

5 Ways You're Sabotaging the Sale of Your Home

By [Terri Williams](#) | Dec 27, 2018



So you've finally decided to put your home on the market. You've planned your first open house, begun searching for new digs, and even made a mental packing list. Now all you have to do is sit back and wait for the offers to roll in, right?

Well, sellers, we don't mean to freak you out, but we've got bad news: You just might be sabotaging your home sale. Obviously, that's the last thing you'd want to do, but one wrong turn—or wrong decision—could hurt your chances of landing a [buyer](#). And the most unsettling part? You probably have no idea you're doing anything wrong.

Below are some of the ways you may be turning off buyers without even knowing it.

1. Bad color schemes



When your house is on the market, you want to make it appeal to as many people as possible. And while your kitchen painted in your favorite shade of neon green might be attractive to you, it could repel buyers.

“When a buyer comes into your home, you want them to imagine it as their future home. The more difficult it is, the less likely they are to buy,” says **James McGrath**, licensed real estate salesperson for Yoreevo in New York. “The more muted the decorations and [color schemes](#), the broader the reach and the better off you are.”

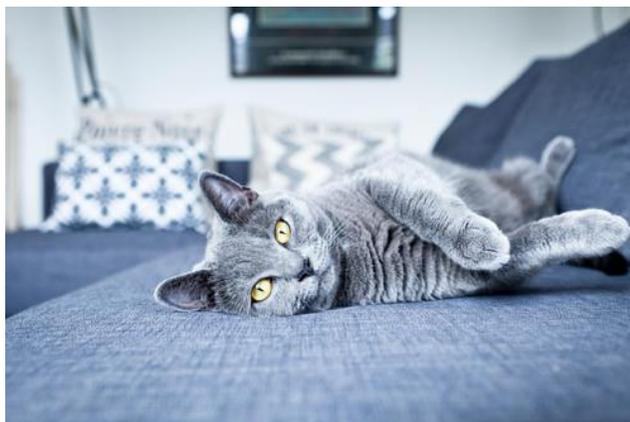
2. Too much personal taste

It's not just bold colors you should avoid; beware of showing off too much of *your* style—at least while your home is on the market. (Yes, we're even talking about your beloved lion statues on the front porch.)

“Odd decorations divert buyers' attention away from the home itself,” McGrath says. “I once saw a home with a stuffed peacock in the bedroom, and every buyer would go in and note the peacock, but not the bedroom itself.”

When in doubt, think neutral: Replace loud patterns with muted ones, and put eccentric decorations and personal knickknacks in storage before your next open house.

3. Bad odors



You might have become nose-blind to cigarette or pet odor, but savvy buyers will instantly pick up on [funky smells](#)—and that's a sure way to drive them away.

If you smoke—or used to smoke—inside your home, know this: Residual nicotine can still be present in the drapes, furniture, carpets, and on walls and other objects long after you've put out the last cigarette, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

And this isn't a problem that can be solved with air freshener. You'll need to either wash or dry-clean your fabrics, shampoo your carpets, and wash your walls. If washing the walls doesn't work, you'll need to repaint.

Pet urine on baseboards and in carpets and rugs is also problematic. Bleach, vinegar and water, or specially formulated cleaners can combat these smells. No matter what, expect to do a deep, deep clean before you list your home.

4. Not being flexible for showings

The real estate market moves quickly, so if you want to sell your home you need to cater to the potential buyers' schedules.

"I get it, getting kicked out of your house for showings isn't fun, but to maximize the activity on your home, you have to be accommodating to potential buyers," says **Jim Stevenson**, a real estate agent at Realty ONE Group in Doylestown, PA.

If possible, require only a few hours' notice before showings, he recommends.

"It's so much easier for me and my buyers if we're able to schedule a showing when it's most convenient for us," Stevenson says. "The sooner a buyer can see your house, the sooner they can make an offer, which lessens the chance of them finding something else."

And remember: One thing buyers definitely shouldn't see during a showing is *you*.

"When owners are home during a showing it adds a layer of uneasiness since buyers don't really feel free in the space," says **Louisa Gillen**, co-founder and principal broker at the Simple Real Estate Co. in New York. "They feel like a guest in someone's home, and ... you want them to feel like it's their home."

5. Disguising problem areas

In your quest to have a show-ready home, don't cut corners. A fresh coat of paint might temporarily hide the appearance of mold, but it'll likely crop up in the home inspection.

"Savvy buyers know to look for mold, which is a fungus that could be toxic," says **Tina Tyus**, real estate broker at Town Square Realty in Birmingham, AL. "If they don't find it, a home inspector will."

Structural issues are another concern for buyers.

“Hairline cracks over doorways could be a sign of settling, but they could also be a sign of structural issues,” Tyus explains.

Instead of trying to hide these problem areas, be sure to address them before you put your house on the market—and be upfront with buyers if you decide to sell the home as is.

Bottom line: Don't try to use paint, rugs, or fancy lighting to mask problems that a buyer will probably uncover.

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