

Your Home's First Impression

A picture can be worth more than a thousand words. When selling properties online, the pictures buyers see of houses and condos for sale are often the first—and sometimes the only—chance for a seller to make a good impression. Less-than-flattering pictures can turn buyers off, lead to no showings or lonely open houses. Good photos will grab people's attention and help you sell your home. My personal pet peeve is seeing Naples listings that have a grey sky! How can you possibly attract a potential buyer sitting in the cold of Minnesota with a grey sky?

Did you know that 80% of people across the country who bought a new home last year used the Internet while house hunting? These buyers rated photographs as the most useful tool in their search, according to a survey by the National Association of Realtors (NAR). The survey also found that 24% of home buyers got their first glimpses of their new homes on the internet, up from a mere 2% in 1997. Virtual tours are another crucial tool for attracting buyers, who use them to narrow out the properties they do not want to see. An added bonus for the seller is that the prospective buyers coming to see your house already have a good idea what to expect.

As a result, it's important to have photos that are professionally presented. If things look shoddy, not only are buyers going to find the property unappealing, they're going to associate the agent with being shoddy and unprofessional as well. Unless you are selling your home yourself, your Realtor will ultimately decide which photographs will go up in cyber space. Brokerages vary greatly in their policies and expenditures on photography, which explains why there is such a wide range in the quality of pictures found on real estate web sites. Don't make the mistake of overlooking the importance of quality photography when listing your home.

Since the photos are meant to be a sales tool, they should not show a property's negatives. The online listing is going to be the face for your property, therefore your home should be shown in the best possible light. While you want to have your home's best features shown, you can't be deceptive. If you take a shot that's not within the realm of reality, buyers aren't going to be happy when they come and see it, and they're going to distrust the whole process.

Photos should be taken with quality equipment using as much natural light as possible. A wide-angle lens was used for the photos on these pages and is an excellent idea for attractive, interesting photos with a lot of detail. Shooting in the dark is a mistake because the light will come out dreary, and a flash that bounces off a window is horrible. For indoor shots, turn on all the lights and shoot during the brightest part of the day with a flash. The result will be a combination of light sources and a bright, clear photo. Taking your photos using a tripod is



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When it comes to clutter, do a preliminary walk-through with an objective eye before pictures are taken. The focus needs to be on the beauty of the property and the features, not on what's in it, so clear clutter and be sure your home is spotless.

Good photos can lure buyers to your home so be sure that you and your Realtor take the best ones possible!

Mara Muller has lived in Naples since 1996 with her husband and 2 school age daughters. Her focus is helping families reach their Real Estate Goals. She was the Women's Council of Realtors' Top Team Producer for 2006 and is one of the Top Selling Realtors at John R Wood Realtors. Contact her at www.MaraSellsNaples.com or 597-3332 with all your real estate questions.

