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**ESSENTIAL**  
**STEP**  
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**STEP**  
GUIDE FOR  
PREPARING  
&  
**\$ELLING**  
YOUR HOME  
FOR  
***TOP DOLLAR***



A  
**PROVEN**  
**SYSTEM**  
FOR  
POSITIONING  
YOUR  
HOME TO  
SELL  
FOR THE  
**HIGHEST**  
**POSSIBLE**  
**PRICE**

**CHLOE MANNING**

# **THE ESSENTIAL STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR PREPARING & SELLING YOUR HOME FOR TOP DOLLAR**

**A PROVEN SYSTEM FOR POSITIONING YOUR HOME TO  
SELL FOR THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE PRICE**

**CHLOE MANNING**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

You are either reading this book because you want some guidance on how to prepare your home for sale to maximize its sale price or you have already tried to sell your home and it didn't sell.

You've made the decision to sell your home and immediately after that decision, you wonder what to do to prepare it for sale. Or you are left questioning why it didn't sell the first time you had it on the market.

You may realize that your home is in no condition to put on the market and likely start getting overwhelmed by everything you think you need to do. That will likely send you into a panic, make you anxious, put you at a loss as to where to start, exhaust you before you've even started and make the entire process a negative and dreadful experience.

We can change that. This should be exciting for you. You are moving on to another house or location, perhaps to a nicer area, or closer to family or for a career. So, stay excited. It is just a process. It's just steps to help you accomplish your goals.

Over the years, I have been an advisor to hundreds of clients – clients wanting to sell their homes but also worried and stressed about the condition they are in and how prospective buyers might look upon their home negatively.

Don't stress.

Seriously. Some of the **CLEANEST** (and yes, I mean, you could literally eat off their floors) and the **MOST ORGANIZED** people still feel the same stress and uncertainty as the family with four kids between the ages of 4 and 12 that are hockey, soccer, and baseball players; and oh, they love animals, so there are a bunch of those too.

And it's okay. Really. Things will be just fine. Trust me. I've been through this hundreds of times.

And you say: "But I talked to a real estate agent and they said the house was fine just the way it was."

Okay. And maybe your house is just fine the way it is. Your house is organized, immaculate, freshly painted and shows like a magazine. No?

If it isn't, you should not hire that real estate agent. He is saying it's fine so that he can get a for sale sign on it as soon as possible.

In this case, one of four things could happen:

a) Depending on the price you put on the house, it might even sell. But I can almost 100% guarantee that you got less than you could have if you were properly prepared. He didn't want to wait to list the property because you were preparing. He intentionally recommended a lower price than other homes in the area because of the condition of the property. He was more interested in the quick sale and the quick pay cheque. He didn't advise you how to maximize ***your investment*** because he was looking out for his own wallet.

b) If you pick a price and the agent thinks it's too high, but can't convince you, he might not even tell you what the consequences will be because he wants the listing either way. It will make his phone ring and he will pick up other clients to work with. Some that might not even see your house.

c) Your house and the price that's on it, helps other houses in the area sell because buyers compare and find they get better value elsewhere.

d) The house doesn't sell and the agent assumes that when you put it back on the market, you will call him/her and he/she will get the future listing too.

Rather than give you all the steps to take to get this done right now, I want to explain the importance of them and why taking these steps **BEFORE** putting your home on the market, rather than after your home has been sold (or wasn't sold at all), is so **CRUCIAL** to the process.

These steps have a huge impact on the following:

a) the price you are able to ask for your house

b) the attractiveness of the photos of your home that will draw buyers to it

c) how many days your home will be on the market before it sells

d) how many buyer showings there are on your house

e) how long each buyer showing lasts

f) how many agents follow up after the buyer showing with questions or indicating interest

g) how many offers you get on your home

h) how fast you get an offer on your home

i) how much the buyers offer for your property

j) what else buyers ask for

k) what price you actually get for your house

l) if your house sells at all



There are two parts to this book.

Part one explains how to prepare your home and the reasons why preparation has such an impact on the price your home will sell for.

Part two explains the steps to take to educate yourself about the real estate market and to get your home listed on the market.

# **PART ONE: PREPARATION**

## **WHY PREPARATION IS IMPORTANT**

So, let's just go through some imaginary situations and examples and you will better understand the purpose of the steps inside this book and why they are so important.

Try to look at your house as a house you might go and look at if you were interested in buying. Remove the emotional connection you have with your house (because a potential buyer does not have that connection to your house and won't see what you see).

Let's agree on a few things:

- a) Presentation is important: Presentation paints a picture, it impresses, causes doubt, excites, causes worry, or it disappoints, etc.
- b) Rooms with too much furniture look smaller.
- c) Dark rooms seem smaller.
- d) If a buyer sees an empty room, they cannot figure out if their own furniture will fit in the room because there is nothing to compare it to (i.e., If a bedroom contains a queen bed, the potential buyer will be able to figure out if a double or king bed will fit in the room and so on.).

e) If cleanliness or maintenance issues are **VISIBLE**, this creates the impression that there may be other issues the buyer cannot see and they are expecting to find more and will be actively looking for or worry about other less visible issues or hidden issues.

f) Rooms that are unorganized, closets that are too full, and clutter gives the impression that the house is too small and there isn't enough room to put everything away or in its place. Even if the potential buyers have substantially less furniture and other items than what they are seeing in your house, they do not think of that. They are left with the impression the house is too small.

g) Houses that are bright, immaculately clean, organized and attractive give the impression of a well taken care of home. This eliminates any doubts or worries in the mind of the buyer and **allows** a buyer to *imagine themselves living there*.

h) The priority for you and your real estate agent (if you use one) is to demonstrate that the house is worth every penny of the price you have put on it, and it is even more desirable because it has been presented in such a way that it shows better than the competition. It is clearly the cleanest and best maintained home in the area. For example, the house is priced at \$500,000 and by the end of the buyers showing, the house has demonstrated that it is worth every penny of the price, and potentially even more, because it shows better than 90% (or more) of the competing houses on the market *{except perhaps for new builds or homes that are empty that have been staged}*.

But let's face it, most people don't have another place to go and live and the ability or money to store all of their belongings in order to allow their house to be staged. So, you are going to achieve this while you and your family still

live in the house (and there are many other benefits that I will mention as we proceed).

When a buyer has worries or doubts related to maintenance and repair issues, or when a buyer sees that there is a lot of work still needing to be completed on a house, it may cause a number of outcomes such as:

- a) The buyer decides not to make an offer.
- b) The buyer makes a very low offer.
- c) The buyer makes an okay offer but also has several conditions relating to inspections.
- d) The buyer makes an okay offer but asks for tasks to be completed at your expense.
- e) The buyer makes an okay offer but asks for a number of chattels that were not included in the price.
- f) The buyer doesn't like the house and, of course, shares this with his real estate agent.
- g) The agent doesn't offer the house as an option to any of his other buyer clients.
- h) The agent talks about the house in his office meeting and other agents from his office also avoid showing the house.
- i) The house stays on the market longer than other similarly priced houses and, as a result, has to have a lot more showings before its sold. This means the sellers will have to continue to try to keep the house perfect and cannot go themselves to look at homes they might buy, as they have no assurance their home will sell.
- j) The sellers continue to have to arrange their lives around buyer showings.
- k) The longer a house is on the market, the more the public thinks there must be something wrong with it, which causes even fewer showings and lower

offers.

l) The house might not sell at all.

m) If the sellers put back on the market at a later time, real estate agents have access to the listing and sale history of the property and will wonder why it didn't sell when it was on the market the first time. They will think there is something wrong with it and it will decrease the number of showings as a result and likely the price buyers will offer as well.

**I AM NOT SAYING ALL THIS TO SCARE YOU. IN HOT MARKETS,  
EVERYTHING SELLS. BUT DID THEY GET TOP DOLLAR?**

This is the process. Perception and presentation are everything.

I have been in houses for sale listed by other agents and my heart just ached, knowing that, with a little work and the right advice, the Sellers of that house could have had a higher price tag on their home.

And sold it for more money.

And sold it faster.

They just didn't get the right advice.

And that's a shame.

Owning a house is likely the largest financial investment you will ever make. You should expect to get the most out of that investment and want to. That extra money will allow you to invest in an even better property. Or the same kind of property but with better features or in a better neighborhood. Or help your retirement fund or put a kid through college.

Forget the money. Who wants to be on call for showings and trying to run their lives around appointments for **W E E K S**? Guess what? Nobody does.

So the house doesn't sell and the Sellers, the majority of the time, don't know why.

Do not get overwhelmed. WE are going to break down what seems like a

gargantuan task into little steps and pieces and believe me, it will all come together.

Step by step. You can work at it at your own pace and skip the steps that don't apply to your home or the state of your home.

**Note:** *Before you embark on this journey of preparing your home to sell, perhaps so that you can buy another house, please do reach out first to your finance company, mortgage agent or bank. You need to discuss your plans and goals with the mortgagor to ensure you have the equity needed to make a move, determine what penalties or fees might be charged for ending your mortgage early, if you can take the mortgage with you and under what circumstances, and of course, what kind of budget you might have for your next home. Find out all this information before moving forward. I have encountered a few instances in my business where sellers did not have equity needed to actually gain any profit if they sold or were faced with extremely high penalty fees which essentially cancelled out any profits they would have made. So **absolutely, take this step first.***

## 2

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## GETTING STARTED

Here is an outline of the steps that you will need to take:

- A) Garage/Basement/Storage Area/Attic – Sorting and deciding on items in these areas.
- B) Furniture – Going through the house and making a KEEP, GET RID OF, SELL or RELOCATE list. We will discuss this further later on.
- C) Closets – Going to go through all of the nooks and crannies in any other areas besides the ones in step one.
- D) Nick-Nacks, Buffets, Wardrobes, Shelves, Drawers & Hope Chests, etc.
- E) ROOM BY ROOM – A critical look and step by step process to re-organize each room and best practices.
- F) Kitchen and Cabinets
- G) Bathrooms
- H) Office/Den
- I) Maintenance List (interior) – A room by room inspection and list.
- J) Maintenance List (exterior) – A critical look and list.
- K) Shopping and Errands



- L) Execution (Exterior) – Following through on lists.
- M) Execution (Interior) – Following through on lists.
- N) Basement
- O) Windows and Window Coverings
- P) Tools and Workshop
- Q) Laundry Room - At the end when the cleaning is done.
- R) Heating and Air Conditioning, Water Tanks, Softeners and Treatment Systems
- S) Fire Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
- T) Wells and Septic Systems
- U) Documentation and Presentation – The final piece: Vital and important facts about a property.

Sounds daunting, I know. It can be. However, you will have to do all this in order to move anyway. It's much better to make money for doing these tasks **BEFORE** you sell.

These steps will make the process manageable and achievable. As well, they will allow you to really get an idea of what you actually have (as sometimes we forget what we have when we've stashed it away for a while).

Sometimes these discoveries are wonderful. You find an item and think, 'oh my gosh, I forgot about that,' and it makes you smile that you've found something you actually cherish.

These steps also help you feel like you are in control and every time you complete a step, you will be pretty proud of yourself (and you should be). It also increases your motivation to continue the steps, because you see the difference it is making and gets you even closer to your goal.



**Pro-Tip** (Time-Saver) : *This process makes it much easier when the time comes to actually pack because you will no longer have to sort anything out, throw anything out, sell anything, donate anything or really have anything left to clean. You know you will be moving items you actually want and not carting junk to the new place that you will either have to sort out later or will get tossed in yet another corner. So, you save money by moving less stuff and you save time, because you've already done the work.*



And if you are actually still not thrilled about carrying out all these steps, think of it like this instead:

**YOU ARE MAKING MONEY BY DOING THIS.**

You will just be paid a little later when the house sells, for a higher price than it would have if you'd not done these steps. These steps allow you to sell your home **FASTER** and for more money – sometimes, substantially more money. So, keep that in mind as we move forward.

Some statistics on the return of investment for improving a home before selling (not to mention how it helps your home sell fast).

Clean and De-Clutter	= 586% ROI - 99% AR
Lighten and Brighten	= 313% ROI - 97% AR
Landscaping	= 258% ROI - 93% AR
Electrical/Plumbing Repair	= 181% ROI - 92% AR
Replace/Shampoo Carpet	= 169% ROI - 98% AR
Paint Interior Walls	= 109% ROI - 96% AR
Paint Exterior Walls	= 51% ROI - 81% AR
Repair Damaged Flooring	= 107% ROI - 93% AR

(<https://stageandsell.ca/general/return-on-investments-when-selling-a-home/>)

A/R: Percentage of Agents that Recommend

Okay, on to the steps.

Just for giggles, take photos of all your rooms, basement, closets and the exterior before you start (for a little project later).

First, let's get prepared with what you will need:

- a) Cardboard boxes of various sizes but not too flimsy (for packing, discarding, storage, garbage, etc.)
- b) Tape – Packing tape (get the good stuff or you will regret it, a 6 pack should be plenty), the green painters tape for labelling and of course, painting (I think they come in a 4 pack).
- c) Garbage bags.
- d) Storage bins – plastic, heavy duty, stackable is best. If you don't have the budget for it, just get a few and shop the sales. They are great for moving but boxes also work. If you can afford a few, they are vital for things you might store out in a garage or a basement (to protect from water damage and rodents) and also moving really breakable china or dishes.
- e) A notebook, pen and a sharpie marker.
- f) Linen bags (for suits, off season coats too big for boxes, wedding dresses,

etc.)

g) Packing material – newspaper is what is used most but you can also buy a flat of packing paper at the moving store pretty cheap. The advantage to that is, when you move, you won't have to wash the ink off of all your dishes. I have another solution for this, however, you will still need some amount, depending on how much stuff you have.

h) Various household tools, including screwdrivers, step stools.

i) Cleaning products and materials such as oven cleaner, Windex, sos pads, bleach, paper towels, rags, etc.

j) Muscle – haha, kind of kidding. Two things: don't get massive boxes because once you fill them, they are too heavy to move. Second, light items go in big boxes. Heavy items go in smaller boxes. Still, if you have heavy boxes that have to go up or down stairs or out to a garage, etc., you may need some help. I live alone and I have devised several ways to move things that are too heavy for me to move by myself. However, if you are in jeopardy of hurting yourself, do not do it. Slide these items to the side, out of the way and mark them with painters tape and save them up until you have a bunch of stuff that needs moving, and then call in help (your girlfriend's husband or son, your son, your neighbor, your brother, etc.). Try to have a lot ready if they will be travelling a distance to help you so you aren't calling them right back again two days later.



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver) : *The best moving boxes I've ever found, usually have come from driving around neighborhoods where I have seen for sale signs. Monday is the best day. They are usually great boxes and people put them out to the curb and are more than happy if you pick them up. Also,*

*sometimes there are free postings for them on Kijiji or Facebook Marketplace. For wardrobe and specific box types (i.e.: wardrobe or artwork, which also work great for flat screen TVs), your local moving company should have them as well as mattress and box spring covers.*



**Pro-Tip** (trick) : *Go to Home Depot for some of the above items. The carpet section in flooring has those handy little 3x3" pieces of carpet for samples. Go grab 8 or 12 (pick thick ones). These are fabulous for placing under the corners of all your heavy furniture, both to protect floors and to easily move furniture around without damaging floors.*

Okay, let's get started!!!

# 3

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## STORAGE AREAS

**Garage, Basement, Storage Area, Attic** – Sorting and decisions on items in these areas.

In later steps, you will be going through areas and rooms, sorting and deciding what items are a keeper, a throwaway, store it, sell it, etc.

As such, you are going to need room to store what you've decided to keep. You don't want to be putting things already sorted into areas where there are items you have not yet gone through and then having to move everything twice (ugh). So, by doing the big jobs first, you make the room you need to store the things that you want to keep and will be moved to your new place. Besides, they do say that if you do the **HARDEST THING *first***, the thing you are really not looking forward to, the rest of the job is easy. You end up feeling so relieved and proud of yourself and have such a great sense of accomplishment. So, I'm excited for you to get this step done, because I know how great you will feel.

If you have a garage, start there. I say this because, once you start sorting other areas, a garage is a great place to store stuff. People expect a garage to

be a storage area and there aren't as many items in a garage that potential buyers need to see (but don't stuff it too full, buyers still need to have a look.) Basements, sheds, under stair storage, and attics (if the attic has stairs), are also great places. If you don't have a garage, start in the shed. If you don't have a shed, the second hardest place to clean out is the attic. (If yours is like mine, I need a ladder to get up there and get items down). Better to get this out of the way and **NOT** put anything else up there once finished.

So remember the order: Garage or shed, attic, basement and then other storage areas, like under the stairs or big storage closets (not regular bedroom closets).

The steps below are for garage/shed, basement, storage areas, attics and anyplace else you've used for storage.

You can download free checklists for these items [here](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/items) or visit:  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/items](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/items)

a) Pull out any boxes, bags, containers, etc. (or piles of stuff that have accumulated). You are going to make piles (just the same as any other room you do). Have your bins and/or boxes ready to go. Four or five is usually enough to start, but that may depend on the amount of items you have to go through. Write on the boxes with a marker, (or on the packing tape to stick to the bins), so you don't get confused. Mark as follows: garbage, give away, sell, give to someone, keep (You need two bins for keep. One is for keep out because you might need it before you move (e.g., Xmas is in two weeks), and the other is keep but pack.).

b) Now start sorting. For items you want to get rid of that aren't garbage, items that someone else might be able to use, consider if anyone you know could want or use it, otherwise, the item might be suitable to leave at the curb. I have gotten rid of some great stuff that I no longer use this way. I put

it out there (sometimes with a free sign) and it's usually gone in an hour. If it isn't gone in a day or two, put it back in the garage until you can take it to a donation center.

c) If you think you are going to have a ton of stuff that is decent, consider selling it. A yard sale could work if you do it all in one weekend (because you don't want to delay this process) but I have found that I am better off posting items on Facebook Marketplace or Kijiji. The work of setting up a yard sale at the break of dawn, pricing it all, sitting out there all day and then packing it all up, especially if it rains or not many people show up is just not worth it. Instead, I just take pictures with my cell phone of the item when I come across it, then stick it in the box that says sell. At the end of the day, I post it online.

d) For garbage – avoid dumping everything at the landfill if you can. If it's recyclable, recycle. If it's clothing that is in okay shape, consider washing it and dropping it off to a good will or other charitable bin. Old paint, chemicals, etc., have specific ways to be disposed of.

There are quite a few hardware stores (Rona for example, but call around before loading and heading out) that will take old paint. Usually there are municipal or local disposal companies (you will have to call and locate) and that will take old gas, batteries, propane tanks, tires, etc.

Take your empty wine and beer bottles back to the store or bottle return, or if there is a ton and you don't want to, call the local children's sports team – they might want to pick them up and use the funds for equipment or uniforms.

If it's old linens (i.e., towels, sheets, tablecloths, blankets, dishtowels) keep them. Unless they are moldy or unusable, keep anything towel sized and bigger - you will be using these later.



If you have sleeping bags you no longer want and they are in good shape, consider washing them and giving them to the women's or men's shelter, a camp for kids or the used clothing donation bin.

e) If you are reserving things for people you know, make sure they actually want them. Give them a call and confirm. If they do want the item, explain the necessity of giving them a deadline for pickup or arrange to drop off the next time you are out and about doing errands. If they do not show up and take the item within a week or two, put it for sale on Facebook or Kijiji. You need the room to store the things you are keeping and you don't need the item getting buried behind all your bins and boxes and then you end up taking it with you.

f) Once everything is sorted, seal, pack and mark the boxes (or if not full, take with you to the next area you are sorting through). Tie up the garbage bags and put them outside the garage. If you are selling items and you've taken pictures and measurements of the item, then box that up too and put it somewhere easily accessible.

g) If you are in the garage/shed, choose the area you are going to use to store the things you are keeping that can be packed now (i.e., in the rafters or loft in the garage or in a corner). Now, thoroughly clean the area so it is ready for your packed items.

h) Remember, we will be adding bins and boxes that you pack, so stack it in a way that it won't be falling over. For things you might need before moving, put those items in another area.

i) If you are in the attic or basement, take everything out to the garage/shed if you have one and put it in the appropriate place. If you do not have a garage, take everything outside that you do not want to keep except for items you are going to sell or reserve for someone. Garbage can go to the curb. Things to

give away can go straight into the car. Things to sell can go in a marked box after you have taken pictures of it.

j) Stack up the packed bins & boxes in a nice, neat pile, in an area that doesn't block anything.



**Pro-Tip** (Time-Saver): *If you are boxing up items that you are planning to sell, take pictures and measurements of the items and record them on your list as you are going through the items. Otherwise, you will have to go back later and do it anyway because a potential buyer is going to ask.*



For items that you need to keep out, put the bin in another area so it doesn't get mixed up. Do the same thing for the items you are reserving for someone. Make sure everything is marked.

If there are items too heavy for you to move, just slide it to the side, because in step 2, there may be other things that need to be moved and you will need to call in some muscle.

For the disposal of paint cans and bottles, etc., just put them to the side and get rid of as soon as possible or it will end up forgotten and overlooked. If you have to make a dump run, consider doing that and the paint can return, special disposal and bottle return all at the same time (of course, this depends on whether you have 100 cases of empties or just 3 or 4). If you expect to find more of the same kinds of items in other areas of the house or property, wait until you have sorted those areas so you can keep your running around to one trip.

Once done, sit down and plan when everything you sorted out is leaving/being dropped off or being picked up. Mark the dates on your calendar or to-do list, put giveaways on the curb and put items for sale postings online. If you are pressed for room until these sorted items leave, it's important that you expedite their removal by doing it right away or arranging for the people who are taking items, not to wait to pick them up.

**You can download free checklists for these items [here](#) or visit:  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/items](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/items)**

Now, depending on how long that took you, rinse and repeat. Do the garage and/or shed, attic, basement and then other storage areas, like under the stairs or big storage closets should all be done in this step.

This may take a couple days or a couple weeks depending on how much stuff has accumulated and how much time you have. But keep working on step one until all storage areas have been done.

Then take a break. Rest up for step 2.

## FURNISHINGS

Time to make decisions.

So, with your notepad, pen, and painters tape, we are going to go through the entire house.

If there is furniture in the house that you do not want to take with you to your new place, you are going to mark it as such (write what you are doing with the item on the painters tape and stick it to the furniture). There are several categories and you are going to mark the items as follows: Donate (to charity or put to the curb) or Give to (name of someone, i.e., son, daughter, etc.) or Sell (take a photo & measurements and record on your notepad) or Move to (relocate to another room in the house). This might come in handy for staging and especially if you get rid of a lot of furniture from one particular room.

You can download free checklists for these items [here](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/items) or visit:  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/items](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/items)



**Pro-Tip** (Organization): *Visit my website to download an items for sale*

*checklist (free). This gives you a tracking sheet with measurements, color, description, whether you've posted it, how much you are charging, etc.*



If it is going to be sold and you have a garage, mark it with painters tape (garage/for selling). Same applies if the item is going to be donated or given to someone (put the name of the person on the label).

Once done, move it all out to garage/shed (this is assuming your garage/shed is waterproof and rodent free). If you do not have a garage, move it as close to the door as you can, so that it is ready to go when the person comes to collect it.

On nice days, you can put things to the curb side. Just don't put things on the curb that can get destroyed by the weather because then no one will take it, and you curb will end up having to move it elsewhere. If no one takes the item, move it to garage and post it for sale or free or donate it.

Be sure to call the people you want to give things to and confirm they actually want it and give them a deadline to pick up. If you have a large number of items for donation, there are usually companies in the area that will pick up donations if you have a large amount. You may have to call around and see, but make the arrangements for pick up as soon as possible and after you have completed sorting every room in the house. You have to make the room you need for the pre-packed items so you can continue the process and continue to make progress, otherwise you will lose steam and things will start to pile up again.

Woohoo. You have completed another step. Feels good, right?

Now your home should be starting to feel a little roomier.

## CLOSETS & OTHER STORAGE

Believe it or not, potential buyers open cabinets, door and drawers. It bears repeating, if the closet, drawer, shelf, cabinet, room, etc., looks over full, stuffed, cluttered, messy or cramped, it creates the impression there is not enough room in the house.

Let's start:

Again, have your notepad and boxes ready. Have a box marked clothing donation, a box for give away, a box for pack and store, a box for pack and keep on hand. Also have painters tape to mark an item that you are giving to someone and a plastic bag for garbage.

### **Start first on coat/boot closets and linen closets**

- a) Coat/boot/shoe closets – First, decide if there is anything in the closet you no longer want. If there are items you no longer want, decide whether they are to be given to someone, donated or disposed of, and mark appropriately. Now, everything remaining in the closet should be items you want.
- b) If you live in an area that has seasons, decide what season appropriate coats/shoes/boots must stay in the closet (this may also include hats, gloves,

caps, scarves and snow pants, etc.). Remove everything else. Before you pack it, is it clean?? Who wants to move dirty things and then have to wash them all when they are unpacking in their new place? If items need to be washed, take them to the laundry room with the box they will be packed in once they are clean. Once clean, mark the box (e.g., coats) and put them in the area you have designated for the items you are keeping. For boots, same thing; if they are dirty, wash them in a laundry tub first or if running shoes (non-leather of course), put them through the washing machine (not the dryer though). I have washed all kinds of running shoes this way. They come out great. Pack up once dry and store with your other items.

c) Onto the linen closet – I chose this as the second closet to do, because in my house, it **is** a task. My closet is huge and it holds a lot. Did you know that make up, medication, cleansers, etc., have expiration dates? And I've discovered that some make up, including brushes, sponges, etc., dry up and get yucky.

d) Definitely have your garbage bag and packing box ready. I have 5 sets of sheets for 2 beds. I have various tablecloths only used for special occasions and way too many towels for just me. Decide what needs to stay. For example, sheets for the beds: if you strip sheets from beds and normally wash the same day, then just keep out one set per bed. Figure out how many bath towels, hand towels and face towels you need and just leave those. All of the other linens can go in a bin for later use when we are packing.

e) Dispose of any make up or medications that you no longer want or that have expired. Go through your first aid items and also check for expired products.

f) If you are like me, I purchase bulk toothpaste, soap, body wash, etc., decide what amounts will likely be used or needed until moving day. Pack

the rest and mark the box. Now, if you live somewhere that gets cold and it's cold now, you do not want to put it outside as the items with liquid will freeze, explode or leak. If the season where you are is fine, put it in the garage. If not, find a space for it, where it won't be in the way.

g) Reorganize the closet. Clutter should be gone and it should be neat and tidy.

h) If you have a massive bathroom vanity or shelving/storage in the bathroom, repeat this process there as well. That way, all of your bathroom items will be packed together.



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *I use linens to pack my most breakable items and items I do not want newspaper ink on (i.e., china, pictures, mirrors, all the dinnerware used daily, and televisions too - the linen goes around the tv before it goes in the box). I have found over the years that using linens almost completely eliminates any breakage of dishes and other fragile items.*



### **Bedroom Closets**

This particular item can be complicated if you have children, depending on how many children you have and how old they are. With my children, I recycled a lot of items from one child down to the other (i.e., toys, clothes, shoes {if they weren't worn out}, books, etc.).

Your teen may not want you rooting through their closets and closet, so you may have to talk them into doing it with you (bribery and rewards may be part of that conversation). If your teen was like my teens, there will be things that they don't need in their bedroom but do want to keep. As well, there will be clothes they never wear, some brand new, that they've decided they don't



like, so go through all the clothing as well.

Have bins/boxes ready for:

- a) off season clothes/footwear (I usually put footwear in a bag first or have a separate bin altogether for them) and mark with your child's name
- b) clothes/footwear to keep for another child (although I did find that teenagers are a lot less likely to take hand me downs)
- c) clothes/footwear to donate and one for garbage (i.e., panties, etc.)
- d) any memories items as well. If you have more than one child, you may want to take the memories bin to the next bedroom Mark the bins and store the "KEEP" bins in the place you cleared out for storing packed items.
- e) Remove the garbage bag and donate box to the next room.

Rinse and repeat – do all the bedrooms, including your own.

Once all the bedrooms are completed, give yourself a huge pat on the back.

The 'going through things' is almost done.



**Pro-Tip** (Organization): *There were many things that my children created, made at school or had given me over the years and I created a bin called memories, where I would store all of their different creations they made when they were growing up. I also saved their favorite toys and things they wanted to keep but wanted me to hold onto until they were older and settled. Years later, I went through them all (I had 8 large bins by then), crying as I went through them and divided them up for each child. It was fun seeing my children go through everything I saved, seeing what they had forgotten they created as children made them laugh and smile. Of course, I*

*kept one bin for myself, but each of my children also has a memories box now. And they have done the same for their children.*



**Knick-knacks, buffets, wardrobes, shelves, drawers, cedar chests, hope chests, etc.**

And now for the last of the places and spaces where things may have accumulated – storage chests, wardrobes, shelves, etc. Everyone has that overflowing Tupperware cabinet and junk drawer.

This is the step where you finish off sorting and purging.

Once you've decided what items you are keeping, repeat previous steps. If selling items, take photo and measurements and put in a 'sell' box. If you are donating it, put it in a box marked 'donation'. If giving the item to someone, confirm they want the item and discuss when they might pick it up, and mark it with their name. If it is garbage, add it to the bag you've already started.

For the items that are breakable that you are keeping, grab that box of linens you put aside and wrap items with those linens. (Save your heaviest and largest linens for larger items such as mirrors and TVs.)

## ROOM BY ROOM REVIEW

A Step by step process to re-organize each room and best practices.

Now that the house has been purged of all the items you no longer want (including furniture and clutter) and all the items that could be pre-packed, let's take another look at the rooms and what is left.

You can download free checklists for these items [here](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/checklists) or visit:  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/checklists](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/checklists)

Go through the rooms with your notepad or checklist.

Could it be organized better?

Does the entire room need a repaint?

Is it bright enough?

Do you need bins or baskets to keep toys, games, jewelry, hats or hair accessories together?

Could adding a few hangers in the closet alleviate overstuffed drawers?

Does the closet need another shelf to hold sweaters or games?

Could adding a decorative hook organizer to the wall keep things off the floor?

Have a look to see if adding a storage solution (like a basket, hanger, shelf or bin) would make it look even better.

If so, do you have something in the house already that could be used like a basket, decorative box or a hatbox?



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *If you purchase items like these, they can become part of the décor and will certainly go with you to your new place. Try a home store like Marshalls or Home Sense for affordable, but pretty solutions.*



**Pro-Tip** (selling tactic): *Although repainting whole rooms takes some time and involves some work, it is the easiest and most affordable way to completely transform the entire look of a room, brighten the room and make it look and smell brand new. If you have very dark colors in a room (except, say for a feature wall, where one wall is darker than the rest of the room), you will want to be painting over that with a neutral or light color (eggshell is best). Remember, dark colors make the room look small and colors also affect moods.*



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *If you have dark paint colors that you are painting over, buy some primer paint and paint two coats over the dark color with the primer paint first (you can get it tinted to the same color as the eggshell or latex paint you will be applying). Primer paint is much cheaper than regular paint. You can also get matte paint tinted and I always use that on my ceilings (less reflection or glare, cobwebs blend in better).*



While you are in each room, make notes about what needs to be addressed, but also look critically for any damage that needs addressing such as: holes in the walls (from nails that have been removed or an overactive teenager), dirty light fixtures or ceiling fans, light bulbs that need replacing, dirty curtains or blinds, could the carpets need a cleaning?

Proceed through each room as above and when you are done you've created a list of things to pick up and a list of items to refresh and improve each room in your home.

**Download a free shopping and errand list [here](https://iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanninng/books/stepbystep/lists):**

**<https://iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanninng/books/stepbystep/lists>**

### **SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT BASEMENTS:**

No matter your type of basement (crawl space, full size, finished or unfinished), you will still need to go through it.

Is it dark and dingy?

Does it need painting?

There is a special paint for concrete and also moisture/mold resistant paint for damp basements. If you have had problems with the paint sticking to the concrete, there is also a very affordable sealing application that can be rolled on and once cured, paint will then stick to the wall. Talk to a specialist at the paint store and buy the appropriate paint and rollers for this area.

If it needs painting, it is best to use light colors but avoid browns or yellows because they can be perceived as water damage or cigarette smoke stains. I put white paint on the walls and a light grey paint for concrete floors.

Add any necessary items to your list.

### **SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT ATTICS:**

If you have a walk up attic, it has likely become a great storage area for a multitude of things. In some homes, just sorting through the items could take an entire day. However, do go through everything and pack and stack the items you want to keep and remove the rest.

Attics do become dusty and seem to attract cobwebs. Take a good look. Does it need a vacuum? Windows likely need a cleaning. Is it bright enough? Replace light bulbs and use higher wattage bulbs so the entire space can be seen. Mark down anything that needs to be done.

Buyers will love an attic with stairs as potential additional space they can finish for a specific use or as a storage area. They will check it out thoroughly.

***DON'T PANIC. YOU ARE JUST MAKING LISTS.***

## KITCHEN, CABINETS & APPLIANCES

This step should only be done if you are within a month or two of listing the house. Unless you live alone, like me, and know that no one is going to mess it up in the next 4-8 weeks. Otherwise, wait till the end to do this step.

Be prepared with sos pads, a square head screwdriver (and possibly a flathead), a duster, rags, paper towels, a bucket with soap and warm water, a stepladder, boxes, garbage bags, your notepad, marker, oven cleaner, etc.

First thing to do is put your oven on self-cleaning or spray with oven cleaner. Be sure to line some paper towels around the door so it doesn't drip on your floor.

Remove your window coverings for washing.

Wipe down the walls with your duster and if they still look dirty, wash them. Wipe the trim around the doors and windows. Clean your light fixtures thoroughly and check the bulbs. Wash the interior window frame as well as the screen and glass.

Now, mark your boxes: a giveaway box, a donate box, a garbage box and a keep and pack box marked with kitchen. Grab your stepladder or step stool

and your warm bucket of water with some dish soap (don't use any harsh chemicals on solid wood cabinets), along with a dry dishtowel and a dishrag. Get your step stool and working from one end to the other, do the upper cabinets first. Empty out the entire cabinet (usually a double door with one or two shelves). As you empty the cabinet, throw away or box up anything that is not going back into the cabinet. Pack anything you will not need again until after the move such as Christmas dishes, platters, china, excessive dinnerware, specialty items like waffle makers and so on. Discard the lids that don't have a container, ruined containers, pots and pans that you no longer use.



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *Did you know that Tupperware that is damaged can be replaced for free? (find a local Tupperware dealer and give them your damaged item to replace).*



Give the cabinet a good scrub with the dishrag inside and out, including the doors and handles and then thoroughly dry the cabinet. As you put everything back, wipe the bottom of anything that might be sticky or dirty from whatever spills might have been in there. Arrange everything in a pleasing manner as you replace it. Move on to the next cabinet.

Once the uppers are finished, remove the step stool and do the lower cabinets, leaving your pot and pan cabinet/drawer, and under the kitchen sink to the very end (do the dirtiest last).

You may want to consider putting liners in the pot and pan cabinets or the cabinet where you keep cooking oil. That way, you won't have to scrub them again and can just wipe them quickly when you are doing the final packing.



Once all the cabinets are completed, get the ladder again and clean on top of the cabinets (unless they go right to the ceiling). If you have stored items up there, take them down, give them a wash and pack them, unless you will need them before you move. It is amazing how dirty and dusty it can get on top of cabinets.

Before starting to clean the oven, turn off your refrigerator.

Clean the oven and then take a look at your hood fan. Is it clean? Is the screen clogged and greasy looking? Clean the vent thoroughly and the screen as well. If the screen is beyond cleaning, **DO NOT THROW IT OUT**. Put it back for now but the next time you go to do errands, wrap it in a bag and take it with you to the hardware or appliance store to see about getting a replacement. Add it to your list, so you don't forget it when you go out next.

Next, clean the stove top (if it's a glass top stove, follow the care instructions specifically for glass top stoves, as using the wrong cleaning method could scratch the glass).

Then, depending on what kind of stove/oven you have, pull out the drawer at the bottom and vacuum under the stove and then wash it. As well, clean the drawer before putting it back. If your stove rolls out that's even better. Wash the walls behind and beside where the stove goes, as well as the stove itself thoroughly. Do the floor and then replace the stove and do the bottom drawer. Now clean the refrigerator. While you are doing the fridge part, open the freezer part so it can thaw enough that you can wipe it without your cloth sticking to it.

Discard all old food and items that you know you are not going to eat. Wipe everything down thoroughly. Do the same with the freezer. Rinse your cloth well and clean the outside of the refrigerator, as well as the top, and dry off.

If your refrigerator rolls out, take a vacuum and clean behind it as well. Do

your refrigerator coils if you have any and the bottom area of the back of the fridge. Clean the floor thoroughly and slide your fridge back in.

Now, remove everything on your kitchen counters and thoroughly scrub your backsplash and countertops. Do the sink and faucet as well.

Remove the donation box to join the other donations you have sorted out. Put all the garbage outside. Close up the items you are keeping, mark the box as kitchen and also breakable if it is, and remove to the area you have reserved for items you are keeping.

Remove any floor vents or cold air returns for washing and then thoroughly wash the floor, being sure to get underneath the bottom of the cabinets for anything that was missed.

Before you leave the kitchen, take a closer look. Is there any damage anywhere? Is there anything that needs to be touched up? Window coverings? New light bulbs? Does the hood fan light work? Does the oven and fridge light work? Does the hood fan need a new screen? Could it use a painting? Add to the list you already created.

Wow. You must be feeling really good now. You now know almost exactly every item that is in your home and have discarded everything you do not want or need anymore. You've reduced the number of items you have to move to the new house, reducing the work and money involved with a move. And, the best part, when you get to the new place, you will be like starting fresh.

## BATHROOMS

Bring your garbage bag, packing box, some cleaning products, paper towels, duster, soapy warm water, notepad, etc.

Take a duster and wipe down the walls. If you notice steam drip marks or discoloration, wash the walls instead and see if this removes the stains. Otherwise, it will need painting.

Wipe the top of the door and window frames with a damp cloth as well.

Wipe down the bathroom door. The interior of the door is subject to a lot of steam, so it usually holds some dust or water marks. Ditto on the ceiling corners.

Remove the exhaust fan cover for washing and vacuum inside for any dust.

Dust the light fixture (if you have glass covers for the bulbs that are really dirty, carefully remove and wash and once dry, replace). Check for any bulbs that need replacing.

Dust or wipe anything hanging on the walls.

Do a thorough cleaning of your tile around the tub or shower. Does it need to be re-caulked?

Do your shower doors or glass enclosure need a soap scum or water stain remover?

Is the drain clogged? Could it use a new shower curtain?

Make notes for anything that needs attention and can't be done right now for lack of materials (i.e., caulking, light bulbs, water stain remover, etc.)

Remove the window coverings for washing.

Wash the interior window frame and screen and then the entire window and leave a streak free finish.

Remove all items from your cabinets, drawers, shelves, shower holder, etc. Go through and determine what needs to be thrown out and what needs to be packed.

Pack what you can, mark the box and move it out of the bathroom.

Clean and dry cabinets and drawers thoroughly and replace the items in an orderly fashion. Ditto for the shelves.

Remove any floor vents or cold air returns for washing.

Finish by cleaning the vanity (thoroughly wash down the front and sides) and do the mirror, toilet, sink and then floor.

## DEN/OFFICE

I left this purposely towards the end for a reason. There are items that we are going to need when the time comes to put the house on the market.

Approach the room like all the others, except you are sorting paperwork, documents, records, etc., instead of clothes.



**Pro-Tip** (Safety): *You have to be very careful when disposing of personal documents like bills or even envelopes with your address on them. Identity theft and just plain theft are huge issues these days. If you don't have a shredder to safely dispose of any personal records or paperwork, put it in a bag and either google a shredding service in your area or keep it for the burn bin (you just may want to invest in a small shredder, so you have it for the future).*



Sort out your personal records. Check with your country's revenue service to see how long you have to keep your personal income tax records before

discarding them. For previous years that you have to keep, they can be boxed. Keep all records that are house related.

For monthly utility bills, go back the last 12 months and the remainder can be packed.

You want to set aside any receipts or warranties or paperwork, for any improvements or maintenance work you have done to the house, as well as an idea of the monthly costs to run the house.

For example, keep out any paperwork for:

New roof

New furnace and/or air conditioning

New windows and/or doors

New appliances (if you are including them with the house)

Hot water tank – owned or rented

Flooring

New kitchen cabinets or counters

New faucets

Contractor bills – i.e., electricians, plumbers, etc.

Fixtures – i.e., toilets, sinks, taps, lighting

Waterproofing

Insulating

Siding

Decks or fencing

Pools, hot tubs

Inspections

Landscaping

Insulation

Water Softeners

Water Treatment

Well Information – including drilling information (like depth and flow rate) water tests, new pressure tank, new well pump.

Fireplace or Woodstove Information – safety certificate, user manual, inspections, repairs, steel flue information.

Property tax bill (current year is great, if not, last year's will do).

One year's worth of utility bills such as heating bill, water bill, electricity bills.

Internet provider bill (just one month will do).

Cable provider bill (just one month will do).

Telephone provider bill (just one month will do).

Any other monthly bills: i.e., if you have condo fees, shared road fees, community use fees, garbage fees, etc.

Put all of this to the side and save for later and deal with the rest. Pack it if it isn't needed and file it appropriately if it needs to stay on hand.

Books you aren't going to need for the next month or so, can be boxed as well (small box so you can carry it).

You've already done a room by room on the furniture so you should be okay as far as what is left in the room.

Do go through any and all files and paperwork now, because we all do have a habit of keeping excessive amounts of old paperwork that we don't notice.

You don't want to be doing it when you are trying to pack for the real move.

Plus, we need the list above and if you go through everything, you will likely find everything we need.

Dust the walls down and if really dirty, wash them. Wipe the tops of all the door and window frames.

Take the light fixture apart and wash. Check the bulbs.

Remove window coverings for washing and thoroughly wash the interior window frame and then do the glass and sill.

Remove any floor vents or cold air returns for washing.

Then thoroughly vacuum or wash the floor.

Now, take a closer look for damages, light bulbs, etc., like we did in all the other rooms and add it to your list.

Take a break now and we can re-start when you are ready.

Okay, so you have moved out all the furniture you didn't want in the house. You have gone through all the storage areas of every room including linens, closets, buffets and all cabinets/shelves and nick-nacks and in the basement, you did all the storage areas too. You have thoroughly cleaned every part of every bedroom, the kitchen, the bathroom and the den. You are likely tired, but I bet you feel great!!

Now, let's do all the remaining rooms. You've already removed the furniture, packed up anything you don't need, disposed of what you don't want and gone through all the storage areas. These rooms should be pretty simple and quick. These rooms might include living room, dining room, family room, recreation room, sunroom, games room, bar, breakfast room, well, you get the idea.

Just follow the steps we did in the other rooms: walls, trim, window coverings, window, light fixture and carpet.



## MAINTENANCE LISTS

**Interior** – A room by room inspection and list.

By now you've already begun the maintenance list when you were doing closets and rooms. However, let's go through the rooms or areas that might not have been done yet, such as the living room, dining room, laundry, mud room, bathrooms, basement, rec room, sunroom, and so on.

Complete the list and then make notes of the items that will be needed to address the issues you have identified. For example: plaster to repair holes, sander to sand the plaster, paint and paint brushes, painters tape, light bulbs, bucket and soapy water, carpet cleaner, drop cloths, rollers, etc.

If you don't have the items needed in the house already, add the items you are missing to the list of things to pick up (i.e., baskets, bins, shelf liners, light bulbs, etc.). If you have the original paint cards from the rooms you had previously painted, dig them out so you can get the right color.



**Pro-Tip** (Selling Tactic): *Whenever I have sold a house, I staple all the paint cards to a piece of paper and write down which room or rooms that*

*paint has been used in. If you've ever moved into a place and had to re-paint an entire room just for one small, damaged area (usually the result of moving out or in), you will appreciate this gesture. When I have paint remaining (unless it's full), I usually write the room on the top of the can with marker, and I leave it behind for the new owners.*



Download a paint color form [here](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/lists):  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/lists](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/lists)

### **Exterior – A critical look and list.**

Now that we are sorted and have our lists completed for the interior of the house, let's get outside and see what needs to be done. No Christmas lights still up in May, right?

Depending on the time of year, any work outside may vary. For instance, if it's wintertime (with snow and the whole nine yards), there will not be too much you can do besides making sure all the areas like decks, patios, and pathways are shoveled (as well as a path around the house if you can, so that a buyer or his inspector can do a walk around).

Besides that, make sure there is no garbage or refuse that is visible and if there is, try to clean it up and dispose of it.

If it's spring or summer, your list will be much longer.

- a) Eaves troughs: in good shape, need repairing or cleaning?
- b) Decks and fencing: in good repair and clean?
- c) Gardens and landscaping: trimmed and cleaned? Weeds to remove?
- d) Bushes and trees: need trimming or raking?
- e) No garbage stuck in fencing or bushes or in the garden?
- f) Leaves to rake?

g) BBQ clean and presentable?

h) If the house is vinyl sided, does it need a cleaning? (If the house is vinyl, especially a lighter colored vinyl, power washing is a great way to clean it up. Otherwise, you can buy a cleaning fluid in a bottle that attaches to your hose. I believe they have one for exterior vinyl and one for windows. (If you have a really good power washer, be sure not to use too much pressure with the nozzle as it could crack your vinyl.)

i) Does the house need a paint job? Consider getting quotes and having this done as it can dramatically increase your price and the entire presentation of the property (curb appeal).

Make notes on your list for anything that needs to be addressed. If there are items you will need to buy (i.e., deck stain, cleaner for a power washer) add them to your 'need to buy/pick up list.

I am not adding lawn cutting to this list as that is at least a weekly chore that will be done anyway, but certainly you want that done the day before you go on the market and once on the market, you want to do it regularly.

## SHOPPING & ERRANDS

**Review all your notes thoroughly and make sure your list is complete.**

Your list might include: latex paint, primer paint, concrete paint, paint rollers, roller handles, paint trays, paint brushes, plaster fill (drywall compound), sanding blocks, caulking, light bulbs, hood vent screen, tsp, possibly carpet shampoo, power washer liquid, etc.

Then go out and pick up/drop off and shop.

- a) Drop off the items to the donation center, the dump, the bottle return, etc.
- b) Take the old paint cans with you when you go to the hardware store to get what you need.
- c) Décor items on the list
- d) Carpet cleaner (if buying one). If renting, wait till the day you have all the rooms ready.
- e) Shop Vac



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *I have found that cheap brushes are lousy brushes. They don't brush on smoothly, they lose hairs constantly that you then have*

*to pick out of the paint, and they don't spread as nicely. Cheap rollers and roller handles also cause the paint not to go on smoothly, not to absorb into the roller or lint comes off the roller. Cheap paint ends up looking like cheap paint. There are better ways to save money. Good brushes are not cheap but you can sometimes find a 3-pack for under \$30.00. If you take care of them, they will last for years. Be sure at least one or two are angled brushes for cutting in and doing small areas.*



**Funny Story:** My son, who loathes spending money, recoiled at the price of the power washer soap (which is very concentrated by the way). Instead, he used regular dish soap. Needless to say, he could have held a bubble foam party for the entire neighborhood because all that came out was bubbles. Oh, and, he did the same thing with his dishwasher and his kitchen was full of bubbles (obviously doesn't take after me – lol).

## EXECUTION - EXTERIOR

You are following through on your maintenance lists.

**Exterior:** Let's start:

First, you've picked up all the items on your list right? If you need to rent a carpet cleaner, wait until you are working inside as this will be the last thing you do when completing rooms. More on that later.

You are going to start outside, but before you go out there, let's get the plaster and fill holes in all the rooms you went through that require it. Plaster needs time to dry, so if you do it now, it will be dry when you want to start the inside and it's the first thing that needs to be done when you do start.

**Note:** If there are more than just a few holes in a room and the damage requires a lot more patching than a nail hole, you will need to remove furniture and belongings from the room or cover everything inside it before you sand the area. If you have no experience with plastering, google how to do small jobs like fill holes. Put on a thin coat only. If you feel you are up to the task for larger holes/areas, knock yourself out, otherwise, call someone you know to assist you.



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *It is always better to do thin coats of plaster, one at a time on larger areas, and then sand, wipe, and put another coat, rather than slopping on a huge amount. Huge amounts make a lot more dust when sanded and it takes forever to sand it down.*



## **OUTSIDE WE GO:**

a) Start with repairing and cleaning out eaves troughs. Top down is the rule. If you wash the exterior and then clean the eaves troughs, you will just make the house dirty again. Once you've cleaned the eaves troughs, rake any debris that has fallen on the ground and dispose of it. Add the extension pieces to the down spouts if necessary.

b) Next – repair any fencing or decking that needs attention. You may be able to do this yourself or you may have to bring in help depending on the job. If the deck boards are really old looking or mucky or moldy, power wash them. Do it on the LOW setting otherwise it will actually eat into the wood. If the boards are very old and almost rotting, do not power wash as you will make them worse. Once cleaned and repaired, stain the new boards if they don't match the existing deck/fencing.

c) Trim any bushes or trees that require it. And then rake the area along with any leaves from the fall. Check for garbage and leaves caught up in bushes or trees by the wind and clean up. If there are overgrown weeds somewhere, pull them or weed whack them and dispose of.

d) If there is any refuse (not garbage but perhaps a pile of material that needs to go to the dump or something like that), dispose of it now, so that the area underneath can be seeded for grass.

e) Gardens look okay?

f ) Check your dryer vent. You likely need to take the cover off and shop Vac the cover and pipe opening to remove the lint that has accumulated there.

g) Do you have a pool, hot tub or spa? If so, it should be thoroughly clean by the time the house is hitting the market. If you have been maintaining the pool yourself, it may be a good idea to have it inspected by a pool technician to get a report that everything is in working order. If you've replaced a part or the liner, it's important to locate that paperwork. People can be leery of pools and the potential expense of repairing them, so providing maintenance records will ease their concerns right from the start.

h) If you have outdoor furniture or cushions, ensure they are clean and in good condition. You don't have to drag them out or arrange anything now, but it sure looks nice if it's set up when potential buyers view your home.

i) If your house is vinyl sided, wash the house and the exterior windows using a power washer and mild soap (use the recommended soap for vinyl and windows - ask at the hardware store for which type you need).

Now, put everything away. The outside is done!



## EXECUTION - INTERIOR

Do one floor at a time as it's very laborious to move everything up and down stairs. Start at the top and work your way down.

### **Wall Repairs and Painting**

The order in which we complete the tasks on the interior really depends on what needs to be done.

**The list is ordered by what needs to be done first, in order to avoid having to repeat cleaning or risk damaging what you've already completed.**

**If there are items on the list you do not need to do, skip them.**

You do not want to sand areas on walls after you've cleaned the carpets or the windows, etc. Here is a sort of priority list (you may have a specific task not mentioned here, so slide it into the list where appropriate and prior to the cleaning part). Carpet cleaning, window coverings, and décor items will be the last thing you do to a room.

Here are the steps with a short description (longer descriptions will follow after in the step-by-step list):

- a) remove window coverings and any bedding
- b) remove or cover furniture and items
- c) sand and clean dust
- d) if another coat of plaster is required, once dry, sand and clean dust
- e) **CRUCIAL** - Wipe down everything - wipe down all walls and ceiling with a cloth. If it's still dirty, wash the walls.
- f) clean ceiling fan/light fixture and replace bulbs
- g) put down drop cloths and paint the ceiling, walls, baseboards, trim
- h) remove drop cloths and painters tape
- i) clean again
- j) put up any shelves/hooks/décor, etc.
- k) wash windows thoroughly
- l) wash floors/clean carpets
- m) replace window coverings/blinds, once they are clean
- n) put everything back into the room



**Pro-Tip** (Time-Saver): *If carpets need to be cleaned and you do not have a carpet cleaner, consider investing in one, borrowing one or renting one. If renting one, wait to pick it up on the day you plan to do the work, and do all rooms at once. It should be the last thing done to a room. If you must do all carpet cleaning in one day because it's a rental machine, do not put everything back in the room when the work is completed. Instead, get all the work done in all the rooms and do the carpets first.*



Further explanation of completing the room-by-room improvements:

First, gather the necessary materials such as stepladder, sanding pads, rags (one wet and one dry), soapy warm water, duster, shop vac, drop sheets, flathead screwdriver, paint tray, paint roller, paint brush, paint, extension handle or telescopic handle, paint can opener, rubber mallet, a plastic bag for your brush, a garbage bag for your paint tray, dust mask, safety glasses, a baseball cap for your head (especially if you are painting the ceiling), linens or plastic to cover remaining furniture, painters tape, trim paint and brush (if needed), paper or thin cardboard, plaster and a scraper, etc.

a) Remove the window coverings (wash if fabric or put aside to clean later if blinds). Remove and wash any bedding.

b) If there is sanding or painting to do, remove what you can from the room including upholstered furniture if possible. Push the rest of the furniture in the center of the room and cover it with the old and unwanted linens you saved or drop cloths or plastic. It's not easy to paint a room with furniture in it, but it can be done. If you are doing the ceiling, get a telescopic handle that will screw into your paint roller.

If it is a carpeted floor, you may want to put a drop cloth down before sanding. I have found if the floors do not have carpet, it's easier to vacuum up the dust from a floor than from a drop cloth. However, it is much harder to vacuum the dust out of carpets.

Close all other doors on the floor you are sanding, turn off your heat or air conditioning. Cover any heat ducts/vents. This will prevent the dust from being sucked into your furnace and prevent the film of dust you will find in every room if you leave the doors open. If you've never sanded before,

google and watch a few different videos for methods that match your specific size of repair.

c) Do your sanding. See if you need a second coat of plaster (large areas or deep holes usually need a second coat or even a third). If a second coat is necessary, put on a thin coat and move to the next room while it dries (thin coats don't take long to dry if the house isn't humid). I do multiple rooms at a time if I have all the tools on the same floor and am getting dirty anyway. You could also tape off the trim and prep the room while waiting for the plaster to dry.

After sanding, it's usually a good idea to leave the room for a half hour with the door closed to let the dust settle, and then vacuum it. I do not walk anywhere else wearing those shoes. I take them off at the door. If you are really dusty, try to not move around the house too much after leaving the room. Carefully walk outside and shake out the dust. For small little nail holes this is not as important.

d) If a second coat isn't necessary, use a shop Vac to vacuum up the dust (do not use a regular household vacuum as the dust will **destroy** it). You can buy a shop vac for dirty smaller jobs like these for about \$35 or \$40. Also vacuum out window sills and ceiling fans, etc. and any other dirty areas.

e) **THIS IS CRUCIAL:** Wipe tops of trim around windows and doors and baseboard before painting. Wipe down walls with a duster but if walls are really dirty, wash them down before painting.

This step makes a huge difference to the finished paint quality, and it is really noticeable if you do not do it. And why not get the best result for all the work you are doing? If you don't do it, all the dust, hair, and anything else on the walls will roll into the paint roller and then into the paint tray. Then it is in the paint and it will be noticeable in the paint that is rolled on all the walls as

it is spread with the roller. And it will be impossible to get off once it's on the walls.

f) Clean the ceiling fan/light fixture and replace bulbs - it's amazing how much dust can be on the blades of a ceiling fan. Use dish soap and warm water and wash and dry the blades as well. If you are painting the ceiling, most blades can be removed with a screwdriver (just be ready with a sandwich bag or container to put the screws in so they don't get lost).

g) Remove all plug covers and light switches and use painters tape to cover them (it's a pain getting paint off of switches and plugs). Put the plug and switch covers to the side to wash before putting back on after painting. Replace them with new ones if they are looking rough or chipped or cracked.

h) Put down drop cloths and tape off trim and baseboards. Also tape off the light fixture. I am really good at rolling paint, but I always end up getting paint on the light fixture. Have your damp cloth handy in case you accidentally get the wall color on white trim, the ceiling or light fixtures, etc. Or the ceiling paint on the walls.

i) If you are painting the ceiling, do that first and cut in the paint where the ceiling meets the walls, as well as around the light fixture. If you are doing the walls, cut in the edges (in other words, brush new paint around the window trim, door trims, both sides of corners and above the baseboard in a 2 or 3" strip, as well as around any wall light fixtures, plugs and switches). Then, when you are rolling, you don't have to roll close to the trim, etc. You will find that the prepping a room for painting (plastering, sanding, cleaning, moving, and covering furniture, taping, etc.) takes a lot longer than the actual painting. Once you get to rolling, it takes very little time.

j) Do the painting. Determine if it requires a second coat. Finish ceilings and walls.

k) Touch up or repaint the trim with trim paint. If you have carpet in the room, use a thin piece of cardboard (or something similar) that you can slide under the baseboard to protect your carpet from getting paint on it. I've also used painters tape and taped right under the baseboard (pushing the tape flat with a scraper) and then used cardboard over top to prevent drips or spills (getting paint out of carpet is impossible).

l) Move to the next room while the paint is drying and prep the room for painting (switch plate and plug covers, painters tape, moving furniture, removing window coverings, etc.)

m) Go back to the first room. Once all the painting is done and dry, roll up the drop cloths and linens covering the furniture and take them all outside for a shake before putting them in the next room you are painting, just in case they are dusty or dirty. Put the drop cloths in place in the next room you are doing. Do any necessary sanding. Determine if a second coat of plaster is necessary. If so, wipe the area with a damp cloth and apply second coat. While drying, you can finish the first room (unless you are covered in dust).

n) In the first room, remove all the painters tape (do this slowly and carefully, so you don't peel off any of the new paint) and put it in the garbage.

o) Reassemble the light fixture.

p) If there are shelves to put up or items to hang on the walls, do this now while the walls have no furniture against them. If necessary, vacuum again.

q) Using your buckets with soapy water, thoroughly clean the window, inside the frame (no bugs), the screen and the glass.

r) If washed, put the curtains or blinds back up.

s) Wash all switches and plug covers, heat vents and cold air return vents and put them back in place.

t) Dust all furniture in the room.

u) Vacuum all areas free of furniture. Wash floors if not carpeted. Use carpet cleaner to clean the carpet (or leave furniture where it is until you can). Slide furniture in the center of the room back into place and vacuum and/or wash the area in the center where the furniture was.

v) Bring any removed furniture back into the room (unless waiting to do the carpet). If it is upholstered, vacuum it thoroughly, including under the cushions.

w) Remake the bed and put all items back in the room.



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *When I bought my current house, I ended up having to replace almost every light fixture. There were two decent ceiling fans though. One was only the fan and no light. Weird right? The hardware store has light kits that you can add to some fans. It was considerably less than a brand new ceiling fan with a light was going to cost, so I bought it. However, an electrician normally has to install it so you will have to see if it still saves you money by the time you factor that in.*



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *The other ceiling fan in my place had the light and was actually a nice fan, except for the dark brown blades. So, I took the blades off, washed and dried them thoroughly and using a mini roller, I painted them a really light gray. It took a few coats of course, but it looks fantastic.*



**Pro-Tip** (Safety): *I wear a mask when I am sanding no matter how small the job. And a heavy-duty mask if the job is bigger than a nail hole. I didn't*

*always used to be careful about wearing these masks over the years and I've paid the price for it with my lungs. You may want to wear safety glasses to protect your eyes from falling dust. Wear shoes that you can take off right outside the door.*



**Pro-Tip** (Time-Saver): *When I paint walls with a roller, I always have a wet and dry rag with me. If I accidentally mark the ceiling (which is white) with my color for the walls, it will come off if wiped right away with a damp cloth. If you do not do this, you will then have to touch up the ceilings with your ceiling paint color and it will be visible (old paint on a ceiling will not be the same color as new paint, even if it's the same color).*



**Pro-Tip** (Money-Saver): *If I am using the same paint color in multiple rooms, and painting the same day, I wrap my paint tray in a garbage bag, my paint roller in a plastic grocery bag and my brush in a large Ziploc freezer bag. I wrap these up the minute I stop painting because if I don't, the paint on brush, roller, and in the tray, start drying out and creates little flakes that will then end up on your walls when you resume painting or start painting a new room. If you have to do a second coat, also wrap everything up in the bags. I usually take the right number of bags with me to the room I'm painting, so I don't have to run and get them after I'm covered in paint.*

**REPEAT THE SAME PROCESS FOR ALL ROOMS THAT NEED IT**  
(Laundry Room last).



Paint rollers and brushes can last two days in plastic bags if the bags are sealed well. The paint tray cannot be left more than 6 hours as it does start drying out. When you finish painting for the day (and if there is NO foreign material in the paint or dried paint flakes) pour the paint back into the can, using the brush to get the bulk of it out of the tray and seal the can tightly. Take your tray to the laundry tub and if it is washed immediately, it comes clean in minutes. Don't leave brushes in plastic more than a few days as they will start to dry, making it harder to clean the brush. I am crazy about my brushes. If I am not painting in the next day or two, I wash them as soon as I'm finished painting because the longer you wait, the harder it is to clean them.

\*If renting a carpet cleaner, try to keep the rooms as empty as possible after they've been painted, so that once all rooms have been painted, you can do all the carpets in one day to save some money. Depending on the size of your house and how many rooms have carpet, this may be a two day task.

## **BASEMENT**

You want really bright bulbs in the basement, so it isn't dark and dingy.

- a) If there are light fixtures, make sure they are cleaned and replace the bulbs to bright ones. This is especially helpful when cleaning and painting the basement.
- b) If your basement is a crawl space with a concrete floor, take your shop vac down and thoroughly vacuum for cobwebs and vacuum the floor (you have already removed anything stored there in the first step).
- c) If your basement is unfinished or partially unfinished, use a broom to get all the cobwebs off the floor joists above and in the corners and anywhere else you can find them. Go over the walls as well.
- d) Remove curtains if you have any and put to wash.
- e) Thoroughly wash the windows (including interior frame).
- f) If the walls have been painted previously, be sure to scrap any loose paint off and vacuum the area and then apply the sealer before you apply the finish color paint.

g) Once the walls are completed, use the shop vac and thoroughly vacuum the entire space.

h) Paint walls first and the floor last. You will have to cut in corners and where the concrete meets the joists and where the walls meet the floor when you are doing the walls. When doing the floors, you will have to cut in where the wall meets the floor and around any other obstacles (i.e., posts).

i) Be sure you plan your strategy on where to start painting the floor. You want to end at the stairs or else you will be trapped in the basement. Concrete paint can take much longer to dry than latex paint, so be sure you have everything you need moved upstairs already because you really shouldn't walk on it for 12 hours.

j) Put all of your painting materials near the bottom of the stairs: i.e., your garbage bags for your brushes and tray at the bottom of the stairs and the can of paint you are using with the lid so you can close it when done. You are only keeping the tray and brushes in case there are touch ups to do or areas you missed. You will need at least two brushes if you are doing the walls and floor different colors.

## WINDOWS & WORKSHOP

For the rooms you haven't already done:

- a) Remove window coverings and wash. Wash window frames interior, screens and glass. Wipe the tops of the trim around windows and doors. Using a duster, wipe down all walls and corners and ceiling to remove cobwebs.
- b) Disassemble light fixtures and clean. Check bulbs and add new ones if necessary and reassemble.
- c) Remove and wash all switches and plug covers, heat vents, and cold air return vents.
- d) Dust all furniture in the room.
- e) Vacuum all upholstered furniture and the entire room. If flooring is laminate or wood or tile, wash thoroughly after vacuuming with the appropriate type of cleaner.

**Tools & Workshop Area** *(if applicable):*

Wherever you store your tools, it may consist of just a toolbox or a couple cabinets or a whole room. I have a small workshop room with a lot of items.

When preparing for a move, use the following steps:

- a) If you have just a toolbox or two, do not pack them (when moving day comes, you will need an assortment of tools to take apart furniture and of course, put it back together when you arrive at the new place). Searching through boxes for tools would be aggravating. Tools are the last thing that goes on the moving truck and the first thing to come off.
- b) If you have a vast number of tools and hobby items, pack any items you will not need before you move such as specialty hobby items, decor items, extra tools (ie., I have three drills and four types of saws) and any miscellaneous items (ie. wallpaper rolls, cabinet hardware, etc.)
- c) Be sure to keep items like hammers, pliers, screwdrivers, wrenches, measuring tapes, drills, vice grips, levels, step stools, etc., out and accessible.
- d) Clean the area of cobwebs, etc., and determine if painting is required.
- e) Be sure the lighting is clean with bright bulbs and vacuum thoroughly.

## LAUNDRY

This is the last step to do as far as cleaning and painting goes.

This is the room where you washed all of your painting trays and brushes, all the window coverings and bedding, light switch covers and heating duct covers, etc., so it didn't make sense to do it until the bulk of the other projects have been done.

- a) If you have cabinets in your laundry room, go through them. Discard any garbage or unwanted items. Thoroughly clean the cabinets inside and out. Replace items you are keeping back in cabinets and pack anything you are taking to the new place in a box marked laundry if you won't need it over the next month or two.
- b) Remove the window coverings and thoroughly clean the windows.
- c) Wipe down the walls with a duster or wash if the walls still appear dirty.
- d) Vacuum the room thoroughly.
- e) Does the room need painting? If so, finish painting the final room in the house.



**Pro-Tip** (Organization): *Start putting aside a collection of cleaning products and materials that you will need to move into the new place. It comes in really handy if cleaners and rags and an assortment of other items (the last box to leave your house and the first box off the truck in the new place) are easy to find. Not all people leave the places they move out of very clean, so do think of any products you might need when moving into your new place such as: toilet bowl cleaner, sos pads, bleach, oven cleaner, sponges, rags, glass cleaner, buckets, liquid soap cleaner, paper towels, mops, brooms, garbage bags, dust pan, light bulbs, utility knife for opening boxes, extension cords, vacuum, step stools, ladder, sandwich baggies to keep together pieces from dismantling furniture, etc.*



**Pro-Tip** (Organization): *If you are like me and have to thoroughly clean everything before unpacking any of your belongings, then it's fantastic to have a box with necessities until you can unpack. Items such as toilet paper, bottled water, snacks, dish rack, shelf paper, Kleenex, paper plates, plastic utensils, phone chargers, coffee machine and coffee or kettle, microwaveable food, will all come in handy. {Also, baby items if you have a baby which will include food, cookies, highchair, playpen, toys, etc./items for your pet such as food dishes, food, litter box, lead or leash for a temporary tie up outside.}*

Wow!! You must be so pleased with what you have accomplished.

Every single room in your house has been sorted out, organized, thoroughly cleaned, freshly painted and looks refreshed and wonderful. All the rubbish is gone and a bunch of pre-packing has been done.

***Doesn't it feel GOOD?***

*To know everything you are going to move is exactly what you want and is*

*clean and organized.*

*To know when the time comes, your packing job will be so much easier.*

*To know your place looks as good as it possibly can for a potential buyer.*

*And now your stress over this whole moving process should be almost non-existent.*

*Very soon, you will be able to spend your time either looking for your next home or, if you've already found your next home, shopping for items for it.*

*Soon.*

*But not quite yet.*

*There are a few more items we need to address and prepare.*

*These steps are **the absolute essential ingredient** to the ability to sell your home faster and for more money.*



## **MECHANICALS ETC.**

### **Hvac, Water Tanks, Softeners & Treatment, Fire Alarms, Carbon Monoxide Detectors & Fire Extinguishers**

These are items that can be a real headache if there is a problem with them. Buyers want to know that when they move in, they will have heat and water and no surprises. Hot water tanks that leak can cause huge damage and furnace repairs are not usually cheap.

Here are the best practices for the following systems:

#### **Fireplaces/Woodstoves**

Has your chimney been cleaned recently?

Does your fireplace meet all the current codes and safety specifications? (You will have to check with your local building and safety codes). For instance, most codes now require a steel flue in the chimney and woodstoves require a certain setback from the wall or specific wall and floor fire retardant material, etc.

\* The very best thing you can do is call an inspector and have the items serviced and inspected (i.e., chimney cleaned, furnace serviced, wood stove WETT inspected). The inspection will reveal if anything is wrong and needs replacing. Be sure to keep the inspection reports or any bills for parts that you may need to purchase. If there is repair work needed that cannot be done at the time, or you are not sure if it can be done, be sure to get a written quote for the work.



### **Furnaces/Air Conditioners**

How old is your furnace or air conditioner? (Home inspectors have life expectancies for almost all mechanical, heating and cooling systems). If your systems are at, near or beyond the life expectancy, it will be on his report and he will inform the potential buyers.

Unless your systems are brand new and still under warranty, have the systems inspected and serviced, to be sure they are clean and functioning and to determine if they are at the end of their life expectancy.

Keep any documentation. If any systems are at the end of their life expectancy, get a quote or two in writing for replacing the item. Not because YOU are going to replace the item, although you may choose to, but because the quote will be crucial when it comes time to negotiate (I will explain further later on).

Be sure to change the furnace filter and put in a new one. Have another on hand so when you put your house on the market, you can make sure the filter is clean.



### **Hot Water Tank/ Water Softener/Water Treatment**

Are any of these rental items?

If so, ask the service provider to come in and inspect them and either give you a report or perform any maintenance so they are in proper working order when the house hits the market.

If you own any of the above-mentioned systems, record the age and ensure they are working properly. Water treatment systems need regular maintenance (i.e., light bulbs, salt, filters, etc.). If you purchase parts like light bulbs and so on, keep the receipts.



### **Water Pump/Pressure Tank**

Find out the age and ensure they are working properly. If maintenance is required, have it done and keep the documentation.



### **Fire Alarms, Carbon Monoxide Detectors & Fire Extinguishers**

Fire codes and recommended practices for the number and locations of these safety devices are constantly changing. If in doubt and to confirm, call your local fire department to find out what the best practices are. Fire alarms are not expensive, and you do not want a home inspector to flag these missing items.

Check that our fire extinguisher is not expired. If you are not sure how to do that, most Fire Departments will do it for you and can also recommend how many you should have and where they should be located in your house.

Purchase any additional fire alarms you may need and install them. Keep the receipt and instructions for the alarms.

Put fresh batteries in any alarms that were already in the house and ensure that they are working.

## WELLS AND SEPTIC SYSTEMS

The codes and best practices for wells and septic systems could be specific to your location. Check with the local health department for their recommendations.

### **Wells**

- a) Be sure your well location can be easily found outside. Mark it with an ornament, flag or other easily identifiable object.
- b) What kind of well is it? Wells can be bored, drilled, dug, communal, shore or sand or even holding tanks.

Find out which and the other details such as how deep it is and the flow rate (depending on where you live and the age of your well, records may be kept by the local public health office or environment organization in your area). Usually, records are only kept for drilled and bored wells. Well records can tell you when it was drilled, how deep it is, the flow rate at the time of drilling, who drilled the well and sometimes the location. If you have this information, be sure to have it handy for your information package.

You may not be able to find out some of these facts, depending on how long you have lived there and how old the property is. Do your best, and if all else fails, call in a well technician to give you the details of the well. They can recognize the different types, can measure the depth, pull up your pump and check it is working properly and recommend any maintenance required. Ask them to put it in writing and keep the paperwork.

c) How old is your well pump? If you do not know, and you have never replaced it, you know it is at least as old as the amount of time you have lived there. Record this.

d) If your water supply comes from a well, when did you last do a water potability test? You need to do a test. Check with your local public health office. They may have free bottles and testing services.

e) If the test comes back with contaminants found in the water, speak to the local public health office about their recommendations.

f) Possible solutions to this are shocking your well or buying and installing a drinking water purification system. You could also speak to a local well driller/technician for suggestions.

g) Shocking your well is usually the quickest way to solve the issue and most public health organizations recommend homeowners do this a few times a year. However, this is dependent on where you live and what kind of well you have. In some instances, shocking may not be the best course of action. For dug wells, sand wells, and shore wells, shocking won't work. Obtain expert advice for your area and your type of well.

h) In some instances, a water purification system works well to dispel any worry about the quality and safety of the drinking water.

i) Unless you have all the information about your well and have obtained recent testing and documentation to show the water is good, call your local

public health office or well technician to get this information.

j) If there is no information and buyers are unsure about the safety of the water, the performance of the well and its systems, the flow rate, adequate supply or the location, they will move onto other homes where that information is available or easily obtained.

k) The goal here is to have the necessary information and documentation about the well and a water potability test that comes back clean.



## **Septics**

Septic locations, installations, size requirements, and required maintenance vary depending on your area and the local governing body recommendations.

Be sure that your septic location can be easily identified. Mark the location of the septic lids with an ornament or other easily identified item.

Proper maintenance has a direct impact on the septic operating properly. Depending on the amount of people living in the home and the number of bathrooms, cleaning out a septic is recommended every 2 - 5 years.

When did you last have your septic tank pumped out? If it was in the last 6 months, find the receipt or call your service provider to get a copy of the receipt. Buyers will want to verify this.

If you do not know where the septic is located or when it was pumped out last, it is very important that you contact a septic service provider to assist you in determining the location and getting it pumped out.

Sometimes if you call the local service providers in your area, you will find one that has previously serviced the property. Go with the most recent provider or the one who remembers the location of the tank. Hopefully, it

wasn't too long ago and the technician will know where the septic is on your property.

This step cannot really be skipped. It will raise serious worries with a potential buyer.

As well, buyers want the reassurance that a septic system has been maintained. (In my area and certainly some others, septic service technicians have to report any tanks that are suspected of leaking or compromised in any way). Buyers don't want to worry that the tank could back up into the house.

Providing the name of your septic technician helps the buyers as they will be able to call and ask any questions they have about the system, ask the technician to do an inspection that they can attend or just use the same technician in the future with the confidence that he is familiar with the system.

Have the receipt for the last time the septic was pumped. If it is longer than one year ago, arrange to have it done. If it is winter where you are and the ground cannot be dug up to expose the lids, think about choosing a closing date in early spring when the ground is thawed enough to dig and agree to have it pumped before the closing date and provide the receipt to the buyers.

If you have a holding tank instead of a septic, have it pumped out and have the receipt available, as well as any other receipts for the year (a 12-month period is best), available for the buyers. Some holding tanks on properties need to be pumped monthly and a buyer will want to know the frequency necessary for the tank and the cost. The cost may be more than the buyer can accept.



## THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Let's talk about the elephant in the room. If you have no areas or items in your home that require attention, skip this part.

In my years in the real estate industry, I have happened upon sellers who have items or parts of their home that need attention. Whether because of the lack of funds, the lack of availability of service people or product, or lack of knowledge in addressing an issue, these items are normally expensive and will be of concern to a buyer.

Let's go through the possibilities:

- a) Your roof/windows/furnace/air conditioner need to be replaced but you don't have the funds.
- b) Your roof/windows need to be done but the roofer can't do it until spring.
- c) Your furnace/air conditioner need to be done but you were waiting for a sale or an installer.
- d) Your refrigerator/stove/washer/dryer isn't working properly, or at all, but you don't have the funds to replace it.

- e) Your refrigerator/stove/washer/dryer isn't working properly but they are back ordered or you cannot find the appropriate size.
- f) Your bathroom/kitchen needs to be updated but you don't have the funds.
- g) Your carpet/flooring needs to be replaced but you don't know what to choose or have the funds.
- h) There is insulation in the attic that might contain asbestos and needs to be tested and removed.

(Insert your items into the appropriate list above.)

In dealing with any of the problems or items listed above, there are three ways to handle this and you can choose which one, depending on your circumstances or knowledge, but I do advise you to choose one.

a) You could replace major systems such as furnaces, air conditioners, water tanks and roofing, but **do not rent** these items. The Buyer will have to assume these rentals and that might be enough to send him elsewhere. Also, replace these systems if you know someone in the industry that is licensed and are confident they are not going to overcharge you and will do the job correctly and on time.

**OR**

b) You could repair the item – I recommend this only if the repair will substantially extend the life of the item, because the item is not near the end of its life expectancy now. Repairing it just to keep it going a little longer, is not going to fool the buyer or his home inspector.

c) For appliances, I recommend replacing only IF you are going to buy one that is of the same value as the other appliances in the house and is the same color or IF you need the appliance yourself before you move (i.e., If your refrigerator dies, you will have to replace it one way or another).

**OR**

## **IF YOU CANNOT REPLACE OR REPAIR:**

You should get written quotes and prices for windows, doors, roof, appliances, and any other big-ticket items that are necessities. Of course, there are the low-end prices for these items and the high end. Two quotes would be best. Average it out. This becomes your negotiating room. Negotiating room should only be used for items that would be a necessity (i.e., door, broken window, furnace, appliance) and are clearly not working or not working properly (window won't open, dryer doesn't produce heat).

\*For windows and doors that still function but are dated, flooring, bathrooms and kitchens (that are dated), we are not replacing anything or quoting anything. The sky is the limit for choices and pricing these items. Flooring can run .99 cents to \$20.00 a square foot or up to \$50.00. Bathrooms can cost anywhere from \$2000.00 to \$5000.00 or more. For kitchens, the sky is the limit.

These items are obvious to the viewer, and they can see what they are getting. These are not hidden items. Be concerned over necessary things like heating, plumbing, and items that could potentially damage the home, like roofing. Cosmetic updates are not as much a concern. The price you put on the house would reflect a brand-new kitchen, right? So, the price should factor in that the bath and kitchen, etc. are not brand new. You are not hiding anything and not having brand new does not make the home less safe or less usable.

Even if you were willing to replace the items, how are you supposed to know if someone wants carpet, hardwood, laminate, a tub or shower, what colors, what kind of counters?

Having said that, if you have the time and money and a bit of style and want to spend \$20-50,000 and redo the kitchen and bath, you will likely make all

that money back and then some. However, if you had a mind to do that, you likely didn't buy this book.



**Attic insulation** (or other items that might contain dangerous substances): There are testing facilities that can determine if your insulation or other item contains dangerous substances. I mention attic insulation because I have dealt with it several times. Not disclosing that it might contain asbestos or just pretending you don't know, hurts you and the buyer.

A home inspector will identify to a buyer that certain types of insulation could contain asbestos and if your attic has the type that might contain it. If the Buyer still wants to move forward with the sale, he will likely seek a reduction in price (which may amount to a lot more than it will cost to have insulation removed) OR he will come after you after the fact, for the cost of remediation or both.

Some people are fine with this type of insulation as some believe that it is not harmful if left undisturbed. But they will still want a reduction in price.

Here is what to do: get a sample and have it tested. It may cost about \$250 or more, however, what it will cost you on the sale of your home, could be 100 times that. You can hire a professional to come and take the sample. He will put on a mask and gloves and take a sample in a special container and mail it to the testing facility. In 7-30 days, you will have an unequivocal answer in writing. If it's clear of asbestos, perfect. Keep the documentation so you can prove that it has been tested.

If it comes back positive for asbestos, **do not worry**. Call one or two remediation companies and have them give you quotes for the cost of removing of the insulation. Get it in writing. You can hire one of the

companies to carry out the remediation, including the insulation needed to re-insulate the attic or just leave it for the buyers (this could still potentially reduce the value because a buyer doesn't want to go through the work, but you will know the amount of money the work is worth).

If you have the quote, you are now in a position to negotiate the price for your house for the amount of the quote and perhaps a little more for the cost of new insulation, but you will be doing so during a negotiation of an offer.

Some buyers won't want to deal with any of this and will just move on. However, there isn't anything you can do about that. Not testing it at all, will have more financial repercussion, possible lawsuits and deals that fail when the buyers have their home inspection.

By disclosing the issue right up front and providing the test results, you have done as much as you can.

**REMEMBER:** If you can't get the work done (for whatever reason) get quotes for the work to establish the amount of negotiating room on your home's price.

## THE POWER OF DOCUMENTATION

The **vital** & important facts about a property.

Okay, now we are at the information gathering and compiling stage.

It's a little tedious but easier than all the work you have already done. And it's just as, or more, important.

I know that you are about tuckered out and you have done **A LOT** of work up to this point.

Let me explain why this is not only important but **CRUCIAL** to getting the offer you want, quickly and cleanly.

I have shown a ton of homes in my time in real estate. In fact, for most real estate agents, that is how they start and build their business. Working with buyers is the largest part of a real estate agent's workload for the first few years and longer sometimes. And it was for me as well. The difference for me was, catching on early to what was missing among all those homes I was showing and incorporating it into my listing process with sellers.

And once I explained why and how this was important, every single one of those sellers committed to doing the preparation tasks and followed my

advice. And in every single case, they were ecstatic with the results. Fast sales, clean offers, strong prices.

A little story which taught me the significance and importance of doing the preparation work and how it impacts sellers: During my first year in real estate, working with buyers, this is what I saw happen over and over with my buyers and with almost all the houses I showed. We would schedule a day to see four houses. We would visit each home and go through it. In the process of going through the home, the buyers would raise questions about the house. For example:

Is there any information about how old the furnace is?

Information about where the septic is?

Info about when the roof was done last?

How much are the taxes?

Is there any information on the approximate cost to heat this house?

And so on and so on.

Twenty-four out of 25 homes I visit have not one piece of paper with information about the house. Absolutely nothing. So, I would make notes about their questions and let them know I would reach out to the listing agent to find the answers they were looking for. By the time we finished seeing the fourth property, I had quite a list. And in most cases, there was at least one, maybe two, houses the buyers really liked. We would part and I would call the listing agents one by one to ask the questions the buyers wanted answers to.

Almost 100% of the time, I didn't reach the agent and had to leave a voice mail (IF the voice mail was not full, which half the time it was). Depending on how many questions there were, I would either ask them to return my call or I would leave a message with the one or two questions we had. If I was

very lucky, the agent would call me back the same day, but usually, it was the following day.

Of course, when they did call me back, they didn't have the answers to the questions. They hadn't bothered to ask their clients any of those pertinent questions. So, they would now have to call the sellers and get the information from them. IF they reached the sellers (and didn't have to leave a message), the sellers didn't usually know the answers off the top of their heads and would have to go through their documents or go and look into it and get back to the agent. This is because those sellers did not realize the importance of the information to potential buyers.

By the time the sellers had the answers and reached out to their agent to give him the information to pass on to me, and I called my buyers to give them information, at least three days had passed. In some cases, five or six days. And guess what happened over those 3-6 days? The buyers forgot all the excitement they had felt when they saw the house. Doubts formed in their minds due to the lack of information. And a number of new homes popped up on the market that have now caught their interest.

**THIS IS THE POWER OF PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION.**

By providing a buyer all the information that answers all of their questions, including some they have not even thought of (sometimes even before they visit the house) and then having all of that information on hand during their visit, means that you have eliminated all barriers, unknowns, doubts and reasons for them not to go straight back to their agent's office and write an offer.

Not only that, but because having that information presented and available, while standing in a house that shows so well, while all the others they have



seen have no information on hand or available, it sets your house apart and in their mind, it is a better caliber purchase with less risk because there are no unknowns.

And in going through the information, the value in the price you have put on your house is demonstrated. It is also demonstrated by the effort and care that is obvious throughout the house and in the preparation of the binder.



So, let's get started.

Download a free shopping and errand list [here](https://iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanninng/books/stepbystep/lists):

<https://iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanninng/books/stepbystep/lists>

(For an easy way to do this, visit my site at the above link and download the free sample forms that can be used with this book and this process. One can be a rough work sheet and the other is editable in word – just fill in the blanks or add as necessary.)

Remember all those documents you set aside in your den?

Sort them out by type such as electricity, water, gas/oil/propane, taxes, telephone, internet, receipts for improvements, etc.

For the utility bills, put them in chronological order (i.e., Jan, Feb, March...).

### **Utility Bills**

We are not giving the bills to the buyers. Utilities are greatly affected by how many people live in the house, how warm or cold they like it and how long their showers are. We are just going to give them an average. To do that, take your 12 most recent bills and add them all together. Now, divide by 12. You now have an average cost for the month.

Write down the utility name, contact number, your account number, and the average cost per month.

Repeat this for all utilities – water, sewer, electricity, gas and/or propane.

If you heat with wood, or use wood as well, figure out the cords you used and cost per year and write it down. Write down the supplier's name and telephone number.

If the hot water tank, softener, water treatment system are rented: write down the provider name, contact number, account number, cost per month and if/when the contract is expiring or renewing.

Find your property tax bill for the current year or the previous year. They should not be older than that as tax amounts can vary a lot year over year. Write down the tax office phone number. Keep this one out as we will need it.

Write down the tax amount and the year.

Find your internet and cable bills.

Write down the provider name/account number/phone number and type of service (i.e., Is your cable provider also your internet provider? Internet is separate? Is it fibre optic? High speed?

Do you have a telephone landline? If so, write down the provider, account number, their phone number.

Do you have a survey of the property? If so, get it out and put it with the tax bill.

Do you have the original plans for the house (from the previous owner or because you are in a house you built)? If so, put this with the tax bill.

Septic Service Technician – name and phone number.

Do you have a recent water test or septic pump out receipt? Add this to the tax bill pile.

What improvements have you completed on the property? (i.e., windows, doors, roof, bathroom, flooring, kitchen, counters, etc.)

Set the receipts aside with the tax bill.

Do you have warranties for anything you have purchased, installed or that came with the house? (i.e., appliances, pool, hot tub, roof, windows, faucets, furnace, etc.) If so, set these with the tax bill pile.

Do you have a WETT certificate or any other certificates or inspections for anything in the house? (i.e., furnace, air conditioner, pool, hot tub, septic, woodstove, fireplace, etc.) Put these in the tax bill pile.

Put any user manuals for items such as appliances, heating systems, hot tubs, etc. into the tax bill pile also.

List what you will include with the house sale. For example, appliances, bar stools, kitchen island, window coverings, hot tub, wall mounts, riding lawn mowers, furnishings, auto garage door openers, central vacuum systems, etc.

Normally, everything that is attached to the house through electrical, plumbing or heating is considered part of the house. You would not disconnect a vanity in the bathroom and take it or the dishwasher.

You can, however, include the hood fan over the stove and the dishwasher, but put the refrigerator, stove, washer, and dryer as negotiable (unless they are attached by a gas line). If you do this, however, make sure you really want to take them with you in case the buyer decides he's not willing to pay more for them.

If there is any other paperwork which is relevant to the property and would be relevant for a buyer, also add that to your tax bill pile.

Now you can put away anything else that is left. I would pack it in a box and mark it appropriately.

Get a binder that has a front slot to put a full-size image into. Collate and insert all user manual information and put at the back of the binder.

Open a word document on your computer and create a sheet or use the one from my website.

List the items under the headings: property information, utility costs, service providers, improvements, inspections, chattels included, rented items, potential closing dates (if you have that). Or use the sheet from my website so you can just put in the information.

### **Property information heading:**

Under property information type in the size of the property (i.e., 60' x 100' lot or 1.8 Acres)

Bungalow, two story, one and a half story, ranch, walk out, etc.

Number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, den, finished basement, finished attic, wrap around porch, etc.

Special features: stone fireplace, beamed ceilings, pool, chef's kitchen, primary bedroom ensuite bath, , walk in closets, accessory suite or in-law suite, etc.

### **Utility heading:**

List the utility and the total cost for the last 12 months and the average monthly cost and the name of the provider (i.e., Hydro Electricity 12-month cost \$1350 Average mthly cost: \$112.50)

Do this for all your monthly utilities and also include any rental fees for hot water tanks as well as frequent fees such as emptying holding tanks, buying wood for the woodstove, etc.

### **Service Providers:**

Under this heading, put down who supplies your internet and what type it is. Many people are now working from home and so this information is crucial

for them in verifying they will be able to work from their new home. You can include the monthly cost if desired.

Cable: just put the provider's name and not the amount. If your cable provider also provides your internet, do put down the type of service (fibre optic, high speed, etc.)

Add your septic service technician and phone number.

Add your pool service company if you have one.

If you have a snow removal service, put it here.

Add other providers that fit in this category.

### **Improvements heading:**

Here, you will list the improvement type and the year it was completed and in brackets, any warranty that would still be in effect). Start with the most recent.

For example:

Windows – 2021 (10-year warranty) (Note: if not all windows, put which windows, i.e., main floor, second story, etc.)

Recreation room flooring – 2019

Main floor bathroom redone in 2019

New roof – 2018 (10-year warranty)

Add the rest of the improvements.

Also, you can add all the work you just completed, such as: Freshly painted throughout 2022 (and any other work you have done).

(If you have the paint chips, make a sheet labelled paint colors and put the headings of each room. Print it out and staple each paint chip under the room heading.

(Or download the form [here: www.iconicwordsmiths/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/lists](http://www.iconicwordsmiths/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/lists).)

This is a really nice thing to do for a new owner coming into the house. It saves them so much aggravation and work.

### **Inspections Heading**

Remember when you were going through the house and following the steps recommended for older mechanical systems, etc. Any inspection you received for the furnace or air conditioner, fireplace, woodstove, etc., just note the type of inspection on the list and a note that it is included in the binder.

i.e. Furnace Inspected on January 15<sup>th</sup> (see inspection in binder)

or

If the item needs to be replaced, list it like this:

i.e. Furnace Inspected on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2022. Replacement recommended.  
(see inspection and quotes in binder)

or

i.e. Furnace Inspected on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2022. Motor replacement necessary.  
Receipt/quote in the binder.

Do this for all inspections **but do not include quotes unless replacement has been recommended or is necessary**. Do not put quote amounts on this sheet (just note that the quote is in the binder).

### **Chattels heading**

Here, you are going to list what you are willing to include in the price of the home.

Normally, the following items are always included:

**Included with the Sale:** All electric light fixtures and ceiling fans, all window coverings, all fire alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, automatic garage door openers and remotes, hood fan over stove, built in microwaves, dishwashers, water treatment/UV systems, water softeners, etc.

**(Do not put any rented items here).**

\*If you have a pool, you should include the pool equipment such as pump, vacuums and so on.

\*If you have a hot tub that is staying, include the cleaning supplies for it.

\*If you have firewood, it should stay, and you can add that to the included with the sale items list.

Now, add your other items if you want them included in price and do **not** want to move them.

Items such as: Refrigerator, stove, washer, dryer, bar refrigerator, wine fridge, etc.

If you are okay with taking the appliances if the buyers don't want them, or you really want to take them, list them like so:

Negotiable: Refrigerator, stove, washer, dryer, bar refrigerator, wine frig, etc.

**Or**

Not included: Refrigerator, stove, washer, dryer, bar refrigerator, wine fridge, etc.

If you have other items that you want to keep and not negotiate on, add them to the not included list. Or, if there are items you are willing to leave if the price is right, add them to the negotiable list. Items such as riding lawn mowers, snow blowers, pool tables, etc., can be added to either of these lists.

The benefit of doing this is that the Buyers will have a **clear** idea of what they can ask for and not ask for.

This saves offers going back and forth and frustrating everyone because the

buyers were not told and did not know what was going to be acceptable to you. It eliminates confusion for the buyers in trying to guess what to include in an offer. We don't want them walking away due to a lack of information and clarity.

**Note:** Buyers may still ask for things that you have not offered.

**Rental Items Heading:** Here, we put any items that are rented on a monthly or yearly basis.

For example:

Hot water tank: \$24.00 monthly – The Water People (phone number)

Propane tank: \$100 per year – Superior Propane (phone number)

Water softener: \$20.00 monthly – Soft Water Co. (phone number)

Etc.

**Potential Closing Date:**

Figure out an approximate closing date. This will of course depend on whether you have already found a place to go to and know when you can move in. If that is the case, write that date down and figure out if it is negotiable at all. What I mean by that is, if you received an amazing offer that asked for a closing two weeks after the date you've chosen, are you willing and can you leave your house empty for two weeks to move to the new place? Or perhaps they ask to close and move in two weeks earlier. Can you move into the new place two weeks earlier or stay somewhere else?

Depending on your answers to these questions, adjust your date like this example:

Closing date: May 28<sup>th</sup> firm OR closing date May 28<sup>th</sup> – June 28<sup>th</sup>

If you haven't found a place to move to, do not choose a date yet. Depending



on the local market around you and what you are searching for, have you seen a lot of appealing homes on the market that you are interested in? You must allow enough time to find the right place for you and your family and then, once you do, it may take 30-90 days to close on your purchase.

Once you are finished, just add your closing date and list it as discussed above:

For example:

Closing Date: May 30<sup>th</sup> firm

OR

Closing date: May 30<sup>th</sup> – July 15<sup>th</sup>

(If you don't know yet, just leave it blank and you can add it later.)

### **Presentation Binder**

Now, add your documents to the binder.

On a separate sheet, list the suppliers and service providers, their contact numbers, and your account numbers and put it in your desk. This becomes your moving contact list to close accounts at the home you have just sold and open new accounts for the new house.

This will be very helpful once you know the day you are moving and for notifying everyone. It saves you having to look it all up again.

E.g., Hydro Electric – Acct No: 50167824 phone number: 800-123-4567

If you are still waiting for some work or inspections to be done, add it to the list and add documents to the binder as you receive them, so they are not misplaced, you don't forget, and they don't pile up again.

Repair bills for items can also be added to the binder. I usually add invoices and receipts to the binder, in the order they are listed in on the sheet I created.

This list will come in very handy for you, your buyers, for moving day, and

for your real estate agent.

Once you are closer to the day you are going on the market, you will have photos done. Have a really nice one of the front or back of the house and blow it up and put it in the front of the binder along with the address added on the photo. Or get your real estate agent to do it.

Here is your presentation binder. It represents all of the pertinent facts about the property as well as all the details of what has occurred during your ownership of the property. It provides the buyer all of the information they need to move forward with an offer.

**Right now.**

And it leaves a huge impact on the buyer. Because they might visit 10 other homes and this information will not be there, so they will be left with questions. This also impresses the buyer. It tells him you have been diligent and pro-active in the maintenance of your home and gives him much more confidence in your home. This translates into offers for more money, less conditions, less demands and less negotiating. It translates into an offer that is exactly what you want.

Now the house is ready to go. Everything is clean, organized, and orderly. You just have to maintain with your regular housekeeping and outdoor chores. You've moved the odd piece of furniture from one room to another to fill in the gaps of the furniture that you got rid of. Its spic and span.

**By the way?** Did you remember to take the 'after' photographs of all the rooms, once you were done with all the work?

This is great bragging material to show off to friends – the transformations you did on your house!!

Now, it's time to focus on the next big step.

A quick education about selling your home, the buyer's perspective, the buying and selling process, how to prepare ahead of time, what research you should do and how to choose a real estate agent.

## **PART TWO: SELLING YOUR HOME**

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

Now that your home is ready to be listed and seen by potential buyers, it's important to educate yourself about the sale process and the intricacies and values of your local market.

There are a lot of influences that affect the pricing of real estate, and those influences are not always what the home offers as far as interior details, size, and finishes. You can have the most amazing home ever built with finishes that belong in a magazine, but if that home is in an undesirable neighborhood or has a neighbor with a yard that looks like a dump site, it is going to impact the price you can get for your home. Conversely, the same house in a popular community will get a much higher price than the identical home in a less popular area.

You have done all you can to make your home look as desirable and presentable as possible and highlighted all the information in a binder. You can do nothing about location; however, it is good to realize there are factors beyond your abilities to change, that also come into play.

Bear this in mind as you go through the following exercises, to educate yourself on the value you can expect for your home. A seller that doesn't have a fairly accurate idea of what their home is worth, leaves themselves vulnerable to agents that just want a quick sale. It can also cause you to overestimate value, which, the majority of the time, results in you getting even less than the price you should have put on it in the first place.

Again, perception is the key. When one house in an area of homes stands out as the highest price when compared to the others, buyers, of course, view all the homes. If they see your home is better than all the others on the market for the price, that's fantastic.

However, for homes that are listed too high, with no discernable difference in value, your higher priced home sits on the market and helps the other homes, priced more accurately and competitively, to sell faster.

The problem with this is that if your home continues to be on the market as other homes continually sell in the area, the public begins to think there must be something wrong with the home and start avoiding it. Showings slow down or stop after a certain period of time.

There are only then two options: be open to a low-ball offer (which someone will make, reasoning you must be getting desperate as your home hasn't sold) or lowering the price. Lowering the price may help revive showings, but buyers and certainly their agents know the home has failed to sell. So, the home can expect to get an offer lower than the new price as buyers are still of the mind that the house is less valuable than other homes, due solely to the fact it has been on the market far longer than other homes.

Be aware that agents can see the history of the sales and attempted sales of a home. If you cancel the listing and wait 6 months, the agent will still see that you failed to sell previously and share it with his buyers. That is not to say

that the house won't sell or can't sell. Sometimes the mistake of pricing the home wrong is mitigated by a market with low inventory (not many homes for sale). Do your homework and seek good advice from professionals.

Educating yourself is important, whether or not you are hiring a real estate agent.

The first step, even before hiring an agent, is to arm yourself with certain information so you can make informed decisions and so you can properly judge if an agent is aware and familiar with your local market.

Write down what price you think your house should be sold at. This will be a good exercise as you can compare it to a price you will determine later after doing some research.

## RESEARCH

Go online every day and see what listings are in your area.

Download real estate homes online worksheet from my website [here](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets):  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets)

In column format, record the date, the address, the name of the real estate agent, the type of home (2 story, bungalow, etc., though its preferred to choose only the homes that are the same style as your own), number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, lot size, an extra features column that can be marked with a yes or no (does the home have desirable features yours does not have), a column for total days on the market (filled in when it is no longer available), a column for a rating (give it a number from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) based on the pictures and presentation you see online and in the last column, the price.

Record your list of similar homes on the first day you start this exercise.

Every day after, check again and add homes that are new to the market and mark the total days on the market for homes that disappear (have been sold).

Once you have a list of 12-15 homes, pick three or four that are close to or in your own neighborhood and are most similar to your own home as far as



number of bedrooms and baths, the age of the home and the style of the home.

Find out if and when they may be having open houses. If no open houses are scheduled, call the listing agent to arrange a showing (do not sign a contract with that agent, just tell them you are wanting to have a look and have just started this process). If you go to the open house and they ask you to sign in, do not say or give too much information. You are in essence being a secret shopper and you are here to rate the home and its presentation and also the agent and their demeanor, professionalism and how they set up the home

Clearly state you do not want to be contacted by the agent but will take his/her business card (later, you may decide to interview him/her for listing your own home once you've seen how he/she has presented the home you are now viewing).

Schedule and view 3-5 homes if possible.

When you are going through these homes, try to be objective when comparing the house to your own house. If there is a listing sheet available on the home, take it and make notes or make the notes as soon as you return to your car while your visit is still fresh.

**Or use this sheet: [www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/trackersheets](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/trackersheets)**

Take note of the following:

- a) What about the house is nicer than your house?
- b) Number of beds? Number of baths?
- c) What about the house is not as nice as your house?
- d) What features really stand out?
- e) What negatives really stand out?
- f) Is it clean or dirty? Organized or cluttered?

- g) Is it obvious that the owners thoroughly prepared the house?
- h) Is there additional information available, similar to the binder you have put together?
- i) Is there still a lot of necessary work to do to the home (i.e., bad windows, doors, repair work)?
- j) Is there updating (i.e., carpets, kitchen, baths) to do to the home?
- k) What is the price?

Take notes like this for all the homes you visit.

Additionally, keep your list of the online homes up to date. You may be able to do similar comparisons of those homes sight unseen over the internet.

Now, let's create a spreadsheet in a landscape format and create columns to insert the information we need for our comparisons (or use the one on my webpage).

The columns will be headed as follows:

Date / Address / Agent Name / Style / #bdrms / #baths / lot size / extra features / Updates / Negatives / clean dirty / Info Avail / Good Pictures / Rating 1 to 10 / #of days on market / price

First, insert the information about the homes you have actually seen.

Now, insert homes you've seen online only (it's okay if you can't fill in all the columns on these homes because you will still have the vital information you need). Use your worksheet of homes online.

If you feel you have seen enough homes and have 10 or so homes listed on the sheet, then sit back and review the information. With a highlighter, highlight the highest price and the lowest price. Does the other information about the house such as special features, better location, poor location, poorly presented) justify the higher price/lower price?

You should start to see a pattern in the pricing but give more attention to the

homes that have actually sold and have disappeared from the market. These prices were actually captured, while the final prices for homes that are still on the market, have yet to be determined.

From the list, you should see a definite ballpark of value. If the highest price or the lowest price are significantly higher or lower, disregard.

Using the second highest price to second lowest price, you can establish a ballpark figure:

(for example: Highest price is 400,000, 2<sup>nd</sup> is 360,000, 3<sup>rd</sup> is 355,000, 4<sup>th</sup> is 350,000, 5<sup>th</sup> is 349,900, 6<sup>th</sup> is 347,000, 7<sup>th</sup> is 345,000, 8<sup>th</sup> is 340,000, 9<sup>th</sup> is 338,000, and 10<sup>th</sup> is 315,000. Disregard the \$400,000 and the \$315,000 priced homes. Just cross them off the list).

Now, your ballpark is \$338,000 to \$360,000. You can take an average (add up the sale prices of the 8 remaining houses and divide by 8) but it is more effective to use your rating scale (1-10) to group the most similar homes to the rating scale of your house.

Add your house to the bottom of the spreadsheet as the final house on the list and give it an objective rating compared to other similar homes you have seen.

Now, if 4 of the 8 homes have rating scales similar to your own, use those numbers to further define your ballpark figure (i.e., \$345,000 to \$355,000).

How does the ballpark price compare to the original price you had thought of before doing all this research?

(If you cannot confirm actual sale prices yourself, you can confirm with the agent you decide to hire, later. Using the list prices on the properties will still provide you with a pretty accurate range for the purposes of this exercise.)

Go back through the pictures of the homes that are most like your home.

Analyze room sizes, lot, finishes and features. Now, did these homes have additional information available to allow a buyer to make an easy decision to write an offer? Because your home does have that.

Now you have a really good idea of the price range your home would fall into. And I would lean to the high side of that ballpark range, due to the fact that your house has been meticulously cleaned and organized and you have a binder full of information the other properties do not offer. These homes are your competition.

Keep in mind, as they are sold, new homes may come on the market. Keep an eye on this because prices can fluctuate month over month. Continue to add new listings that are similar to your home to the list, so you can identify if prices start to fluctuate up or down.

Some months can capture higher prices and some months have more buyers looking.

As a matter of fact, there have been times when I have called a seller who is preparing to sell and encouraged them to put their home on the market sooner than we initially planned. This was because, the homes that would have been in competition with the sellers' home had all sold and there was nothing available anymore in the price range my seller wanted. In fact, there were no homes priced for \$50,000 lower or higher than the price we wanted to put on the house. So, we raised our original estimate of the sale price by \$20,000 and we had a sale in a week. There were no other homes to buy, so we had no competition.

A good agent will be watching for these sorts of opportunities and positioning your home for every advantage.

## **TRUTHS AND MISPERCEPTIONS (ABOUT THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY)**

### **The Billboard/Advertising TRAP/Misconception**

Please do not fall for the Billboard/Ad trap. The agent that has the most billboards is not the best agent. He's just the guy that spends a lot of money on advertising. But why? A good agent gets tons of repeat business and referrals. Within a few years, a good agent doesn't need to advertise as much. For those that are spending a ton of money advertising, it is normally for one of two reasons.

- a) They are not experiencing a lot of repeat business and therefore, they have to find brand new clients over and over again every year.
- b) They are no longer an individual agent. They are now a team and as such need to support multiple assistants, admins and at least a few buyers' agents. This is quite common now and I have interacted with quite a few real estate teams. Some are fantastic, others not so much.

The one thing you want to confirm is whether you and your listing are going to be passed off to someone else you haven't even met. Are multiple buying

agents from their office going to be showing your home? Do they know anything about it? The danger with teams is that the personal service can get lost in the amount of people involved in the selling process. As well, unless the team has fantastic communication, they don't always know what each other is doing.

### **The agent that has the most for sale signs**

Once again, you need to know how this happens.

Let me share a story: 25 years ago, in an area of about 100,000 homes, an agent moved in and started business. At the time, the average commission rate for a real estate agent was 4-5% (that total is shared between the listing and buying agents, so essentially 2-2.5% each). This agent wanted to get his business volume up fast. So, he had huge signs put up around town advertising a commission rate of only 1% (1% does not even cover an agent's costs).

Within a year, he had 50% of the market and within two he had 90% of the market. Sounds like he was smart, right? And sounds like he saved sellers all kinds of money, right? Of course, he did save some money for some sellers; however, he could not keep up with the business he attracted. He would list your house, put up a sign and you would never see him again. He did not do open houses. He had no time. He didn't do professional photos, presentations, and color brochures. He wasn't going to spend the money when he wasn't making any money. He put the sign up and let other agents from other offices show the property and actually **SELL** the property. He didn't sell them; he just became a listing machine.

Unfortunately, the other agents who lost business to him were forced to lower their commission rates to compete. But guess what happened when they did? They cut the services they offered. They had little choice but to cut costs as they could no longer afford to spend money to promote the homes they did list at such a low rate of commission. So, professional presentations for listed properties disappeared. Color brochures and advertising disappeared. Professional photos disappeared.

Essentially, one agent in an area lowered the level of service and the quality of service of the entire industry in that city. Can you imagine that?

For all that work he attracted and took away from everyone else, he was actually losing money and over time he slowly raised his commission rate to the same as it was before he decimated the level of service.

However, the public at large did not understand that he was manipulating the market or how. His signs everywhere fooled the public into thinking he was this amazing agent that everyone was hiring.

Over the years, I picked up a lot of business from his unhappy clients.

Hearing home owners tell me, 'I never saw him again,' 'I never heard from him, he never returned my calls,' and 'I don't honestly know why the house didn't sell. He never gave me any feedback from any of the showings,' just made me cringe inside. It gave the entire industry a bad name.

Needless to say, his dominance in the market didn't last that long. Just long enough to damage the reputations of all agents due to his shabby service.

Usually, deeply discounted commission rates translate into deeply lacking service, results, and quality. And can also imply the agent is desperate.

**SKIP THE NEXT SECTION IF YOU AREN'T SELLING YOUR HOUSE YOURSELF**

### **If you are selling your house yourself**

The real estate market is different in every area, in every state and in every country. Laws exist for real estate transactions and processes and licensed vendors. You will have to check with your local government what the laws and guidelines are. At the very least, you want to work with a good lawyer who can protect you and make sure everything is legal and binding. Do your research thoroughly prior to taking this step. It can be very risky and leaves no arm's length distance between the seller and the buyer. You will be negotiating for yourself. Ensure you know the price you are getting isn't a lot less than the market will pay. Be sure to have a lawyer review all contracts before you sign anything.



## HOW TO FIND A GOOD REAL ESTATE AGENT

Real estate agents who list homes don't always sell the home themselves (quite often other agents bring buyers through and bring offers on the home). The way the listing agent (you hire) carries out their obligations such as: Description of the property, additional information they provide with the listing, photographs and staging, marketing and advertising, and their communication and responses to other agents, all go a long way to attract agents to show the property.

Conversely, if the agent has a reputation of being hard to get along with, negotiate with, is negligent about responding to calls or emails or just generally appreciating another agent's efforts and work, other agents will avoid dealing with that agent, try to avoid showing the agent's listings, and avoid doing offers. (I actually have clients that will not see homes listed by certain agents. This is due to the way they were treated in the past when seeing other houses listed by those agents.)

At the end of the day, it is your agents job to give your property maximum exposure to attract buyers and ultimately offers. That way the Seller knows

that a fair number of potential buyers have seen the home and had the opportunity to buy it. Then, when they do receive an offer, they will not doubt that price offered is not what the property is worth. If only one buyer sees your home and then makes an offer, how will you know that others would not have offered more? This is why property listings are available to all agents to show their buyers. It is the best way to expose your property to the most people. And that is what you want from your agent. You want an agent who you trust.

**You want an agent who will:**

- a) work hard for you
- b) do what they said they would, when they said they would do it
- c) communicate with you regularly
- d) explain things you do not understand
- e) be honest
- f) put your interests before their own (they don't try to low ball your price in order to have a quick sale and paycheck)
- g) be passionate about delivering a fantastic experience for you (thereby hoping to make you a life long client)
- h) be determined to help you achieve your goals
- i) go above and beyond to make sure you are happy
- j) be thoughtful and professional

**How do you find this agent?**

- a) Watch the names on the signs in your local area. Do you see one name more often? Do those homes stay on the market a long time or seem to sell fairly quickly?

- b) Ask a friend or neighbor or relative if they have an agent and about their experience with the agent.
- c) Think about the name of the agent that helped you buy the house you are in.
- d) Watch for advertising leaflets in your mailbox or area.
- e) Did any of the agents you met at open houses impress you or stand out?

Once you have four names of potential agents, call them and invite them in for a look around and then again for an interview/presentation.

If none of the agents impress you or establish a rapport with you, keep looking.



### **THE PROCESS AND HOW TO EVALUATE**

- a) Reach out to the agents by telephone or email.
- b) Explain you are interviewing agents to represent you in selling your home.
- c) Let them know it is a two-step process: first a quick walk through, and then 2-3 days later, an interview.
- d) **First Step:** Invite agents in to have a look at your home. Confirm with them that you have scheduled a certain time frame for them (i.e., 1:00 – 1:30). Schedule the next one half an hour after the first agent has left. Try to invite all of them on the same day when the house is presentable and your schedule is clear. It's just a walk through and it should only take 30 minutes. Do explain to them, it is just a walk through, so they can see your home and have enough information to do some comparable research.
- e) Make notes about the visit with each agent and any particular things that impressed you or annoyed you about his or her visit and behavior.

- f) Let the agent ask general questions about the home. Questions such as: how long have you lived here, have you done improvements, what are the taxes, other features, etc.? They might want to measure rooms and take a few pictures.
- g) Do not share your binder with them or let them see it (we want to see which agent you interview suggests that some information gathering would be necessary and essential in selling your home).
- h) Do not answer questions about what price you want. If they ask you what price you want, tell them you do not know and are looking forward to their recommendations after they have done their research on comparable sales.
- i) Before they leave, set a time and day for them to come back to give you a presentation. Be sure to allow 1 to 1 1/2 hours for each presentation. For example, tell them their appointment to see you will be at 2pm and over at or before 3:30 pm. Then schedule the next one to start an hour after that agent leaves. For example, 4:00 pm. Put the agent's materials away before the next agent arrives.
- j) \*If possible, you should try to do them all on the same day so you can have everything fresh in your mind about each agent. If not, schedule the remainder for the very next day or you will forget the first presentation.



### **Second Step - Presentation Day**

I would suggest that you try to set up these interviews and presentations on your dining room table if possible. If the agent is professional, they will have sales data and comparable properties to review with you and it is easier to do this on a table. As well, the dining room is more formal and a living room too casual.

You want to maintain formality at this point, until you have made a decision. You should have ready a list of questions for the agent. This ensures your questions get answered and not forgotten in the conversation and it ensures you ask all the agents the same questions for a fair and equal comparison.

Download a free worksheet with agent questions [here](#):

[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets)

Write down their answers. After interviewing three or four agents, you may need to refer back to your notes when making the decision on which agent you will hire.

### **Questions to ask the agent:**

- a) Are you a full-time agent? (You want a full-time agent who is dedicated to his business and the business of selling houses. Part-time agents may not be available to those who want to see your property and may take much longer to become an area expert.)
- b) Is this the only job you have? (You want an agent who is focused solely on real estate; otherwise, he may be less motivated to work hard to get your home sold because he has another income source.)
- c) How long have you been a real estate agent? (If licensed less than 6 months, are they ready to be listing homes? Do they have the knowledge? Most agents work with buyers for a year or two, before having the confidence and negotiating experience required for listing homes. Agents with 18 – 24 months or so under their belt know their way around the processes.)
- d) How many homes have you helped clients buy? (If the agent has never listed a home, having helped a large number of clients to buy homes is still worthy of consideration. The agent knows what buyers want and look for in a home and they have written many offers and gained experience in negotiating.)

e) What services do you include with the listing? (i.e., Photography, measurements, staging, one on one service, advertising, drone video, interior videos, virtual staging, legal services, full color presentations, visitation on photo day with flowers and assistance in getting rooms photo ready, direct communication with the agent, etc.)

f) Are you part of a team? Can we expect to be dealing with you personally throughout the sales process? (It's nice to know up front if the agent will be available to you or if other people you don't know will be the contact for communicating.)

g) Do you have any holidays coming up or scheduled in the next 6 months or any periods of time you will be away? If yes, do you have someone to manage our listing in your absence? (Let me tell you how annoyed clients are when they sign everything and get so excited and then discover a week later their agent is going to be away for two weeks and they are being left in the hands of someone else that they have never met, didn't interview, and have no idea if they are experienced or effective.)

h) Do you have any clients that we could contact for a referral? (Preferably clients that have sold their home with the agent or at least have recently done business with the agent.)

i) Do you have a good working relationship with your Broker? Is your broker on hand to consult with if you ran into any sort of difficulty? (A good broker is like gold. They are on hand to deal with issues or problems that can arise such as: strange clauses or conditions in offers, circumstances that sometimes arise with buyers or their agents, undelivered deposit cheques, suggesting or confirming certain wording or clauses that protect you on sale documents, dealing with agents from other offices if they have been difficult, etc. An agent is much more confident if they know they have a great broker.)

j) How much commission do you charge? Is that split 50/50 with the agent that brings a successful offer for a buyer?

k) If you bring an offer from a buyer, is the commission rate the same?

l) If we were to hire you to sell our home, would you also be able to help us find a home to buy?

If so, does that change the commission rate?

m) Would you send us potential listings that we might see?

n) Are there any fees we would have to pay to you for helping us find a home?

o) Are there any other costs that we will have to pay? (i.e., Legal costs, title search costs, etc. If they are a discount brokerage you may have to pay for certain services on top of the commission as well like photography and videos).

p) How do you feel about open houses? Would you want to do open houses on our home?

(see below for my thoughts on open houses).

q) Will it be you personally who would host our open house?

r) How would you handle the number of visitors that come into our open house (potentially at the same time)? How would you ensure our personal belongings and valuables will be safe?

s) How would you know the visitors walking through our home are qualified buyers?

t) What is your impression of our home? What features do you think have the most appeal?

u) How do you think our home compares to similar homes on the market (competition)?

- v) What list price would you suggest on our home? What final price could we expect?
- w) What information determined the price you are suggesting?
- x) Do you have comparable home sales to substantiate your recommendation?
- y) How will you present our home if you list it?
- z) What is your average days on the market for homes you have sold in the last year?

Ask any other questions you can think of. There may be some questions that come up as a result of an answer given by the agent.

Don't be alarmed if the price range the agent gives you isn't exactly what you had estimated. Agents have access to up to the minute sold prices (not just the for sale prices and these are the prices the houses actually sold for). Agents can also see the level of inventory available. At certain times of year and in certain areas when inventory is low, prices usually start increasing. Hear the agent out and let them explain how they have come to their recommended price. If you feel they are way off the mark, do not say this now. Wait until you finish all interviews.

If one of the agents has the highest recommended price and it is within the ballpark prices you determined from your research, as well as the ballpark prices of the other agents you interviewed, record this. If an agent believes you can capture the price, you can choose the agent who impressed you most and tell them you want that price put on your home.

If one of the agents offers a much higher listing price recommendation, please **beware**: That is an agent who is trying to "buy the listing". Please do not fall for this. This would be a price that is significantly higher than all the



other recommended prices and your own research. There will be no benefit to you in placing a huge sticker price on the house. The agent will be fine because their phone will ring and they will gain business, but your house won't sell. This is usually done by agents either unintentionally (they did not do their homework and have no idea what your house should sell for) or deliberately, by agents who just want another listing so their phone will ring. They will list the house, their phone will ring, they will pick up clients who call about your house, but the house won't sell. Then, in a few weeks, the agent will call and suggest you reduce the price of the house. And in the end, the price will be at or lower than the recommended prices of the other agents and likely sell even lower than that.



### **Agent's Presentation to you:**

Download a free worksheet to fill out during agent presentations [here](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets):  
[www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets](http://www.iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemanning/books/stepbystep/trackersheets)

Pay attention to the agent's presentation to you. Does the presentation include the following?

- a) Detailed listing sheets for properties that compare to yours, sold or unsold, preferably both.
- b) A written or verbal commentary on the listing sheets highlighted, explaining the differences between that home and your home and how those differences affected the final sale price of the homes.
- c) Does he have documentation showing his average days on the market for listings he has sold in the last year?
- d) Does he have written recommendations from clients?

- e) Does he have a questionnaire for you to fill out, asking about the details of your home?
- f) Does he have listing sheets for properties he has actually sold in the area? (Be sure that at the bottom of the sheet, it shows his brokerage office as the listing office. Sometimes agents can print off listings that are not theirs and their name appears on the listing only because they printed it off, however the listing brokerage office is also listed and be sure that the office is the same office the agent works for.)
- g) Does he have a written marketing plan for your home? Does he have a list outlining his services and what is included in your commission fees?
- h) Is he asking you what price you want your house to be listed for or is he recommending a price? (Wait for his recommendation to ensure he has done his research.)
- i) Has the agent put together a presentation package that he is leaving with you? Is the presentation package personalized to your home? Does it look well researched and prepared?
- j) Does the agent ask you specific questions about the house to gather additional information to substantiate or pinpoint a price for your home?

Once the presentation is over and the agent has left, write down your thoughts and impressions of the agent, his questions and answers, his presentation and whether you feel he has impressed you and seems trustworthy and hardworking. If you are interviewing multiple agents, you may forget your impression of the first interview, so these notes will help. Repeat this for all the agents.



### **Compare Presentations & Overall Impressions**

Once all the interviews are complete, review the presentations and information that the agents left with you, as well as the notes and impressions you wrote down. Discuss with your partner or family member. If an agent really stood out to you, trust your gut and hire them. If you have additional questions or need clarity on a certain issue, call the agent and ask the questions.

If you feel that none of the agents actually connected with you, or didn't seem professional and knowledgeable enough, or did not answer all your questions satisfactorily, keep looking. Your house is likely one of the biggest investments you've ever made and you've worked hard to prepare it for sale. You want to feel like the agent you hire is your partner and is invested in the process of moving forward and getting your home sold.

## HIRING AN AGENT AND PREPARING

Download the question sheet from my website [here](https://iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/trackersheets):

<https://iconicwordsmiths.com/chloemannings/books/stepbystep/trackersheets>

Download the listing detail sheets from my web page so you don't forget anything.

Once you've hired the agent you want, further discuss the following:

- a) The list price for your home (especially if there is a week or two that goes by before your home is going on the market. Markets and values can change quickly and if there is a last-minute adjustment due to lower inventory or latest sold prices, and you could possibly list at a higher price, you would want to be aware of this and take advantage of it.
- b) Timing. What day do you feel the house can be ready for photos? Will the agent attend the photo shoot?
- c) Is there going to be a sign on the property? Do you want one? When is the sign being installed?
- d) What day will you be ready for the house to go on the market? This should be a day you are also prepared to allow showings.

e) Review your schedule. Are there days and times that just won't work for showings? Perhaps you have young kids and they go to bed at 6pm? Perhaps you are a shift worker who works night and needs to sleep in the daytime? Perhaps you have a big birthday celebration happening on a weekend, a week from now. Review the possible and not possible dates and times with the agent.

f) Discuss with the agent the days of the week or daily times when showings will not be able to happen, so he knows ahead of time.

g) How will you be notified that a showing is scheduled? Do you have to confirm the showing by responding? Will you be reminded? How will you keep track?

h) When or how will the agent let you know of any feedback from the agents who have shown the house?

i) Are you setting a date for offers? If so, when?

j) What will happen when there is an offer? Is your agent bringing the offer to you to present it and discuss it with you? Is the buyer's agent bringing the offer to present it? Discuss what will happen with our agent.

k) Discuss possible closing dates with your agent. You must ensure you do not pick a closing date which is a holiday when lawyers and banks will be closed. Also, your closing date must align with the date you are moving into your next house or closing on the house you are purchasing.

l) If you have not yet found your next house that you plan to purchase, you may have to start looking for the house first, depending on the inventory on the market in your area. Your agent may suggest you list your house and start looking for houses at the same time. You may have to choose a long closing date in order to give you time to find the right house and to match the closing date that those sellers are offering. Talk to your real estate agent about the

situation. He/she will know if inventory is sufficient and that you should or shouldn't need to worry about finding a place in time, etc.

**OR:**

m) Discuss with your agent what kind of home you are looking for. Let him know your preferred location, style, number of bedrooms, bathrooms, and other features you would like as well as your price range. He can then take a look to see potential properties and note how many possible homes may be available on the market. Once you review the number of homes available and whether the homes are appealing to you, you can then decide together with your agent whether to list your house now or wait until you've identified and made an offer on the home you want to buy.

n) Give the information binder to your agent so he can copy the information. You will need it back to have it available for buyers when they visit. The visitors will not take the binder, but your agent may want to provide a color brochure with the listing sheets and description and have those available so potential buyers can take a copy.

o) Talk to the agent about any work that needs to be done on the house and the quotes for the work you have documented. This way, you are on the same page as far as how to handle those issues and can review and agree on any negotiating amounts before receiving an offer.

p) Talk to your agent about a real estate lawyer if you do not already have one. Call the lawyer and ensure they are available to handle the sale. Find out their rates ahead of time. You do not want to be scrambling at the last minute to find a lawyer or end up paying more for a lawyer because you don't have time to find another one if you have a fast sale.

q) Discuss anything else that needs to be agreed on or any questions you have. He/she will likely have questions for you as well.

r) Tuck valuables that are laying around away in drawers or safes. While most people would never take anything or even touch anything in someone's home, it is a good idea to put away jewelry and small valuables that are out on display in your bedroom, bathroom, etc.

And now you are ready to put your House on the Market and get it sold!!!



**A note about open houses:** Over the years, I have held many, many open houses. Looking back, open houses built my business. I advertised and attracted an amazing amount of people to those open houses. In fact, one year, I sold eight of my own listings to people who attended my open houses. However, the market at the time was a buyers' market and the competition was very stiff. It was taking months to sell a house at that time. Honestly, a lot of the people I met at open houses became my clients. So, in a market with a lot of competition, open houses can be a method to get more exposure on your home. However, they are also an extremely effective way to build a real estate agent's business. Be sure that the market you are in requires the extra exposure of an open house to help get your home sold and it's not just a tactic to help the agent build their business. In hot market, you do not need to have open houses. Here are the issues with open houses:

- a) Some open house attendees are tire kickers. They really aren't even sure they want to buy (and may even have a home to sell first that isn't even on the market).
- b) Some open house attendees are nosy neighbors who just want a look at your house.

- c) Some open house attendees are people looking for decorating and design ideas.
- d) You don't know if the open house attendees can even buy the house. Are they pre-approved for a mortgage? Do they have any money?
- e) How does the agent watch all attendees when too many arrive at the house at the same time?
- f) Qualified serious buyers will book a showing with their agent to see the home. Is the open house taking time away from possible showings by agents?

**A note about new agents:**

Do not discount a newer agent from listing your property. Everyone has to start somewhere and needs that first break. Having said that, I would not hire a brand-new agent to list my home.

I would, however, let an agent who has been working with buyers and helped a good number of buyers buy homes, list my property. Even if it is the agent's very first listing. If the agent has been working with buyers for the past year and helped at least 8 or 10 buy a home, they have been through a lot of listed homes and written enough contracts to be comfortable with the process.

New agents are hungry, energetic and determined to build a business. If you are their first listing, you will get undivided attention and an agent who is going to be 100% committed. Of course, that agent still has to impress you through the interview process and so on, but if the agent does all that, do not overlook them just because you might be their first listing.

(I remember my first listing. A very nice woman. She straight out asked me how many homes I had listed up till that point. I was honest and said, 'Your home will be my first.' However, I told her, I had helped at least 10 clients



buy homes, I had shown at least 100 homes and that I would work my butt off for her. Well, she hired me. I did work my butt off. I sold her home, and she became a lifelong client as well as her neighbor and her son. I will never forget her. It's always nice to give a person their first break and believe in them. They will reward you for the opportunity you have given them).

## **A NOTE ABOUT REAL ESTATE AGENTS**

Let me tell you, this industry and being in it, is not easy. It is ruthlessly competitive.

The talent and skills and personalities of real estate agents are all over the map. You sometimes wonder how an agent ever got his/her license. Agents can be either absolutely terrible or absolutely amazing and everything in between.

Sometimes, I really felt as an agent, that I was financially supporting a ton of other industries. It sometimes felt like all of those businesses that service real estate agents were making more money than the agents themselves. It's a huge money grabbing industry.

Real estate agents have a ton of fees and costs and it is extremely expensive to become an agent and stay an agent. Real estate agents are called, emailed, mailed, marketed to, pursued with product and service offers. Telemarketers love us. We are the most pursued industry by telemarketers and service companies.

Nothing pisses me off more than hearing someone say that we do very little work for an extremely high pay cheque.

Actually, the only thing that pisses me off more than that is someone saying I should lower my fee and accept less money. Really? So, you want to hire me because you believe I am the best, but you want to pay me what the worst agent charges? Can you buy a Mercedes brand vehicle for the same price as a Kia brand vehicle? NO.

How would that person feel if I went to their office where they work and announced that they were being given a specific task to perform but, they were going to have to perform the task for half of the salary they normally make? And all because I decided that they made too much money, and for no other reason.

The person would say: “Do you know what I do at my job?”

“No,” I would say, “but it looks easy.”

OR

“Do you know how hard my job is?” I would say.

And they would say, “How hard is it? You show homes and you write offers.” (I have actually heard this.)

Let’s be clear here.

The television shows have not helped actual real estate agents one iota. It is NOT like the shows portray. It is soooo far from it. It is NOT easy. Something like 90% agents do not succeed or if they do, they do not make any money.

People don’t realize that our commission cheques have to cover a million expenses and our time.

They don’t realize that we do not have any income in between closing dates. We have children and mortgages and expenses too. In fact, if you factored in

all the expenses we have and all the hours we invest into each client every week, I bet most of us do not make minimum wage and in a lot of cases, we don't take home what a middle-income person earns.

It costs a lot of money. It is very stressful. You are pretty much on call seven days a week all year long. You sometimes feel like you live in your car. And you are on the phone all day.

It costs money for the real estate course. It costs money to get the license and those fees are renewed every year. It costs money for our errors and omissions insurance, also yearly. Business cards, signs, lockboxes, websites all cost money. We have to belong to a real estate board (sometimes multiple boards) and that costs money. Agents need a website and that costs money.

Our brokerage office (every real estate agent has to belong to a brokerage) takes a **large** percentage of our commission (sometimes as much as 50%) or they charge desk fees (these can range from \$400 - \$2000 month).

With what is left we have to cover our income taxes, our vehicles, travelling costs, cell phone costs, copy and printing costs, laptops, clothing, desk fees, office telephone and copy costs, parking, client photography, client videos, yearly real estate memberships, course update fees, marketing fees, mailing costs, etc.

When we pay for photography, signage, videos and/or staging for a listing, that is out of our pocket, before your house even sells. And we don't get actually paid until about two weeks after the sale closes and after our office has taken their share. Closing can sometimes be 90-120 days after we have spent that money.

AND WHAT IF THE HOUSE **DOESN'T SELL**? Do we expect the seller to cover those costs? NO. Do we ask them to? NO. We cover it.

Think about this. Let's say you pay 5% commission. Your house sells for

\$300,000. That equals \$15,000. But that is split with the listing agent and the buyer's agent, so \$7500 each. However, each of the agent's brokerages is going to take a percentage (this can be anywhere from 50% to 10%, let's call it 20% just for the example). That \$1500.

There is \$6000 remaining. You have to pay income taxes on that, so let's take another 30% off ( $-\$1800 = \$4200$ ).

You pay the photographer, sign installer, the sign costs - \$400. We are not even going to count any advertising or printing or brochure costs. There is \$3800 left. The licensing costs for the year are anywhere from \$1500-\$3000 and errors and omissions is approx. \$500.00 which averages out to \$300 per month. Now we are down to \$3500.00. I haven't even listed the telephone, printing, copying, fuel, etc... And most agents buy closing gifts for their clients (\$200 – \$500).

On top of that, some of us have children, so there is babysitting costs. We put a huge amount of mileage on our vehicles every year and so there is usually a corresponding amount of maintenance and repairs. Our cell phone and internet services alone can be hundreds per month.

Real estate agents don't get benefits or paid health care. We have to make the money last and make it cover all those expenses until our next closing.

In the first couple of years, most agents are lucky to break even. But if they push through and hit a certain volume of sales every year (say at least 15 sales), they can make an okay living. Really though, they need to do more than that to make a good living. And that level of income demands a ton of hours per week to make this happen.

If you worked it out by dividing what we make in three months – by the hours we work – it wouldn't amount to much. I know my first two years I worked pretty much constantly. I put in anywhere from 50 – 70 hours a week

and every single weekend (because that is when people are available to see homes).

I once showed 32 houses to one couple alone before they found one they wanted.

The hours agents spend working are way beyond the regular 40-hour week most people work and that impacts our families.

It is difficult to make plans because inevitably, when we do, an offer comes in or buyers just **have to** visit that property tomorrow and you have to leave whatever you are doing or suddenly change your schedule from time spent with your family, or a special occasion and go to work.

So please, please, please. Do not denigrate real estate agents for the money they might earn. Beat them up for doing a bad job, not calling you back, putting crappy photos online, but not for what they earn.

It's a hard lifestyle and not everyone can do it. It looks cool on television maybe but those shows just make agents laugh. If it was that easy, we would all be millionaires. Agents who succeed love the business and being self-employed. That is the reason why they stay. Or they are just absolutely determined to win.

For the most part, agents really do **EARN** their money. The failure rate among agents is about 90%.

They give up. If there is one standing in front of you that has survived two years, know that they are a fighter.

Of course I may be bias, but that has been my experience and the experiences of many others I know.

That's my rant and that is all.

Happy selling. I hope you get a fantastic price for your home after all the work you have done and I hope you find your dream home for your next

house.

Most of all, I hope this book helped you navigate the process, eliminated at least some of the stress, organized your life a little better, provided a road map to follow, educated you, informed you, helped you hire the right agent and made you more money.

I would love to hear your feedback on this book. Any suggestions of content I missed or overlooked. Any stories about the difference it made for you.

Keep an eye out for my next book. I think the title will be: How to Renovate Without Being Ripped Off!

Take care!

## CONCLUSION

Thank you so much for purchasing and reading THE ESSENTIAL STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PREPARING & SELLING YOUR HOME FOR TOP DOLLAR.

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Thank you!

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Chloe, an intrepid DIY'er and only parent to 4 children and 3 grandchildren, has spent years in the real estate industry. She has been an advisor to hundreds of clients on home preparation and maximizing the largest investment most people will make in their lifetimes. She loves helping people and is busy putting together guides and books to help even more people maximize their investments.

(p.s. Chloe Manning is pen name for C. Domina)