

## Real Estate: Its all in the prep

***"I'm a photographer, not a miracle worker"*** [to paraphrase Miracle Max, the Princess Bride]

The more effort you put into preparation the better the photos will look. Will this translate to a quicker sale at a higher price? Well it certainly won't hurt your chances. Your photos are your buyers' first impression of a property: make it a great first impression and that positive emotion will stay with them...

The amount of effort will depend of how long you have to prepare. Assuming you have a few days...

## First, Change Your Headspace

It may be difficult, and often a wrench, but you need to stop thinking of your property as your home, and start thinking of it as a commodity you want to sell. One useful approach is to imagine that you are letting the property fully furnished. In that case you would want to clear out all of the personal objects - and leave just a few of the best knick-knacks and pictures. Clutter makes a space feel small - and this is magnified in photos.

## 1. Mow the Lawn!

If you don't do anything else, this has got to be the single most important thing to take care of. I can't overstate what a difference this makes - both in the photos and in subsequent viewings.

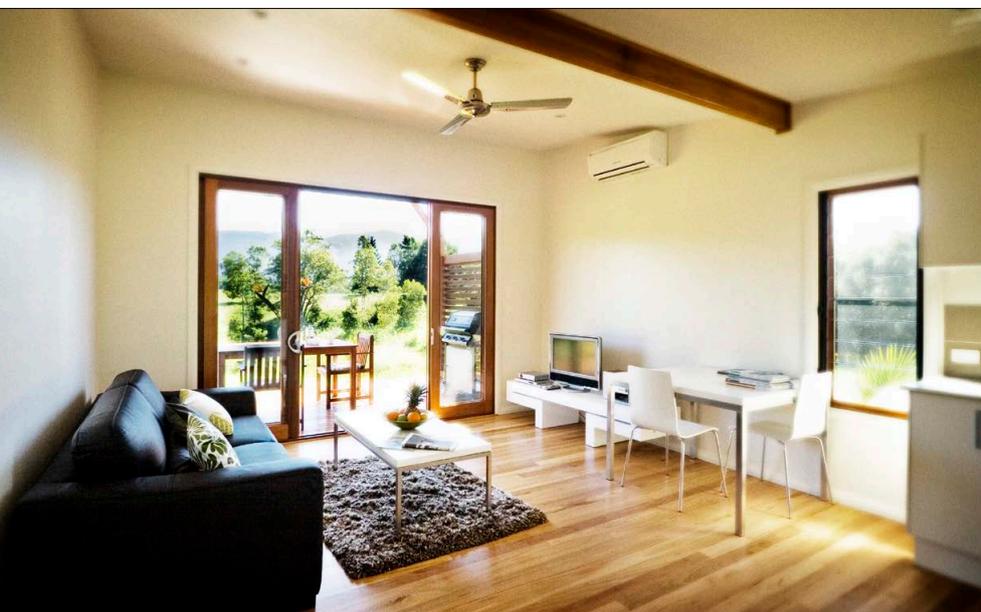
## 2. The Lead Shot

Mow the lawn at least at the front of the house or its best aspect - whichever will be the poster shot for your property. Clear away bikes and boots, lawnmowers, toys, cars etc. Cast a critical eye at things that may have become part of the furniture - Mouldy gutters? Enormous Cobwebs? If you have time mulch weedy garden beds, prune trees and bushes that might obscure a view or a view of your house.

## 3. Tidying more important than cleaning (but cleaning still good)

- Make sure surfaces - table tops and benches have nothing on them except for the occasional functional or decorative object.
- Make sure the floors are free from kids toys - and big kids toys.
- Remove personal photographs, bean bags, and pet beds and toys, and other items sitting on the floor.
- If you have a lot of knick-knacks, as a rule of thumb remove half of them, and then half of the remainder as well!
- Put a couple of bouquets of flowers around the house
- Spend more time on your best rooms. Leave cleaning of windows with no views till last.

## Not sure where to start? Talk to your agent!



Accommodation providers: Uncluttered lounge - A bowl of fruit, newspaper, breakfast setting outside, a few books. You could also add a beach bag, towel, an item of clothing - to make the room feel "lived in".



The digital negative (above) - see our faq on processing.

## 4. Room by Room

**Front door:** Remove shoes and boots and knick knacks (see 6). The main rooms in order of importance:-

**Living room/lounge:** (do you have views out of your windows? Make sure they are clean!) Remove TV remotes, magazines, personal stuff. If you have a well loved but tatty piece of furniture, remove it if possible. If you have views, take down net curtains!

**Kitchen:** all surfaces clear and clean. Bowls of fruit and veg are fine, Piles of post, keys, spare change, washing up - not! Take fridge magnets and post-its off the fridge, and give it a quick clean. **I mean it, yes!** **Take everything off your fridge.** For some reason people are loath to do this, even in million dollar properties. It makes a big difference to how your kitchen will look.

**Dining Room:** Take EVERYTHING off the table, then put a bowl of fruit, bunch of flowers, teaset etc in the middle.

**Master Bedroom:** Make your bed like you've never made it before. Its going on the web, folks! Everyone will see it! Clear up all personal items. The odd book, and framed picture are fine. Chuck stuff in your closet, not under the bed (to check whether stuff under the bed can be seen, get on your knees - I often shoot from this height).

**Bathroom:** Clean! Don't leave your bathmat hanging up. Remove soaps etc. A couple of nice towels hanging neatly is fine. Replace old shower curtains. Glass shower Soap scum: Easy-Off Bam Grime & Soap Scum works with elbow grease - but you may need several applications. CLR cleaner works wonders - try google!

**Other Bedrooms:** Put more effort into any rooms with views, or bigger rooms. Kids rooms - if we can see the floor this is a big bonus :)

## 5. Be Ready!

If you are cleaning or clearing as I work you wont get the best results.

## 6 .Where to Put Your Stuff?

**In the laundry and garage.** No house sale has ever been clinched on the basis of a laundry. Besides its important to leave some surprises for the buyer. Also a standard garage is a good place to store your stuff. I will often photograph the garage - but they are not glamour shots - people will not mind a bit of mess.

## A few general points

Photography needs light! The rooms should feel bright and airy: Make sure all curtains and shutters are open, blinds are open. Please try to ensure this is done before I arrive - 10 minutes spent opening all the blinds is 10 minutes spent not on the job! If I'm shooting in your absence, its essential this is done before - I won't force a sticky blind: I've broken a few! Now is the time to fix or remove broken blinds or curtains that wont open!

***Yes I photograph every room - if I miss any, potential buyers will suspect something is amiss!***

Clients often tell me when I arrive at a property that they have a few things that they will move as I go from room to room. Try to avoid this - it will take up time and mean I'm not as focussed on the job.

Don't expect digital removal of items. It can take hours; removal via your digits is often very much quicker!

Be realistic about what can be achieved: if you have trees 2 metres away from the front of your property, don't expect to see a shot of the front that doesn't feature trees!

***Let me get on with it! I'm a friendly chap, but you'll get the best results if you take the dog for a walk for half an hour or so!***



Windows CAN sometimes be cleaned digitally, but the result is never quite the same as windex + elbow grease (it also adds time and expense)



## A Quick Summary

- ➔ **Mow the lawn!**
- ➔ **Tidy up the front yard**
- ➔ **Get rid of clutter and personal effects**
- ➔ **Make your bed like a ninja**
- ➔ **Tidy up the house like the queen is visiting**
- ➔ **Pray for sunshine**

## But wait there's more...

Don't hang your laundry up on photo day!

Do you have trees right outside windows? Prune to let some light in!

Remove your tea towels from the oven! Remove cloths from sink. Hide your dish rack unless it's pretty. Put the soap away.

Open the doors of the rooms you want me to photograph (unless you want me opening all your cupboards!). Tell me about rooms that might not be obvious.

Tidy up, remove the clutter - we are much more likely to move a few things to get the perfect picture, but wont tidy up first.



Not so Ninja front yard

Ninja Bed!



ps. Mow the lawn!

## Preparation: Real Estate Examples



Minimal but lived in: contemporary interior design matched by contemporary homewares and a complementary coffee table book. I could point the camera anywhere in this room and get a great shot!



A splash of green on the table, fruit in a fruit bowl, quality olive oil on the counter - all things you'd expect to find in this style of kitchen.



A busier style of decor, but minimal knick-knacks and clutter add to the bohemian feel of this home.



Very different to the kitchen above, but similarly filled with objects you'd expect to find in a more rustic cosy living space.



A challenging home! I don't shoot many like this!

(Usually it's when the home is tenanted, we can give advice about this situation, too).

## Preparation: Examples



This shot was taken for an accommodation provider: in real estate personal items are generally not a good idea, but personally, I think with a shot like this it adds to the atmosphere.



Picking out your best pieces of furniture, and clear away everything else!



Imagine this shot without the flowers.



This cluttered kitchen in a \$1.2m property severely reduces the shooting options.



The decor might not be to everyone's taste but its wonderfully consistent!