

The Pre-Sale Prep Cheat Sheet: What's Worth Doing (and What's Not)

When it comes time to sell, most homeowners ask the same question: **"What should we fix—and what's a waste of money?"**

Here's the straight truth: not all improvements are created equal. Some consistently pay off. Others rarely do. And many things sellers stress over... buyers barely notice.

Fixes That Almost Always Pay Off

These improvements typically return far more than they cost—either in price, speed, or buyer confidence.

Paint (Neutral, Fresh, Clean)

A fresh coat in light, neutral tones instantly makes a home feel newer, brighter, and better cared for.

Flooring Repairs & Cleaning

Worn carpet, damaged planks, or dirty floors raise red flags. You don't need luxury—just clean and consistent.

Minor Repairs Buyers Can See

Loose door handles, dripping faucets, sticky doors, cracked outlet covers. Small stuff signals neglect when ignored.

Curb Appeal Basics

Trim bushes, edge walkways, fresh mulch, clean the front door. Buyers decide how they feel about your home before they walk inside.

Professional Cleaning

This is non-negotiable. A spotless home feels newer, larger, and more valuable—period.

Improvements That Rarely Pay Off

These upgrades often cost real money but don't deliver a meaningful return.

- **Full Kitchen or Bath Remodels** — Unless the space is truly dated or broken, buyers won't pay dollar-for-dollar for your renovation choices.
- **High-End or Highly Personal Finishes** — Exotic tile, bold colors, luxury fixtures—buyers may not share your taste.
- **Specialty or "Hobby" Spaces** — Wine rooms, elaborate workshops, custom built-ins—nice extras, but rarely value drivers.
- **New Roof (If the Old One Is Still Serviceable)** — Important? Yes. Profitable? Usually no—unless it's clearly failing.

What Buyers Notice vs. What They Ignore

Buyers Notice:

- Cleanliness
- Light and openness
- Condition and maintenance
- Flow and functionality
- First impressions

Buyers Mostly Ignore:

- The age of appliances (if they work and look fine)
- Minor cosmetic flaws
- Your furniture (they're buying the house, not the staging)
- Upgrades that feel "overdone"

How to Prioritize If Time or Money Is Limited

If you're short on either, here's the order of operations that works:



The goal is **confidence, not perfection**.

One Final (Very Important) Note

Every home is different. What makes sense in one neighborhood—or price range—can be a mistake in another.

That's why I never recommend pre-sale improvements without:

- Reviewing the market
- Studying buyer behavior
- Matching prep to price strategy

If you'd like a **custom, no-pressure pre-sale prep plan** for your home—focused only on what actually matters—I'm happy to help.

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