

Preparing your Home for Real Estate Photography

In the classic movie (and later musical) *Sunset Boulevard*, the main character famously said, "I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille."

That's actually a good mindset to be in when preparing your home for photography. You want to make sure your property looks great for the camera. And, these days, potential buyers will zoom in on details (the close up) when viewing photos online.

Here are some tips that will help:

- Clear away anything that may be distracting. Those can include personal items (like family photos), excess furniture and accessories, and especially, clutter.
- Clean and tidy the entire house. Pay particular attention to bathrooms and the kitchen, as these rooms can make or break a sale.
- Make as much natural light available as possible. Natural light is often ideal in real estate photography. Make sure window coverings and blinds can be easily opened. If the natural light is too overwhelming in an area, the photographer can make adjustments.



- Stage key rooms strategically so they look their best in photos. Pay particular attention to the living room, family room, and kitchen. Consider such finishing touches as fresh flowers, a decorative bowl of fruit, or some new throw pillows to add pops of colour and interest to your home.

Finally, take some test photos of your own with your digital camera or phone. That will help you identify any further changes you can make before the photographer arrives.



How to Prepare for Closing Day, so you're Not Overwhelmed

Closing day is a time of celebration. After all, you've sold your property and are moving to your next dream home. However, that day can also be stressful if you're not prepared. So, with that in mind, here are some ideas for avoiding closing day overwhelm.

The first step is to ensure you have all your documents ready. Your real estate agent and lawyer will help you with this. You may need to provide government-issued ID and mortgage documents, as well as other documentation (such as the last payment of property tax.) You should also have all keys associated with your home available.

Next, be prepared for the typical closing costs you'll incur that day. They may include lawyer fees and real estate commission, paying off a remaining loan or mortgage balance, final payments for utilities and rentals (such as a water heater), and other services.

There may also be unexpected fees associated with your move, even if you've already paid the moving company. You might need additional packing material, for example, or need to purchase lunch and snacks for family and friends who are helping you that day.

The good news is, if you're prepared, closing day — which might also be your moving day — can be a positive experience. So, embrace the excitement of moving and walking into your new home.

Cutting Renovation Costs without Cutting Quality

As you probably know, it's easy to lower the costs of a renovation. Hire an inexpensive, fly-by-night contractor — and hope for the best!

Chances are, you won't want to take that risk. So how do you ensure you get quality work while keeping your budget in check?

Here are some tips:

- Get estimates from at least three contractors. Often prices can vary widely, even amongst contractors with similar reputations and experience.
- Narrow the project focus. If you're getting a bathroom renovated, for example, decide whether you need the contractor to paint the new walls. Can you do that yourself?
- Shop around for the building materials. Yes, contractors often have access to wholesale prices. Still, you might be able to find a bathtub and vanity at a lower cost or at least avoid any markup the contractor may charge.
- Negotiate. Sometimes a contractor is willing to lower the price for concessions, such as quick payments or more time to complete the job.
- Schedule the renovation during a low demand season. For example, deck contractors charge more in the spring than the fall. It's supply and demand. More people want their decks done in the spring.



Keep in mind that spending a little more for a skilled and reputable contractor can save you money in the long run. The renovation will have fewer, if any, "issues" (that may require an expensive fix) and will last longer.