

# The Top 5 Ways to Raise Your Home's Value—Now

Real estate is a careful balancing act. Over-improving a property—say, by adding a swimming pool, sunroom, or home theater in neighborhoods where they're rare—will cost you because the market won't support the asking price you need to break even, let alone turn a profit. Under-improving your home, namely, by ignoring essential repairs, will also drag down its value. The following strategies strike the sweet spot between too much enhancement and not enough.

## 1. Clean Up, Clear Out

**Cost Range:**  
\$0 (DIY)-\$2,500 (Pro)  
**Potential Return:** 3 to 5%\*

Nothing drives away would-be buyers faster than clutter, grime, and the weird smells that accompany a messy home. Bruce Irving, a renovation consultant and real estate agent based in Cambridge, Mass., tells clients to imagine their boss is coming to dinner with his or her spouse. "Your home should be at least that nice on the day of any open house," he says.

Vital to the process is decluttering and depersonalizing the space as much as possible. Buyers will have a hard time imagining themselves in your home if it's filled with family photos and other personal effects.

For severely cluttered residences, or if you're downsizing and need help winnowing your possessions, consider hiring a professional organizer. Check the location-based member directory on the website of the National Association of Professional Organizers, at [napo.net](http://napo.net). "We're not counselors, but we have skills to help people think through why they're having trouble letting go of certain items," says Jennifer Lava, president of the Austin,

Texas, chapter. In addition to making your current home more sellable, a pro can help you get off to an organized start in your new residence.

Depending on the level of clutter, an organizer may need one to three months to get your home ready for sale, at a cost of \$600 to \$2,500—money well spent if it helps your property move more quickly. The service might even be worth it if you plan to stay put for the time being because living in a cluttered home takes a psychological toll.

Before hosting the open house, remember to open the curtains and blinds because natural light is just as important as order to making a home feel bigger. And give the entire interior a thorough cleaning, including vacuuming, dusting, and wiping down every surface. Your boss might not be coming over, but someone in the position to write you a very big check hopefully is.

### SMELL TEST

# 41

percent of surveyed real estate professionals put dirt, smells, and clutter on their list of costliest home-selling mistakes.



### → RED FLAG ODORS THAT WON'T GO AWAY

Smell is a powerful memory sense, so any funky aromas potential buyers detect in your home will linger for a long time.

Musty odors are the biggest concern because they could be a sign of mildew or even mold. It's important to eliminate the source of the smell, be it a damp carpet or wet ceiling tiles. Call in a professional for mold outbreaks that are more than 10 square feet. Smaller outbreaks can be scrubbed with water and detergent. Be sure to don gloves, goggles, and an N95 respirator, available at home centers.

It's also a good idea to air out damp parts of the home with a dehumidifier. The \$250 Danby DDR60A3GP topped our list of large-capacity dehumidifiers and should handle the toughest situations, including a wet basement. For smaller, less dank areas, consider the \$220 Frigidaire FAD504DWD or the \$200 Sunpentown SD-31E, both of which aced our tough tests.

Smelly pets can be another deal breaker. If possible, get them out of the home while it's on the market. "I had a client who did that with her cats," says agent Bruce Irving. "They went to summer camp at the neighbor's." If that's not an option, he strongly recommends regular professional cleaning for as long as the home is on the market.

Certain types of cuisine, including those with heavy spices, leave a lingering smell, so try to keep them off the menu. And forget the Friday-night fish fry prior to weekend open houses. If your home is showing during nice weather, open the windows beforehand to bring in fresh air. Baking bread or cookies before the open house is an old trick that can be effective, but don't overdo it with air fresheners and deodorizers because people with allergies could react, plus they might give the impression that you're trying to hide an underlying problem.



## 2. Spruce Up the Kitchen

**Cost Range: \$300-\$5,000**  
**Potential Return: 3 to 7%**

It's a real estate adage that the kitchen, more than any other room, sells the home. But that doesn't mean you should drop tens of thousands of dollars on a new one before putting your house on the block. "Given all the volatility in the real estate market, you can't spend megabucks on any project, even a kitchen, and expect to get that money back," says Bill Wilson, a real estate professional in upstate New York. His first advice to clients is to make all of those minor repairs that can lead to serious second thoughts for buyers—the leaky faucet, the loose light fixture, the burn mark on the countertop.

Once you've made the kitchen fully functional, think about a gentle spruce-up. For a few hundred dollars, you can probably paint the walls, update the cabinet hardware, and add new curtains, which will give the space a clean, fresh look.

If the kitchen is badly outdated, increasing your budget to \$5,000 might make sense, especially if you could be in the home for a few more years. A couple thousand dollars will get you a top-performing refrigerator, range, and dishwasher, all with popular stainless-steel finish (See "Appliance Suites," at right). New countertops and floors will cost about the same, especially if you go for DIY-friendly laminate and vinyl, both of which proved very hard-wearing in our tests. That will leave about \$1,000 for odds and ends, such as light fixtures and a new faucet, as well as any necessary labor costs.

**THE KITCHEN SELLS IT**

**53**

percent of real estate professionals told us that the kitchen is among the most important rooms of the home to have in good shape before selling.

**"Replacing a tired old carpet with durable tile could really pay off. Or you could go with vinyl flooring, which has become very cool and modern."**

*—Bree Al-Rashid, Redfin real estate agent, Seattle*

## Value Upgrades: Appliance Suites

Spending \$2,220 on a new suite of appliances for the kitchen could add \$2,000 to \$6,000 to your home's asking price.

Appliance suites, which are from the same brand and in matching styles, create a coordinated look. Plus manufacturer rebates and store discounts often apply. Below are two suites to consider.

Kenmore, which is exclusive to Sears, offers solid value in our tests, and it tends to be among the least repair-prone brands.

Spending more on the LG appliance suite gets you slightly better style and performance, including French-door configuration on the refrigerator, though LG dishwashers have been more repair-prone.

### CHEAP BUT EFFECTIVE



**Dishwasher**  
Kenmore 13223  
**\$600**

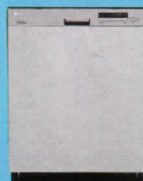


**Refrigerator**  
Kenmore 78033  
**\$940**

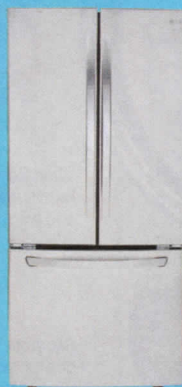


**Gas Range**  
Kenmore 74132  
**\$675**

### HIGH PERFORMERS



**Dishwasher**  
LG LDS5040ST  
**\$700**



**Refrigerator LG**  
LFC24770ST  
**\$1,700**



**Electric Range**  
LG LRE3083SW  
**\$1,000**



### 3. Freshen Up the Bath

**Cost Range: \$300-\$1,000**  
**Potential Return: 2 to 3%**

Buyers want to see that a home is clean and well-maintained, especially in the bathrooms. "Simple improvements like caulking the tub or re-grouting the tile floor will go a long way in the mind of a buyer," says Bree Al-Rashid, an agent with Redfin, an online real estate brokerage.

Installing new bathroom fixtures will make the space look brighter and more appealing. "I tell my clients to replace anything with a handle, especially if the

home has hard water, since it causes so much metal corrosion," says Ginny Ivanoff, a real estate professional in Carlisle, Pa. Updating the mirror and lighting will improve the sensory experience.

If you're not looking to sell right away, there are several larger upgrades that shouldn't cost a fortune, given the small dimensions of many bathrooms. For example, you might be able to add a new floor and vanity countertop for less than \$1,000, especially if you use inexpensive vinyl and laminate.

Adding new toilets is also a smart upgrade because it can improve the look of a home while also making it more water-efficient. We recently

tested toilets to see how well they handle solid waste (using sponges and plastic balls) without leaving unsightly stains inside the bowl or creating a deafening whoosh. See the Ratings on the facing page.

#### BATHROOM OR BUST

# 42

percent of real estate professionals said the bathroom is one of the most important rooms of the home to have in good shape.



#### → RED FLAG BOUNCING BATHROOM FLOORS

Hidden water damage is a common problem in bathrooms. Whether the source is a leaky shower pan or a running toilet, excess moisture can cause the floor to become a little spongy over time—something astute buyers, and certainly their home inspector, will pick up on. Even if it costs \$1,000 (more if there's structural damage), correcting the problem can be a smart investment.

## Value Upgrades: Bath

Spending \$2,000 on a new master bathroom floor and vanity countertop, a new toilet, and new fixtures for the sink and tub might allow you to raise the asking price by \$4,000 to \$6,000.

Match the mirror to the faucet finish for a coordinated look.



Vinyl floors are hard-wearing and affordable.



The \$100 Glacier Bay N2428E toilet outflushes models costing many times more.



Because you don't need a lot of material, consider stone for the vanity top.



Choose a faucet with scratch-resistant PVD (physical vapor deposition) protection.





# Ratings: Toilets

Scores in context: Of the 32 toilets we tested, the highest scored 81; the lowest, 33. Below are the highest-scoring single-flush models, as well as all tested dual-flush models.

CR Best Buy  Recommended 
 
 Excellent  Very Good  Good  Fair  Poor

## A. SINGLE-FLUSH TOILETS

Recommended	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	SPECS		PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS			RESISTS	
			Type	Gallons per Flush			Solid-Waste Removal	Noise	Bowl Cleaning	Soil and Odor	Drain-Line Clogs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>American Standard</b> Champion 4 Max 2586.128ST.020	Gravity	1.28	\$240	<b>81</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>Delta</b> Riosa C43906	Gravity	1.28	\$270	<b>80</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>Toto</b> Drake CST744S	Gravity	1.60	\$370	<b>79</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>Gerber</b> Avalanche 21-818	Gravity	1.60	\$330	<b>79</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	<b>Glacier Bay</b> N2428E (Home Depot)	Gravity	1.28	\$100	<b>79</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<b>Kohler</b> Kelston K-3754	Gravity	1.60	\$275	<b>78</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	<b>Toto</b> Drake II CST454CEFG	Gravity	1.28	\$320	<b>78</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	<b>Kohler</b> Highline Classic K-3493	Pressure	1.40	\$425	<b>76</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	<b>American Standard</b> Clean 2514.101 (Lowe's)	Gravity	1.28	\$240	<b>76</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	<b>Toto</b> Eco Drake CST744E	Gravity	1.28	\$380	<b>75</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	<b>Aquasource</b> AT1203-00 (Lowe's)	Gravity	1.28	\$100	<b>74</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	<b>Kohler</b> Wellworth K-3575	Gravity	1.28	\$280	<b>74</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	13	<b>Kohler</b> Cimarron The Complete Solution K-11451	Gravity	1.28	\$250	<b>73</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	14	<b>Kohler</b> Cimarron K-3589	Gravity	1.60	\$270	<b>71</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	15	<b>Gerber</b> Avalanche HE-21-818	Gravity	1.28	\$240	<b>70</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## B. DUAL-FLUSH TOILETS

		BRAND & MODEL	SPECS		PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS			RESISTS	
			Type	Gallons per Flush			Solid-Waste Removal	Noise	Bowl Cleaning	Soil and Odor	Drain-Line Clogs
	1	<b>Glacier Bay</b> Dual Flush N2316 (Home Depot)	Gravity	1.60/1.10	\$100	<b>72</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	2	<b>Mansfield</b> EcoQuantum 148-119	Pressure	1.60/1.10	\$400	<b>60</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	3	<b>Kohler</b> Persuade Curv K-3723	Gravity	1.60/1.00	\$305	<b>58</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	4	<b>American Standard</b> H2Option Siphonic Dual Flush 2886.216	Gravity	1.60/1.00	\$300	<b>54</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	5	<b>Gerber</b> Maxwell Dual-Flush DF-21-118	Gravity	1.60/1.10	\$220	<b>37</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Pick the Right Toilet

You can spend \$100 for a new toilet or several times that. Our latest tests of more than 30 toilets included single-flush models, which use the same amount of water with each flush, and dual-flushers, which let you use less water for liquid waste.

### CHEAP BUT EFFECTIVE

- **A5 Glacier Bay** \$100 CR Best Buy
- **A11 Aquasource** \$100 CR Best Buy
- **B1 Glacier Bay** \$100

**A5** is a Home Depot exclusive that performs as well as far pricier models. Available at Lowe's, **A11** uses 1.28 gallons per flush, and the lesser water usage won't result in drain-line clogs. Choose **B1**, exclusive to Home Depot, if you think water efficiency will appeal to potential home buyers; the dual-flush model uses just 1.1 gallons per flush in its liquid-flush mode.

### BEST FOR LONG-TERM VALUE

- **A1 American Standard** \$240
- **A2 Delta** \$270
- **A8 Kohler** \$425

**A1** and **A2** are both comfort-height toilets that handle solid waste despite using just 1.28 gallons per flush. **A1** is better at resisting clogs and odor. Paying more for **A8** gets you a pressure-assisted toilet whose powerful (but very loud) flush can be helpful in large households.

**Guide to the Ratings.** **Score** is based on solid-waste removal and bowl cleaning at 35 pounds per square inch (psi) water pressure as well as noise. Models are listed in order of precise overall score. **Solid-Waste Removal** is ability to move simulated waste through bowl and trap. **Noise** is flush quietness without seat. **Bowl Cleaning** is water height and how well flushing cleaned front and sides. **Resists Soil and Odor** indicates a large water surface and depth, which help prevent soiling and odors. **Resists Drain-Line Clogs** indicates that the model sent simulated solid waste farther, potentially reducing clogs. **Price** is approximate retail for white; many colors may cost more.



## Value Upgrades: Paint

Spending \$100 to \$1,000 to repaint the kitchen and bath and make touch-ups throughout the home might allow you to raise the asking price by \$2,000 to \$6,000.



### 4. Paint the Rooms—Selectively

**Cost Range:**  
\$100 (DIY)-\$1,000 (Pro)  
**Potential Return:** 1 to 3%

A fresh coat of paint is the quickest way to transform a room. But it probably doesn't make sense to have your entire house repainted prior to putting it on the market. "I've seen people spend three, four, even five thousand dollars on a massive paint job, when all they needed to do was hit the walls with a Magic Eraser and maybe redo one or two rooms," says Redfin's Bree Al-Rashid.

Kitchens and bathrooms are two candidates for a complete paint job given the high traffic they see. You should also paint any brightly colored rooms. "Most people do not have the vision of what

a room could look like, and instead they walk away and later say, 'Oh, that's the house with the purple bedrooms,'" says Kim Parten, a real estate pro from Horseshoe Bay, Texas. "I've had homes not sell, or sell for less, because of purple bedrooms."

Whites and off-whites tend to attract the most buyers; the neutral palette allows them to focus on a home's attributes. "Grays and beiges are both very reliable," says Al-Rashid. "They're not too warm, not too cold, and they work with most types of furniture, so buyers will be able to see themselves in the space."

As for the paint itself, if you're getting your home ready to sell, choose a paint that does a good job of hiding old paint and leaves a fairly smooth surface; several in our Ratings meet those requirements for less than \$30 per gallon. Invest in a top-quality product if you're planning to be in the home

for a while. Our tough tests, which include scrubbing the finishes with harsh abrasives, found eight winners. Because a brand's flat, eggshell, and semigloss formulations perform similarly overall, we've combined the scores into one to simplify the process.

You can paint the walls yourself or pay a pro about \$300 per room, paint included, with added rooms costing \$200, says Debbie Zimmer, a spokeswoman for the Paint Quality Institute.

#### POWER OF PAINT

# 16

percent of real estate professionals said interior painting is an important element in fostering the sale of a home.



#### → RED FLAG SIGNS OF AN INFESTATION

While you're inspecting your home's paint job, take a close look at the baseboards and windows. That's often where signs of pest infestations can be found. For example, termites often shed wings along windowsills, walls, and other entry points in a home's exterior. Carpenter ants leave behind piles of sawdust along baseboards. Holes as small as a dime can provide entry for mice.



# Ratings: Interior Paints

Scores in context: Of the 23 interior paints we tested, the highest scored 81; the lowest, 43. Many paints, including most recommended products, are exclusive to one retailer, as noted in parentheses.

CR Best Buy  Recommended 
 
 Excellent 
  Very Good 
  Good 
  Fair 
  Poor

## INTERIOR PAINT

Recommended	Rank	PRODUCT	PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS					RESISTS			FEATURES		
					Hiding	Staining	Gloss Change	Scrubbing	Surface Smoothness	Mildew	Sticking	Fading	Self-Priming	Zero VOCs	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	<b>Behr Marquee Interior</b> (Home Depot)	\$43	<b>81</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	<b>Valspar Reserve</b> (Lowe's)	\$44	<b>79</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	<b>Behr Premium Plus Ultra</b> (Home Depot)	\$34	<b>78</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	<b>Clark+Kensington Enamel</b> (Ace)	\$32	<b>76</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	<b>Benjamin Moore Aura</b>	\$54	<b>74</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	<b>Valspar Signature</b> (Lowe's)	\$34	<b>73</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	<b>Valspar Ultra</b> (Lowe's)	\$29	<b>72</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	<b>Behr Premium Plus Enamel</b> (Home Depot)	\$28	<b>71</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	9	<b>EasyCare Ultra Premium</b> (True Value)	\$24	<b>67</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	10	<b>Olympic One</b> (Lowe's)	\$27	<b>67</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	11	<b>Benjamin Moore Natura</b>	\$57	<b>67</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	12	<b>Benjamin Moore Regal Select</b>	\$54	<b>65</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	13	<b>EasyCare Platinum Enamel</b> (True Value)	\$35	<b>64</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	14	<b>Glidden Duo</b> (Home Depot)	\$25	<b>63</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	15	<b>Olympic Icon</b> (Lowe's)	\$25	<b>62</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	16	<b>Sherwin-Williams Emerald</b>	\$63	<b>61</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	17	<b>Sherwin-Williams Duration Home</b>	\$61	<b>61</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	18	<b>Ace Royal Interiors</b>	\$27	<b>60</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	19	<b>Glidden High Endurance Plus</b> (Walmart)	\$24	<b>60</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	20	<b>Glidden High Endurance Plus</b> (Walmart)	\$24	<b>55</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	21	<b>Glidden Premium</b> (Home Depot)	\$25	<b>54</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	22	<b>Farrow &amp; Ball</b>	\$105	<b>52</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	23	<b>Color Place</b> (Walmart)	\$17	<b>43</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



### Pick the Right Paint for Your Needs

If you're selling your home, you need an inexpensive paint that freshens up a room in one coat. Buyers, and homeowners sprucing up for the longer haul, need paint that can also withstand stains, scrubbing, mildew, and more.

#### CHEAP BUT EFFECTIVE

- **7 Valspar** \$29
- **8 Behr** \$28
- **18 Ace** \$27
- **20 Glidden** \$24

You'll save by buying 5-gallon containers. Use flat paint on badly damaged surfaces because it's best at hiding imperfections, and its no-sheen finish serves as a blank canvas for buyers. All but **18** are self-priming and impressive at hiding old paint in one coat. **8** left the smoothest finish; **20**, the roughest.

#### BEST FOR LONG-TERM VALUE

- **3 Behr** \$34
- **4 Clark+Kensington** \$32
- **6 Valspar** \$34

Use satin or eggshell finish for most walls and trim because they're best at fighting stains and withstanding scrubbing. Flat paints are the least stain resistant, so they aren't great for kitchens, hallways, and kids' bedrooms. These recommended paints are self-priming and better than most at resisting mildew, sticking, and fading, making them ideal for sunny rooms. **3** was the best at hiding old paint and maintained its sheen after cleaning. **3** and **4** left smoother finishes than **6**.

**Guide to the Ratings.** **Score** is mainly hiding, surface smoothness, resistance to staining, scrubbing, gloss change, sticking, mildew, and fading. Most results reflect white, pastel, and medium-tint bases. **Hiding** is coverage of contrasting color mainly with one coat. **Staining** is resistance to water- and oil-based stains. **Gloss Change** is appearance change after rough cleaning. **Scrubbing** is ability to resist an abrasive cleaner. **Surface Smoothness** is absence of roller marks when dry. **Mildew** is ability to inhibit mildew growth. **Sticking** is ability to resist tackiness when dry. **Fading** is resistance to lightening from sun rays passing through a window. **Price** is approximate retail per gallon.



## 5. Enhance the Exterior

**Cost Range: \$150-\$7,500**  
**Potential Return: 2 to 5%**

You wouldn't go to a job interview without brushing your hair and putting on a crisp, clean outfit. Nor should you try to sell your home without sprucing up its exterior. Start with basic maintenance: mowing the lawn, trimming overgrown shrubs, applying a fresh layer of mulch to garden beds.

As with your home's interior, it's also important to make minor repairs, such as replacing cracked siding boards or repointing brick walls. "Any house could probably also stand a good power washing," adds agent Ginny Ivanoff. Follow with any necessary paint touch-ups, especially to the front of the

building, which will get the most scrutiny. It might be worth completely repainting the entry door, provided that won't make the rest of the facade seem tired and outdated. A top-performing semigloss exterior paint, such as Lowe's exclusive Valspar DuraMax Semi-Gloss, \$40 per gallon, provides maximum protection plus a bit of visual contrast and shine.

The roof is another area to pay close attention to because prospective buyers are sure to do the same. "They always, always ask how old the roof is," says Bruce Irving. "To be able to say the roof is new signals to the buyer that this house has been cared for, plus the project is usually a lot cheaper than people realize." That's particularly true if you choose standard three-tab asphalt shingles, which often cost about \$75 per 100 square feet; including

installation, a typical reroof might cost as little as \$6,000. If you're not in a rush to sell, consider upgrading to laminated shingles, also known as architectural shingles. They can cost two to three times as much as the three-tabs but in our tests proved much stronger. Whichever type of shingle you choose, look for a product with a warranty that can be transferred to the next owner.

### ROOF REPAIRS

# 31

percent of real estate professionals said the roof is one of the more important parts of the home to have in good shape.



### → RED FLAG CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION

Although hairline cracks in a foundation wall are usually harmless, those wider than  $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch can be serious trouble, especially if you notice they're getting worse over time. Also be on the lookout for bulging or buckling in the wall. Along with expanding cracks, those conditions require the attention of a structural engineer. The longer the problem goes unchecked, the more costly it is likely to be.

## Value Upgrades: Exterior

Spending \$7,500 on a new roof, spot repairs to the siding, a newly painted front door, and a full yard cleanup might allow you to raise the asking price by \$4,000 to \$10,000.



A freshly painted front door can transform a home's entire façade.



Potted plants add color and warmth to the front entry.



Gloves made of nylon or leather combine protection and maneuverability.



Owens Corning Oakridge architectural shingles are attractive and, at \$68 per 100 square feet, surprisingly inexpensive, plus they stand up to the elements.

Behr Premium Semi-Transparent Weatherproofing Wood Stain, \$37 per gallon at Home Depot, protects decks and siding while letting some wood grain show through.



Loppers with sharp blades and long handles provide leverage when trimming overgrown bushes.

