



## Real Estate Photography - Photo Shoot Checklist

By now most will agree that buyers and buyers' agents shop for homes on the Internet. Making a good impression with photos taken by a professional is as important as ever. A pro shoot will help sell your property faster and at a higher price.

This guide will outline the things you need to do before your real-estate photographer arrives and you're ready to show your home. Many of the hit points listed here may seem like plain old common sense, but experience has shown that they are worth mentioning.

### Exterior

We'll start with the outside of the home first because the image of the front of the house is typically the lead for the listing. This makes it one of the most important photos to get right. Most buyers select homes to view by a process of elimination when reviewing the online listings. You don't want the property eliminated before the potential buyers see the rest of the images and read the ad copy (home description).

The assumption is made that you have prepared the home for sale. That means the trees are pruned, required painting is completed or touched up, the driveway is power washed, and major repairs are finished. But getting the home ready for market is a subject for another article. This article concerns the photo shoot and showing your home.

Okay, let's get started.

- Clear the roof and gutters of branches, twigs, leaves, and other debris.
- All windows should be clean and free of excessive dust, dirt, or streaks.
- The lawn should be freshly mowed the morning of the shoot or the day before, and well manicured. Rake and bag the clippings. Be sure to edge along driveways, sidewalks, patios, etc.
- If your lawn is suffering from mole mounds, rake the piles of dirt and reveal as much green grass as possible. At certain times of the year these buggers dig deeper tunnels and leave the piles of dirt behind. Stay on top of this daily if you know a shoot is coming.
- Clear away all trash or items that would make the property look cluttered, and move the trash containers to the garage. The same applies to hoses and the winding apparatuses used to store them.
- Any children's toys that can be moved to the garage should be moved. Swing sets and playground-type structures obviously should stay and could be a selling point if they are in good condition.
- Grass or vegetation growing in the driveway, patio, or sidewalks should be removed. A defoliant works if you start several days ahead of time. If you're starting the day before, use the weed eater or do it by hand. Also tend to the weeds in garden or mulch areas.

- The sidewalks, stairs, driveway and patio should be free of stains. This is usually accomplished with a power washer. At a minimum, sweep all flat surfaces free of debris.
- Pools and hot tubs should be uncovered and freshly skimmed of leaves and debris.
- Make sure the letters on the mailbox and house are straight and in good condition.
- When the photographer arrives, be sure all vehicles are removed from the driveway and, if possible, from the front of the house. There are two reasons for this. First, an unobstructed view is needed to get that perfect shot of the front of the house. Second, when shooting inside, if blinds are open or there is not a complete window covering, the view from the window will be seen in the photos.
- If it is rainy, cloudy, or overcast, consider asking the photographer to come back on a clear day to get the best outdoor shots. Remember, the front of the property is the most visible part of the listing and will probably appear at the top of the brochure.

## Interior

Moving on to the inside of the home—it is helpful if the home tends to look like a model home that was decorated by a professional, even if it wasn't. This can make for busy days before the shoot, so let's dig in.

- Generally the house should be free of clutter, and it is assumed that all repairs to walls and fixtures have been made. The home should be freshly cleaned, making sure to get rid of cobwebs and to clean the light fixtures. Items unrelated to the typical use of a room should be removed to give your home a spacious look.
- All surfaces should be free of an excessive amount of "stuff". This would include photos of family and friends and paperwork stacked on desks or tables. All surfaces should be freshly dusted or cleaned.
- Make sure all light fixtures, including lamps, are plugged in with working light bulbs.
- Kitchen counters should be free of ALL appliances. Add accent porcelain art pieces or plant arrangements for decoration and to add color. Vases or other decorative items work as well.
- Items belonging to pets should be removed (toys, food, and water bowls). Friendly pets, while well meaning, can get in the way of a photo shoot.
- Small children should be tended to so as not to be in the way of the shoot, and all toys should be put away. (That large, tip-proof high chair can be placed in the unfinished part of the basement or garage.)
- Bathrooms are an important part of the presentation. They, too, should be free of clutter. There should be wall decorations and matching towels hung neatly on the racks.
- Bedrooms look best with just window treatments, bedroom sets, and wall decorations. Too much furniture (or oversized furniture) can make rooms look small, so just stick to the minimums on furniture. This applies to family rooms and living rooms as well. To make these areas look spacious, move extra furniture off site or to an area that will not be photographed.
- Unfinished portions of the house, garage, and laundry room are typically not shown in listings.

Most selling agents have a knack for interior design and can give advice as you prepare the house for shoot day and showing. They usually have a working relationship with furniture-rental companies, so if the home is unoccupied or the interior décor needs a little improvement, consult with your agent.