



PRE-SALE HOME PREP GUIDELINES

General Rules of Thumb:

- Hire a professional maid service before taking listing photos, and keep your home clean and tidy during your listing period. If you are selling a used home - meaning, a resale home or condo, and not brand new construction - buyers should be able to easily envision themselves living there, with their own belongings. The last thing a buyer should be reminded of is that the home is currently someone else's. When most buyers see dirt and filth, they often fear bigger concerns with the home - and by that point, you may have lost them entirely.
- If your furnishings and décor are older, out-of-style, or completely mismatched, consider working with your agent to hire a home staging service. At SMIKEWALLEN, our team of agents and designers routinely offers staging and styling services for clients, though most agents do not. The investment in staging typically pays off, especially in hot real estate markets such as Los Angeles, and your agent should be able to assist you with this aspect of the home-selling process.
- Consider painting your entire home one neutral color. While one homeowner may like the lime green "statement bathroom" they did back in 1993, but buyers will NOT. The pre-sale home preparation period is the time to ensure that your home will appeal to the widest range of buyers possible - bold colors typically have the opposite effect. As a rule, go clean and go neutral.
- If you have been putting off little repairs here and there, now is the time to call in a handy-person to help tie up those loose ends - especially those most visible to potential buyers. If these things have bothered you, they will absolutely bother new potential buyers and stand out in open houses, showings, and listing photos. Get ahead of any issues that could lower your profit, and deal with it now before selling.
- Turn all of the lights on - that means every single light in the house - and replace any and all burned-out bulbs. Wipe down and clean your recessed light housing, if applicable.



- Dust your home thoroughly and clean out any cobwebs in lamps, fixtures, sconces, recessed lighting, and corners of walls.
- Blinds, drapes, and shutters should be adjusted to your preference. Heavy drapes should be drawn open. Consider cleaning heavy drapes and upholstery, if they have never been professionally cleaned.
- Remove any items from the floor that do not belong on the floor. If there's any doubt at all about whether it belongs on the floor - it doesn't! Remove it. Less is more when selling your home, and clean, uncluttered surfaces and floors are key.
- Hide stacks of papers, bills, and magazines, as well as unsightly wires and cables, using the handy containers or banker's boxes that your real estate professional can provide.
- If you have children, place toys in storage containers when not in use and before showings. At the very minimum, clear all toys from view while listing photography is taking place.
- Clean all windows, inside and out, to remove streaks and dirt. Ask your agent for a professional window cleaning service, if you need it.
- Close all lids, cupboards, drawers, and doors to conceal clutter. Consider updating your drawer and door pulls and/or handles if yours are looking tired or dated. Cabinet and door hardware are a super quick and easy way to add some updated, modern flair with minimal financial investment.
- Laundry rooms, garages, closets, and pantries can be catch-all areas if necessary. However, photos of these areas are often also very useful to photograph and show buyers. If it's possible for these areas to also appear tidy and fresh, it's absolutely worth cleaning these out too.
- Invest in some high-end candles for listing photos, open houses, and showings. Try to avoid anything too overwhelmingly scented or specific, and stick to neutral, fresh scents.
- Let your real estate agent know that you would like fresh flowers placed in main rooms for listing photos and showings. Fresh flowers add life to a room, imply that the home has been well cared-for, and should already be a part of their marketing budget.

Living & Dining Areas:

- Straighten chairs, fluff and correctly position pillows, and move and reposition any furniture that is obstructing proper flow. Give your couches a quick facelift by adding a couple bolder, high-graphic pattern pillows. These will pop in listing photos, and create visual impact for buyers.
- Remove any and all personal items - meaning visual, personal clutter - from table tops and open shelving, except for centerpieces and decorative items. Buyers don't want to see who lives in the home. Instead, they want to fantasize about living in the space with THEIR stuff.



- Remove all remote controls and place them in a safe space that you will remember.
- Wipe all surfaces of dust and dirt, and sweep floors or mop as needed.

Kitchen:

- Clear ALL kitchen countertops, except for decorative items. That means that all daily use items and small appliances like coffee makers, stand mixers, toaster ovens, etc. should be placed into the cabinets.
- Remove EVERYTHING from outside of the refrigerator. This means no family photos, no magnets, etc. Also, clean out your fridge! Buyers ALWAYS open them, and an overstuffed, dirty, or cluttered fridge is a major turn-off for buyers.
- Hide pet dishes, sponges, trash cans and any other extraneous items that create visual clutter, which can make your kitchen and counterspace appear too small. Clean, empty surfaces are best.
- Clean and dry your kitchen sink(s), and remove and put away any dishes that might be out.

Bedrooms:

- Clear ALL items from tabletops, dressertops, and countertops, except for (and sometimes even including) decorative items.
- Make beds with fresh WHITE sheets if at all possible, and straighten pillows, duvets, and comforters.
- Hide trashcans, clothing hampers, and any other daily use items inside closets and cabinets.
- As a precaution, remove any and all personal valuable items and place them in a safe place, container, or safe

Bathrooms:

- Daily use towels should be hung straight or hidden away. Fresh white towels should be used if at all possible.
- Remove ALL personal and grooming items from bathroom countertops, and place into drawers and cabinets (or storage containers in those cabinets). While your home is on the market, consider putting your daily use items into a small container that you store in a cabinet, then taking that container out when you're getting ready, and putting it back when you're done.



- Remove bath rugs if they are ratty and replace them, or, ideally, leave the bathroom floors without rugs.
- Empty the shower and sinks of shampoos, soaps, razors, etc. and place into a container that can be hidden away and returned easily after photos and showings.
- As a precaution, remove any and all prescription medications and place them in a safe place, container, or safe while your home is being shown.

Pets:

- Remove pet carriers, crates, pet dishes, and visible litter boxes. Be sure to employ any and all fresheners necessary to alleviate pet odors and smells.
- If you have friendly pets that want to be in every photo, please crate them or otherwise contain them during the listing photo shoot - and, consider having a friend or neighbor pet-sit during open houses and showings.
- For dogs or other large animals, be sure to clean any waste in yards, side yards, or dog runs. There is nothing worse than strong odors - or poo on your shoe - when trying to attract buyers to your home.

Outside:

- Remove cars, lawn and landscaping, equipment, debris, recycling bins, and trashcans from your driveway, and tuck them away out of sight.
- Mow the lawn, rake leaves, prune back overgrown plants and shrubs, and plant blooming flowers if possible.
- Remove clutter from your front stoop, porch, or entry. Nothing should clutter the entrance to a home.
- Consider hiring a gutter service to clean the gutters and power wash the exterior of your home, if it is in need of either clean-up.
- Consider painting your front door a fresh, bold, contrasting color to your house color. Bold means bold - give buyers something to remember right away. Even if they don't necessarily like the door color, they will remember the house and re-painting a door is easy and cheap. Instead of "house 6 of 10 on their tour that day," which could get lost with the rest, your home becomes "that one house with the red door."



- Put down a fresh welcome mat, which can cost as little as \$10 at home or hardware stores. If the weather is inclement, consider having a new mat at various entry and exit points to your home. As far as welcome mats go – simpler and cleaner is better.
- Roll up all garden hoses and hide sprinkler attachments.
- Open patio umbrellas, put out outdoor furniture cushions, and freshen up any empty or underused pots with fresh plants or blooming flowers.
- Remove pool items and pool toys from any pool or hot tubs, and make sure pools and hot tubs are clean and clear for listing photos.
- Dry any puddles on decks, patios, driveways, or pool areas that could show up in listing photos.

**This Pre-Sale Home Prep Guide is designed to be used before listing photos are taken, before all open houses, and before any private showings.*