

Surviving Home-Showing With Kids

Tips for Sellers With Teens, Tweens and Tots

Selling your home and keeping it “show-ready” is difficult enough for most folks, but toss a few teenagers, a toddler or a baby into the mix, and it’s bound to send stress levels skyrocketing. But have no fear, with the tips below you can tame the kid clutter and ease the process for the whole family.



- **Contain it. Then carry it away.** Keep a bin, tote, or a laundry basket someplace handy. Before a showing, grab it and toss in any messy items from counters or floors. A pretty basket always looks better than clutter. Take it one step further and bring the basket with you as you leave—voilà!—the mess disappears right out the front door!
- **Invest in furniture that doubles as storage.** If you don't have any nifty hidden-storage-style furniture in your home yet, start checking it out. There are some very stylish options available that not only look great, but help contain your clutter. Also, utilize baskets and bins as much as possible to contain loose items.
- **Store away unused items.** Consider a storage unit to help remove currently unused items and store them off-site. Pack up and store away any toys or supplies that you are saving for future children, or that your child is too young for and will not need or miss for the next few months.
- **Remove barriers.** You would never purposefully place barriers in your home that prevent buyers from easily moving from one space to another; but unfortunately, that's exactly what baby gates can become. Gates are essential in homes with babies and toddlers and removing them *completely* is unrealistic (unless it's a planned open house), but you might consider propping gates in the open position before showings. Also, be sure your agent knows how to operate your baby locks on cabinets and drawers.
- **Lose the extra fluff.** Put away any stuffed animals that are not used daily. Children love stuffed toys, but are often only *attached* to a select few. So keep those out and store the rest. As a bonus, after the move, it will be like Christmas when you bring back out all the "new" stuffed animals.
- **Sort, store and donate.** Only keep or store what you really want and need. Get rid of clothes, toys, or baby gear you are storing that you really don't need. (Like for instance if you are done with the baby stage for good). Today might be a perfect day to sort through items, store away keepsakes, and decide what you can part with. Instead, pass them on to family, friends or the needy.
- **Get pre-school chic.** We love everything our kids make with their little hands. We also love their photos all over the place. But the house doesn't have to look like a day-care as a result. Keep the décor simple and sophisticated. Consider replacing tons of child-made artwork on the walls or refrigerator with a few select items showcased as framed art.
- **Go for the drawers.** Get things off the counters and floors quickly by utilizing your drawers. Keep in mind that buyers love to open them, especially in the kitchen and laundry room, but they usually only open the *top* drawer. So if you have to stash something in a hurry, go for

the bottom drawer, keeping the top one neat and tidy—which sends a great message about how you care for your home.

- **Think like a pro.** You'll want to be able to clean quickly when you get the call for a showing. You can't do this if you are hunting for cleaners that are kept all over the house, in closets and under sinks. So get a cleaning caddy (just like the ones donned by the professional home cleaners you wish you had "on staff"), stock it with the essentials and keep it under the most central sink in the house.
- **Make it a daily routine.** As busy as you are, try not to leave cleaning to a once a week activity—it leaves way too much time for messes to get out of hand and you won't be able to clean them up in time if you get a last minute call. Instead, set aside a specific amount of time each day to straighten up so the task will be more manageable overall.