

Paul Ellis – Architectural, Aerial and Real Estate Photographer

USEFUL ADVICE TO HELP YOUR HOME REACH ITS PHOTOGRAPHIC POTENTIAL

I photograph over 500 homes a year ranging from clifftop mansions right through to studio apartments and everything in between. I know a lot about making the right choices when it comes to getting your home ready for photography. The tips that follow will help to get the most out of your upcoming shoot. They will also help when thinking further about your open homes.

This is a list of general tips and things to think about. Please don't worry if you find it all a bit overwhelming. You don't have to follow this exactly – it's just a guide!

1. The weather. Surprisingly, it's possible to shoot in a wide range of weather conditions. Persistent rain does usually means a shoot will be postponed or split across several shoots (interior on one day and then exterior on another day). These days, computer technology means even on heavily overcast days, it's possible to manipulate photos to have blue skies. There are some limitations to this, but the weather isn't as much of a deciding factor as you might think. So don't worry about it. 😊
2. Buy some fresh flowers. Probably the single most useful accessory. You can use them in any room or outdoor area and they immediately make any space look better. Get a couple of different bunches of cheap, colourful fresh flowers and make sure you have a suitable vase.
3. Lightbulbs. Make sure all your lightbulbs work. This includes ceiling lights, lamps and outdoor lights (especially if we are doing a twilight shoot).
4. Give your windows a light clean. Just the main ones.
5. Unless your carpet is utterly horrific, you don't need to vacuum it specially for me. Vacuuming is not as important for photography as you might think so don't worry. The stuff that vacuum cleaners remove is too small for the camera to see!
6. If you are going to hire one of those orange bags to clear out your rubbish, try not to put it in front of your house. Companies are often late to collect bags and it can have a real impact on a photoshoot if there's a big ugly orange bag in front of your home.
7. Cars. Make sure you are able to move any cars that are parked on your driveway, in front of your home. Especially if you have tenants who may not be home when we do the shoot.

8. Kids toys. A few kids toys are ok and outdoor toys can definitely add “family feel” to a property. Inside, they tend to be visually distracting especially in the main living areas. Store them in the garage for the shoot.
9. Don't waterblast or hose down your outdoor areas on the day of the shoot. If it doesn't dry in time then we will have wet concrete or decking to contend with. Certainly do it the day before though. 😊

Kitchen and Dining

- Benchtops in the kitchen should be mostly clear apart from a few appliances and kitchen things, a fruit bowl (with nice fruit in it) and some fresh flowers.
- Wipe down surfaces and splashbacks
- Remove magnets from the fridge
- Hide rubbish bins
- Dining tables generally look better without a tablecloth on them, even if they are scratched. (this can be fixed in Photoshop if necessary)

Lounge

- Have a look at the furniture in your lounge. Is there too much? Does it block your indoor outdoor flow? Remove unnecessary furniture items and store in the garage.
- Coffee table should be clear apart from fresh flowers and/or a Lifestyle Magazine or ornament.
- Remove protective carpet mats and store in garage.
- Any exercise equipment should be banished to a spare room or garage.
- Make sure you have keys to unlock French doors and ranch sliders.
- If you need, get hold of some bright cushions for couches and chairs. K-Mart are exceptional for low cost furnishings.

Bathrooms

- Clean the shower and remove shampoo/conditioner bottles
- Put toothbrushes, floss, dentures etc in a cupboard
- Hang some clean towels (white is fine if you don't have colours that complement your décor)
- A pot plant or small posy of flowers always brings a bathroom to life.

Bedrooms

- Remove freestanding fans, heaters, dehumidifiers etc...
- Make the beds
- Tidy kids bedrooms but don't stress if they are cluttered with toys. It's better to have the toys in one room than all over the house!

Outdoor areas

- Cut the grass
- Have some props available such as a bottle wine and some glasses. You can go as far as you like with dressing outdoor areas. Here are some examples of things I use from people's houses;
 - o Plant or vase of flowers for the BBQ table
 - o Sunhat
 - o Sunglasses
 - o Lifestyle Magazine or paperback book
 - o Fancy teacup or bright coffee mug
 - o Beach towel (if you have a swimming pool or loungers)

On the day...

The shoot will take approximately an hour depending on the size of your home. Plan for an hour and a half to be on the safe side. As I don't usually photograph the inside of the garage, this is a useful place to store all the items of furniture and things you don't want seen.

I hope this document will help you to get the most out of your upcoming shoot.

Best wishes and see you soon!

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