



## Education Series: Preparing for Photos

June 20, 2017 – Jordan DiCaprio, Owner, Hampton Roads Real Estate Photography | 757-665-8656 | HRHomePics.com

In the process of selling any house, the time always comes that you have to clean up and get ready for showings. Here are some thoughts when going about this and preparing for the sale.

**Cleanliness:** The most obvious factor is general cleanliness - we all want to keep a clean home, but think of this.... If I, a buyer, go to showing ready to pick my next home, what does trash, stains, excessive dust, pet smell, etc say? It makes me question how well the property has been kept up, and makes me wonder if there are other issues hiding behind the walls. We don't live in a perfect world, but minimizing the things that can be picked on and pointed out saves the confidence of the potential buyer.

I, the buyer, would happily take a good-looking home with a minor issue through to the home inspection process; but I wouldn't have the confidence to move forward with a home that doesn't look like it is maintained. A simple sweep, vacuum, and wipe-down can do wonders. Consider a rent-a-maid or cleaning service before your picture day to relieve the stress of you having to do everything on your own.



*Seek professional cleaning services when dealing with pet smells*

**Clutter:** Going along with general cleanliness, excessive clutter is a big factor on the perception of a property. Utilize closets, garages, attics, sheds, and storage units to minimize clutter in the home. Some moving companies even offer storage so you won't have to move the items twice. It can be tough, but keep it as close to the bare essentials as possible. This is especially true for the kitchen area - A lot of buying decisions today are centered around the kitchen. Try to keep the counters clear of everything besides generic kitchen appliances, decorative items, and fruit baskets. If you wouldn't find something in a model home, it probably doesn't belong here. (Tip: Often, sellers will tuck these extra items up into cabinets before showing so they don't have to be packed away for good)



*Pack away clutter in the garage or storage facilities*

**Staging:** As mentioned in the previous section, keeping to the idea of "as generic as possible" is usually the best bet. Ask yourself, "can this box of baby toys be tucked away in the garage when I leave every morning?".... It's a good idea to do so. You want your potential buyers to see the blank slate that they can picture themselves in, rather than seeing how you live in the home. I may be a single male looking for a bachelor pad or a father of 3, but a living room and kitchen filled with bright pink toys would only associate with one of those buyers. Consider professional staging



*Consider professional staging options to show your vacant home in the best light*

**Views:** One of the staples of real estate photography is seeing the view.

You don't need to show off the view into the neighbor's sunroom, but even a



*A view like this is worth a ton! Don't cover up money-making views with heavy drapes and bookcases*

simple tree outside of the window is a pleasant sight. For photos, the view is very important as it lets you escape the confines of the room and gives the viewer a stronger connection with the property as a whole. Be sure that all (let's say "money-making") views are clear from furniture if possible and the area outside is also clear. Ladders, trash cans, yard waste, unused children's play equipment, etc, should be removed if they would obstruct a view.

**Window coverings:** If you will be replacing window coverings, keep in mind that while the standard metal or plastic, 0.5 inch blinds have nothing wrong with them, an upgrade to 1.5 inch wood slat blinds have a much more premium look to them, and are the perfect match to a hardwood or laminate floor. Going along with keeping things generic, highly stylized blinds or curtains should generally be saved for the next house. 9.9 times out of 10, the buyers would rather have a blank slate they can customize rather than complaining about everything they have to replace to make it the way they want.

**Outdoors / Yard:** We have all heard of the term "curb-side appeal". In real estate sales, this can often mean a good deal of yard work before and during the sales process. For the sake of the listing photos, make sure to consider the following tips.

1. **Trash:** While some photographers will pick up small trash, it is not the responsibility of your photographer to clean up the yard. Yes, this preparation time is full of cleaning, packing, moving, etc, but don't let's your curb-side appeal suffer by leaving the old fence posts laying along the house. (Tip: Generally, the interior of the garage does not get photographed, so tuck any large items that you're stuck with in there.) I can make great things happen with photoshop, but I can't erase yard waste in real life.

2. **Driveway:** Remember the tip about keeping everything as generic as possible? This is repeated in the driveway - no cars, boats, rv's, trailers, etc should be in the driveway when the photos are being taken. There are only a few exceptions - a golf cart or jet-ski will subconsciously enhance the perception of the lifestyle associated with the property, if they are meant for on-site use. Don't put out your atv, canoe, jet ski, and other recreational items if you have to go somewhere else to use them.

3. **Landscaping:** Going back to curb-side appeal and to start with a good impression for potential buyers, be sure to have the lawn well-kept and preferably mowed a day or two before pictures. Likewise, be conscious of weeds or miscolorings on the house. Pressure washing away a stain or algae from the siding is not only a good idea for maintenance, but it is one less thing for potential buyers to pick on.



*Be sure to have your landscape clear of debris and scattered landscaping materials*

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I hope these tips have given you some food for thought when it comes time to get your property ready for market.

On the next issue, we will look at the value of aerial / drone photography in real estate marketing. Stay tuned!

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