

## Make your home a buyer's dream

Maintaining your home is always important but especially so when you want to sell your home as potential buyers will notice everything and a neglected home will put many buyers off. If you are considering putting your home on the market then its worth doing a home audit. Have a look around your home and make a list of all the areas that could be improved or jobs that you have been putting off. Then do them, or arrange a handyman to do them. It may require a little time and money but you will kick yourself if you loose money, or worse still the sale, because something wasn't quite up to scratch.

It's important to stop looking at your house as your home, put yourself in the shoes of a buyer, try and look at your house with new eyes. Start with curb appeal. Does your house look the smartest on the street? Does the gate open and close easily? "It's crucial to look after the outside of your house" says Roy Ilott of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. "If you look after the outside, particularly the roof and the gutters, then you will avoid some costly damage to the interior. For example, if you don't sort out blocked gutters, then they will overflow, the paint could peel off the fascia boards, the brickwork could become stained and the damp could cause mould to grow inside."

Then step inside, is your home warm and welcoming? "Inside the house, it's important to make every room look as bright and big as possible," according to Roy. Adding: "It's best not to be too whacky or personalised if you're preparing your house for sale. Painting your ceiling your favourite shade of purple could definitely put would-be buyers off."

There maybe some jobs that will be worth you doing in order to secure a sale, such as giving the place a fresh lick of paint but remember to stick to neutral colours. It may even be worth changing your kitchen and/or bathroom but don't spend too much and check with your estate agent to see if they think it will be worth while. Another crucial tactic is to de-clutter before selling, de-personalise your property so that potential buyers can begin to imagine themselves there.

If you are thinking of doing any major work then it is worth getting a professional in. Brian Berry, Director of External Affairs at the FMB says "While it is tempting to try and save money by doing some DIY it can be false economy as poorly carried out improvements can knock thousands off the price of your home. Employing a professional may also save you time, as they will be able to do the work quicker than you."Berry continued: "If you do decide to use a builder always follow the FMB's advice for finding one:

1. Be specific and prepare a detailed brief. Be as clear as you can about what you want, as this can make a huge difference to quotes.
2. Choose a reputable builder. Ask friends and family or check the find a builder website ([www.fmb.org.uk/findabuilder](http://www.fmb.org.uk/findabuilder)). And don't be afraid to ask for references or to speak to previous clients.
3. Get at least three quotes. When you are ready to decide, don't just go with the cheapest, consider communication and quality too.
4. Use a contract. You can download free contracts on the FMB website (<http://www.fmb.org.uk/find-a-builder/free-contracts/>).
5. Never pay the full cost of the project up front. Agree a payment plan. Using a credit card to pay can offer you more protection."