

Preparing for Viewings

Introduction

Very few people buy property without first viewing it. From a seller's point of view, this is the best opportunity to make the sale, so to increase your chances of success, it's well worth making the effort to present your property at its best.

First Impressions

Always remember that first impressions make a huge difference and the chances of making a sale can be destroyed if that first impression is negative. You should make sure that the first things potential buyers are likely to see are kept in a presentable and attractive manner. Freshly cut grass, neat hedges and litter free grounds are essential. Make sure pathways are kept clear, this includes removing children's toys, any weeds, leaves or ice. If you have gates, you can make the property more inviting by leaving them open and keeping the driveway clear so it is easy for the buyer to park their car.

If you live in a shared building, this may mean doing work that should be paid for or done communally. If no one else is willing to help, you should go ahead and do the work yourself, as the investment of time could be well worth the effort.

Lighting - At night, a light looks warm and inviting. A porch light will guide potential buyers to the front door and keeping a hall light on is also a good idea. Be sure to check that the property name or number is clearly visible from the road. If there is a bell, make sure it is clearly labelled and works properly.

Pets - Everyone loves their own pets, but other people's pets are a different matter. Some people are allergic to pets; some people simply don't like animals. It is always worth keeping any pets well out of the way.

Decoration - Too many obvious signs of recent decoration can appear suspicious, the potential buyer may think that you are trying to hide something. The smell of fresh paint is a quick giveaway that redecoration has recently been done and will put the potential buyer on their guard. It is worth planning any redecoration well in advance of putting the property on the market. However, this does not mean that no decoration can be done in anticipation of viewings. Touching up chipped paint and peeling wallpaper is well worth the time and effort. A complete re-decoration may be unnecessary and can be very expensive. You should focus on decoration that could add value and increase the chances of a quick sale at a good price.



D.I.Y – Make sure you finish all those little DIY jobs that you've been meaning to take care of for ages. Any small jobs left undone will suggest that the property has not been cared for, so ensure that minor repairs are completed. If possible get someone to fix things such as broken slates, blocked or leaking gutters, jammed windows and doors. These are the sorts of things that can send out the wrong messages to potential buyers.

General

You should make sure that every room in the house is presented in a consistent manner. Space is extremely important in any property but even more so in flats and small houses.

Have a big clear-out, not only does this help with the viewings but it gives you the chance to make some money if you sell the items at a car boot sale. Alternatively, you can give away items to charities. There are a number of charity shops in Jersey which are always grateful to receive goods that they can sell on. The added advantage of clearing things out for viewings is that it reduces the amount of packing you need to do when you come to move.

Make sure you de-clutter every room. Remember that potential buyers want to be able to imagine themselves living in the property so keep personal mementoes and photographs to a minimum. Again, you can pack these away in preparation for moving.

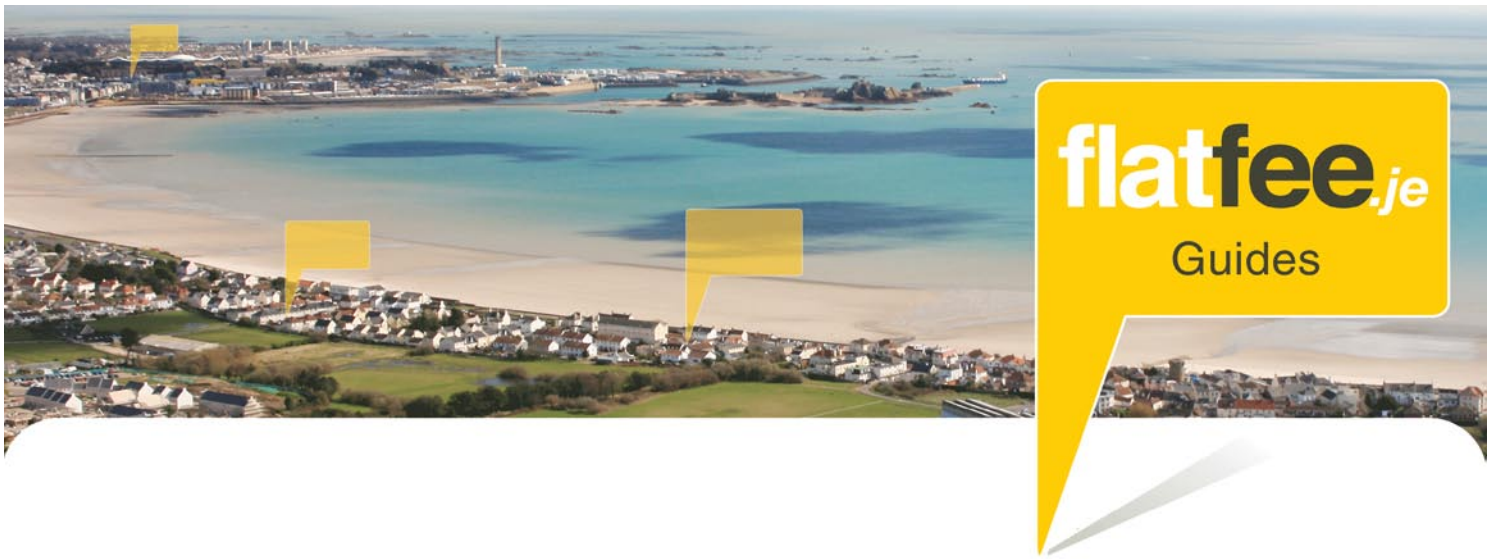
Doors – Visitors should be able to fully open all doors. Wide open doors also provide extra light and create a feeling of space. If furniture is in the way, consider a change of position or put it into storage.

No Music Please - Always remove any distractions so you can keep potential buyers focused on the property and facilities. Music, computer games and the television are all best left switched off.

Storage Space - Increase your storage space by sorting out and/or throwing away what is no longer required. Again, this is particularly important for flats and smaller properties. It is better to do this now than wait until you move out.

Bedrooms – It is essential to tidy all bedrooms and make the beds. By doing so, the rooms will appear more spacious. Get into the habit of making the bed as soon as you get up and placing all dirty linen in the laundry basket; this will help you cope with sudden appointments made by potential buyers.

Conversation – When the potential buyers arrive, do not forget common courtesy. Warmly welcome them and show them into the property. You can go into the details of each room when you are in the rooms themselves. Don't be afraid of silence, visitors will have to absorb a lot of information. Let the buyer look around at their own pace, do not rush them. Remember this is normally the most expensive purchase in a person's life.



Facts and figures – Make sure you know the sizes and basic details of every room. Potential buyers will want to know these things and you will only frustrate them if you don't have the answers to hand.

Safety First - It is advisable to keep your hallway, stairs and any passageway free from objects that potential buyers could trip on. Sometimes a full family including relatives may arrive to be shown around.

Revisits - Another look around may help potential buyers make a final decision. So let them wander and revisit rooms at will. If possible stand at the doorway of the room so they can talk to you without you getting in their way. Serious buyers often ask to revisit to check out points they may have missed previously so be prepared for an extra barrage of questions.

Honesty - Answer questions truthfully. Do not mislead people as purchasers can easily sense this and confidence and trust can quickly evaporate. It is against the law to give false information. Remember don't volunteer too much information wait for them to ask the questions.

Nice Smells Sell - Shops use this technique to get you to buy bread. You could bake some cakes or have vases of freshly cut flowers on the mantelpiece, this will give the house a nice aroma. Similarly ensure that the rooms are well ventilated and aired with no unpleasant odours to put people off.

Don't Apologise - Show your home in the most positive way. Don't fall into the trap of apologising for issues as this creates a suggestion that there are problems which don't actually exist. If there is something that requires attention and this is obvious, why not get an estimate from a reputable tradesman on how much it would cost to rectify. If this is done prior to a viewing, you are fully armed should a viewer raise the issue.

For example, if a flat roof requires attention and this is obvious, get an estimate. You can then tell the viewer that it will only cost a few hundred pounds to fix and it does not become a deal breaker. Back this up with an estimate from a reputable tradesman and it is no longer an issue.

Gardens - This can be an excellent selling point to any house. Ensure that your garden is clutter free and that borders are weeded and lawns cut. Overgrown shrubs and trees can make a garden look small so prune them back at the right time of the year to ensure new growth is visible.

Outbuildings - These can also prove to be major selling points. Make sure you keep them well maintained and free from junk and rubbish. Again, this is an excellent opportunity to reduce the amount that you'll have to pack when you finally move out and you may be able to make some money by selling them at a car boot sale.



Open Viewings

Open viewings are a great way to generate interest in your property and you should take all of the above tips into account when arranging an open viewing.

One of the biggest problems with open viewings is dealing with the sheer number of viewers in an organised manner. For this reason, it is worthwhile taking down the names and contact details of everyone who visits. These details will also be useful in the following situations:

- In the event that items are left behind
- If you've found it impossible to speak to everybody you can call for feedback later
- If something goes missing you can call and ask if anybody saw anything (please read our safety tips below)
- If your price drops in the future you can call all interested viewers to see if they would be interested at the new price. Sometimes a drop of just £5000 makes a big difference.

Remember that every person who walks through your front door is a potential buyer. Be friendly and don't pre-judge people on how they're dressed, wealthy people wear joggers and have tattoos too!

Safety and security

Once you're ready to start viewings have a quick look around to make sure you haven't left any valuable items lying about. Although at Flat Fee we've never heard of items going missing, it's always good practice to keep the things you care about tucked away. Also, if you live alone or plan to show people around whilst on your own, it's a good idea let someone else know what you're doing. Jersey is a very safe place to live but we wouldn't be doing our job correctly if we didn't warn of the potentials risks.