

Real Estate

Your Home | Your Life



Get Noticed

Consider the exterior of your house as your home's way of introducing itself to the neighborhood.

Not only is it the first impression people have of your home, but unless your home is for sale on the market (or these people are friends of yours) it is very likely that it is the only impression they will have of your house.

Curb appeal also helps — or hurts — the value of the entire neighborhood. Implement a few of the following tips to add some “wow” factor to your exterior.

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM COLOR

Your front door is the entry to your home and can make a big statement. Painting it a contrasting color to the exterior of your home can give your house an instant facelift.

Flowers are another inexpensive way to brighten your property. Plant colorful flowers around the foundation of your home, in planters on your front porch or spilling out of window boxes. Not a fan of flowering plants? Place a dark-colored mulch in flower beds to make shrubbery “pop.”

HOUSE NUMBERS

House numbers can be a fun way to bring out the character in your home. Place them horizontally over your door or vertically beside it. Think past the traditional plastic numbering offered at most home improvement stores and try out other materials, such as iron or wood.

Remember that the more creative you get, the more likely your home will be noticed from the curb.

GIVE YOUR LAWN A MANICURE

Nothing says, “This house is taken care of” better than grass that is cut on a regular basis, clean edging by the sidewalk and flowers and shrubbery that are devoid of weeds. Not only does it look nice, but it evokes a sense of care.

The good news is that no matter the weather, there is likely some work you can do in your yard. If the outside is maintained and nurtured, buyers assume that the same care and attention most likely is being paid to the interior of the house.

CREATE A SEATING AREA

Add seating in the front of your home. You don't need an entire patio set. If you have a porch, consider adding rocking chairs or other outdoor furniture. If you lack a covered area, Adirondack chairs are a great choice. They are generally easy to find at a variety of price points and hold up well to weather.

Keep outdoor living spaces looking new by pressure washing once a year and changing up the cushions.



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Your front door is the entry to your home and can make a big statement.

Dressing Up the Drudge

When it comes to decorating, there are some rooms in the house that get all the love: new granite countertops for the kitchen, curtains and cozy linens in the bedroom, a photo gallery wall in the living room or leading up the staircase.

But don't forget about the more utilitarian rooms of the house. Cultivating a sense of style and decor in these rooms not only brings a dash of cheer to otherwise menial tasks (does anyone like folding laundry?), but it designates these spaces as important areas in your home.

Having these rooms beautified and modernized can lead to major resale bonus points when it's time to put your home on the market.

BATHROOMS

We spend considerable amounts of time in bathrooms. Make yours a retreat. Hang photographs — or any type of art for that matter. Place a little greenery, whether a fern that spills over its container or a simple, tidy succulent, on a shelf.

Store your necessities (think Q-tips, cotton balls, lotion) in attractive canisters and bottles. It's all about how to display what we already have and use.

LAUNDRY ROOMS AND MUDROOMS

Laundry rooms and mudrooms are notorious for clutter. An attractive aesthetic can be achieved most dramatically by organizing the space. Don't let laundry sit in piles on the floor, or in a basket on top of the washing machine.



Consider changing out plastic baskets for wicker, or create a labeling system to separate whites and darks. Is your laundry room not so much a room as it is a closet? Make an easy, dramatic upgrade with peel-and-stick wallpaper. This wallpaper comes in a variety of colors and cheery patterns. Best of all, it is incredibly user-friendly.

If you misalign the edges, just peel off and start again.

CLOSETS AND PANTRIES

These areas routinely suffer from neglect precisely because you can literally shut the door and forget about them. Their doors and small square footage make it easy not only to “stuff” them with items, but to see

them as only a feature of another room and not a space all their own.

Keep your pantry organized and more accessible by facing canned goods outward. Keep smaller grab-and-go items such as individual cups of fruit or bags of chips in colorful bins that match your kitchen decor. Stock your basics (flour, sugar,

cereals) in clear, coordinating canisters. This not only looks nice but makes it easy to notice when you are running low on something.

For bedroom closets, hang your clothes on matching hangers. Whether wood, felt, or plastic, matching hangers create a clean look that puts the clothes front and center.

Go Tiny to Live Large

More and more people are choosing to downsize their homes and belongings in search of more. More time to spend with loved ones and more money to spend on the things they want most. Tiny homes are living spaces that are generally between 100 and 400 square feet.

While many tiny homes exist in the form of apartments and single-family houses, tiny homes on wheels are gaining momentum. Living tiny is not for everyone. Here are just a few pros and cons of tiny living.

PRO: Cheaper utilities. You are heating and cooling limited square footage, a fraction of the space of a traditional single-family home.

CON: Not necessarily cheaper housing. While tiny houses can have a lower overall cost than a traditional-size home, that doesn't mean they are necessarily cheap. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, a new home in 2015 on average cost \$350,000 for just over 2,700 square feet. Research found many tiny home builders who start in the \$60,000 to \$90,000 range and go up from there.

PRO: Customization. Because you are outfitting a smaller space, it becomes easier to afford the upgrades you desire. It is a lot more feasible to install granite countertops when you are paying for 6 square feet instead of 20.

PRO: Mobility. Did you get a new job? Relocating to a new city? Take your house with you.

CON: Where to park it. Where to park a tiny house can be tricky. Aside from purchasing land, many owners of tiny homes have found success parking at RV parks, as many builders follow the legal parameters for travel trailers.

PRO: Smaller carbon footprint. Making a home smaller is one of the easiest ways to lower the amount of resources needed to build it and the



amount of energy needed to sustain it. Tiny homes also can be designed to live “off-grid,” reducing their carbon footprint even more.

CON: Storage. There is no getting around this one. Less space equals less storage. This means getting inventive with storage solutions, and utilizing

what would otherwise be “dead space” such as space underneath cabinetry and stairs.

PRO: More time. This is simple math. The less house you have, the less time you spend cleaning and maintaining it.

CON: Close quarters. While tiny liv-

ing is all well and good when the space is just servicing one person, living in such tight spaces can be tough on relationships. There is not as much room to allow for solitude. This is not to say that relationships can't work in tiny living spaces, but there are more challenges.

Keep Your Home Safe

Having a safe house is among the top priorities among homeowners. However, unless you've purchased your home with a security system already installed, investing in one isn't always in the budget. There are, nevertheless, features you can implement to increase the safety of your home without the large upfront cost.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Lighting the pathways of your home has never been easier with solar light fixtures. Not only affordable, solar light fixtures rely on the sun for power.

This means no digging up the lawn to bury the electrical. This feature also makes it simple to place the lights exactly where you want them to give your yard a safe, stylish addition.

LANDSCAPING

How you choose to landscape your property also can be a deterrent to burglars. Planting roses or any sort of prickly plant underneath windows makes them less accessible entry points.

Also keep your lawn trimmed and mowed. If your grass gets too high, it can look like you're on vacation.

WINDOW TREATMENTS

Installing curtains or blinds — and keeping them closed when you leave the house and when you go to bed — prevents people from casing your house.

If a thief cannot see what there is to take, they will likely leave you alone. This is especially critical when you are at work or running errands.

DEADBOLT DOORS

According to [safety.com](https://www.safety.com), 34



percent of intruders enter homes through the front door, and an additional 22 percent enter through back and side doors. Adding an additional and sturdy lock to all exterior doors is perhaps one of the best improvements to your home's safety.

MOTION SENSORS

This is a smaller investment (you can find great ones in the \$200 range) and great alternative to a full-blown security system.

Most models allow you to monitor the device directly from your smartphone. Simply

download the company's app and keep an eye on your property at all times, even when you're far away.

FIRE AND GAS GEAR

Don't forget the simple things, such as keeping fresh batteries in smoke and natural

gas detectors. The Firefighter Safety Research Institute strongly suggests testing all detectors once a month for dead batteries and defects.

As an added bonus, all of these safety features will increase the value of your home.

Sell Your House Fast

When you find yourself in the position of needing to sell your home, generally quicker is always better. Not being able to sell a house in a timely fashion can mean serious financial strain.

In the current economy, however, it is difficult to count on a fast sale. Keep the nightmares of your house sitting on the market for months on end at bay and try the following tips to help make your home stand out to buyers.

DECLUTTER

This small goal can have big effects. People want to be able to visualize their own belongings in the space. This is hard to do if you have stuff stashed in every corner. If it's feasible, rent a short-term storage locker for your non-essentials, or ask a friend or relative if you can store a few boxes in their garage or basement.

At the same time, make sure you keep enough of your belongings in the house to stage the space. It can be hard for people to visualize how a couch might fit, or where to best position a bed. This is much easier to do if you haven't had to relocate before selling.

TAKE PHOTOS

We live in a digital world. According to the National Association of Realtors, 90 percent of people use online searches as part of their house hunt. And those who don't are probably receiving digital listings via email from their agent.

This means that curb appeal

starts online. Oftentimes, the listing photos are the first impression potential buyers have of your home, so make sure they are high quality.

If your Realtor insists on taking the photos, don't be shy about still snapping a few of your own. Remember that you've lived in your home and know its best features and

angles. Let buyers see how lovely the light is in your dining room in the morning or how shady the backyard gets in the hot afternoon.

IMPROVE YOUR CURB APPEAL

Because the first impression your home makes is its exterior presence, it is important to

consider what potential buyers might think when they pull in the drive. Walk outside and take an honest look at your house. What elements are attractive?

Are there projects or maintenance you've been meaning to complete but haven't? If they aren't cost-prohibitive, consider tackling a few. Set

aside a Saturday and clean out the gutters. Swing by your local home improvement store or nursery to pick up potted plants and hanging baskets for the front porch. Rent a pressure-washer and give your siding, front porch and driveway a good scrub. Everything doesn't need to be new, but it must be clean.



Not Your Mother's Housing Market

Buying a home today is a drastically different experience that it was for your mother, or your grandmother. The economy, population growth and social desires of a generation are all contributing factors to the real estate climate.

Each generation continues to have its own tendencies and desires when searching for a new home. One of the goals of the National Association of Realtors is to follow these generational trends. Read below to see how you compare.

MILLENNIALS

Millenials are people ranging between 18 and 35 years of age, and they currently make up 35 percent of all homebuyers — the largest share and growing each year. They are the most likely to not only search for a home online but take action.

GEN X

Buyers between the ages of



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36 and 50 represent Generation X, and make up 26 percent of all homebuyers. Because this generation is in the peak of their earning potential, it is no surprise that they have the highest median home prices and highest median square foot-

age of all the generations. Generation X also makes up the largest share of sellers, at 25 percent.

BABY BOOMERS

Baby Boomers, people between the ages of 51 and 69, move the longest distance

at a median of 34 miles and foresee themselves living in their current home the longest, at 20 years.

THE SILENT GENERATION

Buyers ages 70 to 90 make up the silent generation, and 9 percent of all buyers. They

are very often downsizing due to retirement, wanting to be closer to family and have the smallest median income of all generations. However, they are the most likely to purchase new homes and the least likely to purchase a detached single-family home.

The Digital House Hunt

Recently Google collaborated with the National Association of Realtors to discover trends in how home buyers use digital media in their home search. The result: We are living in the age of the digital house hunt. Here are 10 important statistics that came out of their study:

- 90 percent of home buyers search online in some capacity to aid in their quest.
- Google searches relating to real estate have increased 253 percent in the past four years.
- 89 percent of people start with an Internet search to find a real estate agent.
- 68 percent of home buyers use a mobile application throughout their home search.
- YouTube is the top destination for video research, with 51 percent of potential home buyers visiting the site.
- 70 percent of home shoppers view videos to tour the inside of a home, while 86 percent view videos to find out more about a specific community.
- Moreover, agent-related searches have grown on YouTube 46 percent year over year.
- While 78 percent of potential home buyers visit three or more sites before taking action on a house, nearly one-fourth take action the day they start researching.
- The biggest demographic of home shoppers to take action through a real estate site are ages 25-34, making up 31 percent.
- 52 percent of first-time home buyers started their search online.

