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Life & Arts

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GUIDE TO LIFE

Guide to Life is a weekly feature offering advice and instruction to central Ohioans about the myriad choices and challenges we face.

TODAY'S TOPIC: PREPARING A HOUSE FOR SALE



Buyer behold

To get top-dollar offers on home, here are 10 things to do inside and out

By Jim Weiker • THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Home sellers are calling the shots now in central Ohio, where demand is outpacing supply, but that doesn't mean that homes sell themselves. • Houses require some preparation before they're placed on the market if owners want to get top dollar. • From the pedestrian to the professional, the 10 tips below will help your home fetch the most, according to experts. The tips will also prep the home for online photos, which nowadays are crucial to drawing potential buyers.

1. Declutter

This is rule No. 1 from real-estate agents and professional stagers.

"Clutter gives the impression that there's not enough room in the house, so it's all about overcoming that objection," said Susanne Casey, a RE/MAX Impact agent who often hires professional stagers for her listings.

Organize closets and kitchen cabinets, remove extra furniture to

See **To-do list** Page F3

First Person is a weekly forum for personal musings and reflections from readers.

Italian trip uncovers family ties



First Person
Laurie Rogers

My husband, Jim, and I are second-generation Americans. Our grandparents, born in Italy, immigrated to the United States in the early 1920s.

My mother would tell you that her parents, wanting desperately to fit in, left their memories behind, shortened their last names, learned to speak English and started a business.

My mother-in-law — nee Macioce — had a different experience.

She was the youngest of seven children, with the first

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CRITICS' CHOICES

Each week, we consult Metacritic.com to compile aggregate opinions based on reviews from various sources. Each movie is ranked by its "Metascore," an average rating from zero (terrible) to 100 (outstanding).

— Michael Grossberg
 mgrossberg@dispatch.com



A24
 Jason Segel as David Foster Wallace in *The End of the Tour*

Writing lives

MOVIE	SCORE
<i>American Splendor</i> (2003)	90
<i>The End of the Tour</i> (2015)	85
<i>Kill Your Darlings</i> (2013)	65
<i>Finding Forrester</i> (2000)	62
<i>Sylvia</i> (2003)	56

Assassins

MOVIE	SCORE
<i>13 Assassins</i> (2011)	87
<i>Collateral</i> (2004)	71
<i>Wanted</i> (2008)	64
<i>Hitman</i> (2007)	35
<i>Hitman: Agent 47</i> (2015)	26

CHARLIE ZIMKUS | DISPATCH



Clutter and a television detract from a hearth.



A tidy hearth appeals to potential buyers.

COLUMBUS HOME STAGING PHOTOS

To-do list

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make a room seem larger, and tidy everything — from bookshelves to side tables.

2. Paint

There is no cheaper way to make a home seem cleaner, brighter and updated than a coat of paint. Although there is no magic color for selling homes, owners should be careful to avoid the extremes of too bland and too bold.

Sellers should aim for something "between a crayon box and a tan box," said Suzanne Byrd, owner of Columbus Home Staging.

"It's fine if it's mostly a neutral shade, but I like to see at least two or three rooms a different color — ideally a decorator color, like a soft blue or green."

3. Depersonalize

Buyers want to see themselves — not previous owners — in the home.

"A few family pictures are OK," Casey said, "but, if every room is a shrine to your children, it's time to rethink that."

Accessories that might put off some buyers — such as political or religious items — should also be set aside.

In addition, sellers should eliminate children's names in decals or paint, said Michelle Kidd, owner of Michelle Kidd Design, a Columbus home-staging company.

4. Size right

Just as important as the

"This is the most important: spick-and-span. The home needs to be clean from top to bottom: carpets, floors, walls, light fixtures, fingerprints — white-glove clean." — Jill Rudler, a veteran real-estate agent in central Ohio

right amount of furniture is the right size of furniture. A few small chairs in the corner of a massive great room could make buyers worry that the room is hard to furnish. An enormous sectional in a tight living room suggests that the home is too small.

"Furniture should be scaled to the room," Byrd advised.

It should also define a room. Instead of a bedroom that doubles as an office, turn the room into either a bedroom or an office.

5. Clean

This might be the easiest but most often overlooked part of preparing a home for sale.

"This is the most important: spick-and-span," said Jill Rudler, a veteran central Ohio real-estate agent now with Keller Williams Excel Realty.

"The home needs to be clean from top to bottom: carpets, floors, walls, light fixtures, fingerprints — white-glove clean."

And don't forget the windows. Smudgy glass can make an entire home seem dirty, unkempt and dark.

6. Get arty

This might be the biggest challenge for many homeowners.

Like furniture in rooms, art

on walls should be rich without being cluttered. The right art can make a home seem modern and tasteful without detracting from the architecture.

"The most common issue is not having enough or the right kind of art or accessories," Byrd said. "You can make a big impact with art."

7. Repair

Selling a home means finally getting to all those small repair projects. A missing cabinet pull or broken doorbell will jump out at potential buyers and cause them to wonder about the things they can't see.

"Delayed or deferred maintenance that people haven't done anything about — they may think it's fine, but it's not," Rudler said. "It gives the impression of the home not being well-maintained."

Homeowners should also keep in mind problems that an inspection would flag — such as faulty outlets, broken downspouts or leaky faucets.

One inspection item that sellers might want to prepare for is a radon-mitigation system, which central Ohio buyers increasingly expect before the deal is closed.

Leave bigger renovations for buyers unless they are safety hazards, such as a

crumbling front porch.

8. Mow and trim

The outside of a house is just as important as the inside. Pack up bikes and toys, and haul out the mower and hedge trimmers.

"This is especially important for those who might look on the Internet and then drive by the house," Kidd said. "That's their first impression."

"Keep your lawn neat and cut. Trim the bushes, especially if you can't see the front of the house. Make the mulch fresh."

If the season permits, pop flowers into the beds for color.

9. Lay out the welcome mat

Visitors enter through the front door, so help it shine.

"The front door is the most overlooked part of the house for the homeowners," Casey said. "Make sure it's freshly painted; maybe put a potted plant next to it. Create a nice, welcoming entrance."

10. Go pro

Some real-estate agents help homeowners prepare a home for showing.

Those who want to take the extra step can hire a stager. Most stagers charge for an initial consultation, which might take an hour or two and cost \$150 to \$250.

They'll advise homeowners on decluttering, furniture placement, window treatments, wall hangings, paint, floor coverings and anything else that catches the eye.

jweiker@dispatch.com
@JimWeiker

Parenting

Intuition needed in teaching, writer says

By Leanne Italie
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Parents should lose the flashcards, learning apps and other educational strategies, advises Stephen Camarata, a child-development researcher who suggests re-discovering the inner "parenting voice" instead.

The father of seven children, ages 19 to 35, has had plenty of practice.

The professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., spans the fields of speech and language, psychiatry and special education; and is considered an expert in speech and language disorders in children.

Camarata recently talked about his latest book — *The Intuitive Parent: Why the Best Thing for Your Child Is You* (Current, 320 pages, \$27.95), published this week — and his philosophy.

Q: Have young parents lost the ability to follow their instincts in raising children?

A: They haven't lost their ability, but outside pressures are derailing that. Marketing is one factor.

Another factor is simply that our lives are busier and busier. A parent may have big job commitments and other things that lead to a lot of self-inflicted guilt and pressure to rush things along.

Q: How do you describe whole-brain learning?

A: Whole-brain learning actually takes in multiple senses, so learning to read could mean sitting with a parent and holding the book. They're seeing it; they're getting touched; they're hearing the story. That's what computer games can't do.

Q: Where does technology fit into your model of intuitive parenting?

A: Technology is not frivolous, but we don't want to turn our children's minds over to technology. We want to include that in our parenting, but we want to make sure that children aren't psychologically imprinted on screens.

I don't want to see a child left alone in a corner with a device. A parent should be there and interacting in the same way they would with a book. You need to be actively involved. You want to wire their brains to be able to take advantage of technology.