



How to sell a home in the winter.

Winter may not be the most popular time to sell a home, but this doesn't mean you have to wait until the weather warms up to list your property. With the right strategy and a bit of hard work, you can make your home stand out to potential buyers in a season where competition is less fierce and certain buyers are highly motivated to purchase.

It may take you a little planning and some prep work. However, when you need to sell your house you need to sell your house – regardless of what season it happens to be. Knowing how to sell a home in the winter can go a long way in increasing your chances of success.

Tips for selling a home in the winter

If the weather is getting colder and you need to get your home sold, consider the following advice to make the process easier and more effective. Use these winter time home selling tips to effectively get your home sold.

Keep the temperature up – While you may have a strong desire to minimize your homes utility bills as winter weather arrives, you need to remember that you are selling an experience when you are selling your home. The people walking through your door should be able to imagine themselves living in your home – something that is hard to do when they are shivering from the cold. You do not have to keep the heat going all of the time if you are OK with cooler conditions, but definitely keep the house warm while you are showing if you want to attract offers. Selling a home has a lot to do with emotional connections. Often times people will know they like a place within five minutes of walking through the door. Making it easier for them to connect with your home is a smart move.

Take care of the ice and snow – If you live in an area where snow falls and temperatures drop below freezing, you should make it a point to keep access to your house free and clear of these obstacles and safety hazards. Your sidewalks and doorways should remain clear of snow and ice, both because it looks better and because it allows buyers access to the interior. It is also important for aesthetic reasons – people like a well-kept exterior. There are also legal reasons as well. Did you know that it is easy to get sued if someone falls and gets injured on your property because of negligence on your part? Some states like Massachusetts have made it a law that you have a legal responsibility to clear snow and ice from your home. Getting sued is never fun. It makes sense to spend a little extra keeping your property maintained especially when you are selling in the winter.

Keep the exterior clean – One of the problems with wintertime is all the grime that accumulates due to the snow and ice. Your windows and your siding may have a noticeable layer of dirt on it that is best cleaned off before you show the house. You only get one first impression, so make it count by cleaning the exterior. So while keeping your walk and driveway cleared of ice and snow is important you also want the general





appearance of your property to be up to snuff as well. A graceful appearance is certainly one of the top winter home selling tips to exercise with care. Take a look at my guide for some additional exterior home staging tips as well as other helpful advice on making your interior shine.

Watch out for ice dams – While many people love the almost magical look of winter time around a home with snow and cool looking icicle formations, these things can wreak havoc on our homes. One of the more common issues that can appear in cold winter climates is the formation of ice dams. Ice dams can form around the eaves and gutters of a roof causing tremendous damage. Ice dams can loosen shingles, tear off shingles, and force water into our homes. This can cause damaged ceilings, peeling paint, ruined insulation and if you don't address the problem right away mold! Fixing ice dam problems is something you will want to address right away especially when selling your home. There are not many things in a home purchase that will scare a buyer away faster than a water issue. As a Realtor one of the things we discuss with sellers all the time is how to prepare for the buyers home inspection. This is of major importance because it is the largest hurdle to clear when selling a home. Many buyers are scared to death of any kind of water issues. Not only will you want to actually fix the ice dam itself but any kind of water staining left behind as well.

Showcase the fireplace – If you have a fireplace you should definitely show it off to buyers. How you do this will depend on several things. If you have a gas fireplace it is easy enough to start it up before a showing and add some ambiance to your family room area. However, a wood burning fireplace is not something you can just leave burning around the clock. You can set up the wood for a fire – at least demonstrating the potential for what the house can do. Talk with your real estate agent to determine the best way to do all of this. He or she may be comfortable starting a fire and taking care of it while showing your house.

Show in the daytime if possible – You only get so much daylight during the wintertime. Try to time the showings of your home for when the sun is still shining. It may take some effort to get buyers to your house before the workday ends but there are obvious benefits to doing so. People can see how the house actually looks both inside and out and will be more likely to find it appealing because of this. Since you can't control when people will actually want to look at your home it will make sense to have a well lit exterior for the occasional showing past daylight hours. Take the time to make sure you have all the exterior lights turned on. If you have spotlights for the backyard or deck area make sure these are turned on as well. Selling a home in the winter can be more challenging to show off your home's exterior living areas but it is well worth the effort.

Emphasize comfort – Beyond keeping the house warm and the fire lit, you can do a lot of little things to make your home seem more comfortable and inviting. Buyers may be coming in out of the cold and feeling stressed from the house-hunting experience. They may be wondering if they can find a house they really like that will be good for both them and their loved ones. Let them know that your house fits this ideal by focusing on the little things. You could put a nice fluffy blanket on the couch, turn back the comforter on the bed and make sure the interior lighting is warm and cozy.





Some sellers like to bake cookies or pie during a showing to keep the house smelling like home. Others like to put on some relaxing music and light candles. What you do will depend on your personality and the space you are working with. Putting in a little effort to make the home comfortable in an otherwise uncomfortable season can work wonders for your sale. I remember a few years ago while selling a home in Franklin Massachusetts how well the seller had their home looking. Everything was perfect from the exceptional care they took with their exterior to the holiday decor to the subtle music playing in the background. All of the Realtors and buyers going through the home were quick to comment on its excellent appearance. It was clearly a difference maker as the home sold after only being on the market for a few weeks in a very slow time of year.

Embrace the season – The holiday season is one of the greatest advantages you have while selling in winter. While there are certainly challenges presented by holidays and vacationing buyers, there are also a range of things you can do to tap into the energy that already exists due to the season. Sellers in wintertime often decide to decorate their homes for the holiday to really draw buyers in. Decorations, lights, scents and even presents under the tree can all do great things for your sale. Many buyers will have families or be planning on having a family. Let them see how great your home is for throwing holiday parties and enjoying time with family and friends. It may be just the thing to attract an offer. Just make sure you don't go overboard. While being festive and having holiday decor can set your home apart from others it can also become a major distraction when you cross the limits. Ask your real estate agent their opinion. Realtors go into tons of homes so they should have a good understanding of what is tasteful and what is "too much".

No shoes – It is easy to be too accommodating to potential buyers, sometimes to your detriment. One boundary that buyers may actually appreciate is the "no shoes" rule. Considering all of the slush and dirt that can be pulled in from outside, it only makes sense to have visitors remove their footwear before walking around in your home. You have already had the carpet cleaned in anticipation of your showings. The last thing you want is mud and dirt brought in from foot traffic. You can place a sign at the door letting visitors know that shoes should be removed prior to entering. Some people offer disposable slippers to wear while in the house, although this is not necessary. What this does is show that you take pride in your home. Buyers generally appreciate this especially when they have the same mind set you do.

Price it right – Depending on your area, the competition for selling a home may be less due to the winter season. However, this does not mean you should price your home excessively high. There are real risks that come with too high a price, including having your home remain on the market far too long to attract good offers. Work with your Realtor to set a fair price for your home that will attract offers right away. The sooner you sell your home, the better. This advice is really important when you are in an area where winter time home selling activity really decreases. The last thing you want to do is have your days on the market inflated heading into spring. This is just going to encourage buyers to make low ball offers on your home. Something I am sure you will want to avoid at all costs!





Monitor the days on the market carefully and try to understand when it is appropriate to reduce your home price. Again your real estate agent should be a trusted adviser to consult with on this subject.

General home selling tips – There are some things that go without saying when selling a home no matter what time of year it is. Besides properly pricing your home which is the most important thing you can do there are other items that are critical components to a successful home sale. These include among other things picking a top producing Realtor, having exceptional photography, keeping your place clean, and allowing easy access for agents to show your home. Take a look at some of the best home sale tips money can buy. When you follow these home sale tips there is no doubt your chances of success will improve dramatically.

Make your marketing material count – One of the downsides of selling a home in the winter is that people can often times not get to see how great your lot looks. Maybe you have the greenest lawn on the block? How about a tree that is simple stunning when it is in full bloom in the spring? Do you have an amazing in-ground pool for summertime fun? These are all things that a buyer will not get to fully appreciate when you are selling in the winter. You can however, make it easier for them to picture. Do this by providing them with some of your best exterior photos during other seasons of the year. This is something that is great to have and will compliment any other creative real estate marketing you have left on the counter for a potential buyer to take with them.

Why Sell a Home In The Winter?

Now that you know how to sell a home in the winter you may be wondering if it is actually a good idea. Much like selling a home in the fall there are some advantages that come with selling in the winter. The biggest competitive advantage a seller has in the wintertime is less competition. Typically there are far fewer homes for sale in the winter than at other times of the year.

Most sellers will wait until early Spring to market their home. This benefits a seller as buyers have far fewer choices. Additionally while winter is usually much slower for home sales, the buyers looking are almost always more serious especially in areas where the weather is inclement. Unless they are really serious about buying a home it is doubtful a buyer will make a practice of going out and looking at homes in the snow and frigid temperatures.

Should I take my home off the market in the winter?

This is another question that comes up quite regularly in discussions with home sellers. There really is no right or wrong answer. It really depends on your goals. One instance where it could make sense to take a home off the market is when it has already been on the market for an extended period of time.

Days on market are a major factor that will help a buyer determine what they want to offer on a home. When the days on the market become extended buyers will naturally feel like they have more negotiating power. By taking a home off the market and coming back on in the spring the days on market are often reset back to zero. For example in Massachusetts when you take a home off the market for 91 days the “clock” is reset back to show like a new listing that has not been on the market.

