DBK Realty LLC

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SELLER RESOURCE · MISSOURI & ILLINOIS

Getting Your Home Ready to Sell

…so it shows its best on day one

The first two weeks on the market matter most. Here's what to fix, what to skip, how to stage each room and how to get ready for photos and showings, plus a countdown to listing day.

6
weeks is a comfortable runway to get a home ready to list

Online
is where nearly every buyer sees your home first

$0
is the cost of decluttering, often the best return of all



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WHERE TO SPEND

Fix it, or skip it?

You don’t need to remodel to sell well. Focus on what buyers notice and what inspectors flag, and leave the big projects for the next owner.

Usually worth doing

- ✓ Fresh, neutral paint where walls are scuffed or bold
- ✓ Fix leaky faucets, running toilets and dripping traps
- ✓ Replace burned-out bulbs, and match bulb colors room to room
- ✓ Repair broken windows, torn screens and sticking doors
- ✓ Re-caulk tubs, showers and sinks
- ✓ Service the furnace and A/C, and replace the filter
- ✓ Fix anything your city’s occupancy inspection will flag
- ✓ Deep-clean carpets, or replace them if worn or stained

Usually skip

- ✗ Full kitchen or bathroom remodels right before listing
- ✗ Adding a pool, addition or other major project
- ✗ Expensive, personal-taste upgrades
- ✗ Replacing working appliances just because they’re older
- ✗ Big landscaping overhauls (tidy instead)
- ✗ Repairs you can price in or offer a credit for instead

Think like an inspector

Consider a pre-listing inspection

A few hundred dollars now can reveal problems before a buyer’s inspector does, so you can fix them, price for them or disclose them on your terms.

Know your city’s rules

Many St. Louis-area cities require an occupancy inspection before you sell. Ask us early, or see our free Occupancy Inspection Guide.

Gather your paperwork

Receipts and warranties for the roof, HVAC, water heater and other updates help buyers feel confident and support your price.

Be upfront on disclosures

Missouri and Illinois both expect sellers to disclose known problems. When in doubt, disclose. It protects you.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Curb appeal and first impressions

Buyers decide how they feel about a home in the first few seconds, from the listing photo and the drive-up. Make both count.

Outside

- [ ] Mow, edge and trim the lawn and bushes
- [ ] Fresh mulch in beds; pull weeds
- [ ] Power-wash siding, walks and the driveway
- [ ] Clean gutters and make sure downspouts drain away
- [ ] Touch up trim and the front door paint
- [ ] Add a couple of potted plants by the entry

At the front door

- [ ] New doormat and a clean, working light fixture
- [ ] Visible, easy-to-read house numbers
- [ ] Polish or replace the door hardware
- [ ] Clean the storm door glass
- [ ] Make sure the doorbell and lock work smoothly
- [ ] Clear the porch of extra furniture and clutter

Inside, everywhere

- [ ] Declutter counters, shelves and closets by about half
- [ ] Pack away family photos and personal collections
- [ ] Open blinds and turn on every light for showings
- [ ] Neutralize odors: pets, smoke and strong cooking smells
- [ ] Deep-clean windows, baseboards and light switches
- [ ] Make sure every room has a clear purpose

Seasonal touches

- [ ] Spring & summer: fresh flowers, a trimmed yard
- [ ] Fall: keep leaves raked and gutters clear
- [ ] Winter: shoveled, salted walks and a warm house
- [ ] Any season: a clean, well-lit entry at dusk
- [ ] Turn off holiday lights and seasonal clutter for photos
- [ ] Keep the thermostat comfortable for showings

STAGING

Room by room

Staging helps buyers picture themselves living there. Aim for clean, bright and simple, with a little warmth.

Kitchen

- [ ] Clear counters except one or two nice pieces
- [ ] Clean appliances inside and out
- [ ] Organize the pantry and under the sink
- [ ] Fix grimy grout and worn cabinet hardware

Bathrooms

- [ ] New white towels and a fresh shower curtain
- [ ] Scrub grout, glass and fixtures until they shine
- [ ] Put away toiletries, razors and medications
- [ ] Fix slow drains and loose toilet seats

Living & dining

- [ ] Remove extra furniture so rooms feel larger
- [ ] Arrange seating for conversation, not just the TV
- [ ] Set the table simply or leave it clear
- [ ] Hide cords and remote-control clutter

Bedrooms

- [ ] Neutral, crisp bedding and made beds
- [ ] Clear nightstands and dresser tops
- [ ] Closets half-empty so they look roomy
- [ ] Kids' rooms tidy and toys in bins

Basement & laundry

- [ ] Bright lighting and a clear path through
- [ ] Run a dehumidifier; fix any musty smell
- [ ] Show a clean, dry foundation and sump area
- [ ] Stack storage neatly along one wall

Garage & storage

- [ ] Room to park a car, if it's a garage
- [ ] Remove or donate what you won't move
- [ ] Consider a storage unit for extra furniture
- [ ] Sweep floors and clear cobwebs

Moving soon anyway? Start packing now. Everything you box up for staging is one less thing to pack later. Our free Moving Checklist walks you through it week by week.

GOING LIVE

Photos, showings and safety

The morning of photo day

- [ ] Every light on, every blind open
- [ ] Cars out of the driveway and off the street in front
- [ ] Trash cans, hoses and toys out of sight
- [ ] Toilet lids down, towels folded, counters clear
- [ ] Fridge front cleared of magnets and papers
- [ ] Pets and pet bowls, beds and litter boxes out of view

Before every showing

- [ ] Quick tidy: beds made, dishes away, trash out
- [ ] Lights on and thermostat set to a comfortable temperature
- [ ] Leave for the showing, and take pets with you if you can
- [ ] Leave a short list of favorite features and recent updates
- [ ] Keep the home “show-ready” with a 15-minute reset routine
- [ ] Tell us about any times that don’t work for you

Keep yourself safe

Lock up valuables

Put away jewelry, cash, medications, firearms, keys and small electronics before photos and showings.

Protect your information

Shred or remove mail, bills and documents. Log out of computers and put away anything with account numbers.

Mind the cameras

If you have indoor cameras, let us know. Buyers often speak freely, and some states restrict audio recording.

Watch for scams

Never share bank details by email. See our free Stop Wire Fraud guide before closing.

My prep to-do list

YOUR TIMELINE

Countdown to listing day

1

6 WEEKS OUT

Plan and price

Meet with us for a market analysis, set your target date and list repairs. Check your city's occupancy inspection rules.

2

4–5 WEEKS OUT

Repair and declutter

Schedule repairs and any pre-listing inspection. Start packing, donating and clearing out.

3

2–3 WEEKS OUT

Paint, clean and stage

Finish touch-ups, deep-clean, and arrange each room. Tackle curb appeal.

4

FINAL WEEK

Photos and go live

Professional photos, final walk-through with us, and your listing goes live.

THINKING ABOUT SELLING?

Let's make a plan for your home.

DBK Realty will walk through your home with you, tell you which repairs are worth it and which aren't, and price it right for today's market. Plus a free market valuation, on either side of the river.

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Important: This guide is general information compiled in November 2026. Every home and market is different; costs, timelines and the return on any repair or improvement vary. Disclosure duties and occupancy inspection rules depend on your state and city. DBK Realty is a real estate brokerage, and this is not legal, tax or construction advice. If you are currently working with another real estate agent, this is not a solicitation of that relationship.

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