some of the items that convey your character, disposition, and preferences.

Throw away magazines, for instance. Why? Because it's human nature for people to take sides. And the magazines you subscribe to may declare where you stand in the buyer's world. If you leave reading material lying around, you risk buyers making unsubstantiated judgments about you, which may subconsciously affect their feeling about the house.

For the same reason, ask your children to take down any posters in their rooms. Remind them that they are not compromising their individuality - just their rooms'. And the sooner you sell the house, the sooner they can give their new bedrooms all the personality they can muster.

Depersonalizing your house may mean removing some cherished items. Get over it. Remove trophies from shelves. Store or sell knickknacks and gewgaws. Be stingy with wall space. A few family pictures on the walls and mantel are a nice touch. But if you display too many treasured moments, buyers may feel like an intruder or worse, a usurper, depriving you of a beloved home.

Rather, let buyers think about what a wonderful home your house would be for them ... instead of what a great place it was for you.

Lastly, it's been said before and it merits mention again: Be a no-show at showings. Pack up the kids and the pets and let potential buyers inspect your house at their leisure and in your absence.

Remember when you looked at houses? Remember how uncomfortable it was to inspect a house and make comments about a house when the owners were present? When you leave the premises, you invite buyers to take their time and give your house their full attention.

If they feel at ease in your home, it will be a lot easier for buyers to ask to see it again. And ultimately, they will be much more comfortable with making you an attractive offer.