

Real Estate · Architecture · Accommodation

Real Estate: Its all in the prep

A professional photographer can bring out the ambience in your home, highlight its best features, show it in the best light - but by far the most important part of the process is the hard work that goes into preparation. There are 2 ways to approach your prep - you can treat it as a pre-photo prep (and be content to do things quickly and sweep stuff under the carpets), or a pre-sales prep where you prepare a few weeks or months in advance, and spend a little time and money.

Change your headspace

It may be impossible, 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.

Adding Value

We wont go into major renovation here - they rarely recoup their cost - however a lick of paint in a tired room can make such a difference both on first impressions and in the photographs that its hard to go past it. Bear in mind that colour preference is very personal - so try to keep colours neutral and light. If you do plan on renovation concentrate on the kitchen and bathroom - the word is that they add most value.

Low ceilings? You can paint the walls a shade darker than the ceiling - and if possible add downlights - both help to make the ceiling feel that much higher.

Mow the lawn!

If you dont do anything else, this has got to be the single most important thing to take care of. I cant overstate what a difference this makes - both in the photos and in subsequent viewings.

If you are up to the pre-sales prep, then its worth especially taking care of the approach-side garden. A great first impression for your buyer will be carried through the rest of their tour - and of course the lead photo is almost always taken here.

- Mow the lawn (did we mention that?!)
- tidy edges with a whipper snipper
- weed and mulch garden beds
- prune back trees - especially low branches where you can create space underneath them
- have a look at the front with an impersonal eye - are there kids toys or tattiness visible? Is there somewhere to hide bins? Imagine the Queen is visiting; is there anything you wouldn't want her to see?
- weed paths
- cobweb and clean windows
- oil decks and cast an eye over external paint - especially around doors and windows
- midcoast mold - its everywhere. "Exit Mould" is your friend. (On interior walls try washing then spraying with Glen 20).
- remove trampolines and bikes and cars in driveways (if they are in a garage or carport that's OK).



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.

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How can I prepare the house?

Photography needs light! The rooms should feel bright and airy: Make sure all the windows are clean (within reason - they don't need to be sparkling), curtains and shutters are open, blinds are up. If you have views from your windows, make sure you can see the view clearly.

Clear out the clutter!

Your house will look more spacious if you remove most of the general day to day clutter that we all live with:

- 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, door stops, 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!
- Take away furniture from rooms if you can - keep your best pieces out on display.
- Accommodation providers might like to set a place at a table, and/or have fruit and drinks on verandah tables to give more of a personal feeling. Having a couple of attractive bods on hand to add a personal feel is also a good idea. (Choose people that are likely to be your target audience). Adding people into the mix will also make the shoot longer.
- Take fridge magnets and post-its off the fridge, and a quick clean.

- Put a couple of bouquets of flowers around the house
- Replace things that are cheap to replace - and will be obvious - like shower curtains
- If your bathroom is a selling point remember to clear ALL personal items including bathmats and towels.

The lens magnifies clutter - your house will look busier and smaller on "film" than it will do in real life.

Outside the house

Think about the best aspect of your house - it might be looking from the front - in which case make sure the front yard is tidy (see previous). If its not the front, then make sure the you apply the same criteria - it may be the lead photo is not at the front of the property.

Things to bear in mind

The photography can only be as good as whats being photographed - the more effort you put into preparation, the better the photographs will turn out.

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 the trees!

Don't expect "digital removal" - it's far quicker and cheaper for you to remove items that can be removed - some things can be removed digitally but it takes time, costs extra and in some cases can't be done for professional reasons. (For example - the removal of a power pole on your property would not be allowed under Real Estate Agent legislation and may leave you on shaky legal ground if you are an accommodation provider).

Things that photographers hate

- Hills hoists or washing lines - especially with clothes on them!
- Swimming pools that havn't been cleaned



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

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 tenant occupied, 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.



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



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