

# YOUR HOME

DECEMBER  
2012

TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

## WINTER SELLING TIPS

**W**hile the weather outside might be frightful, selling your home during the winter doesn't have to be. Fewer buyers are shopping for homes at this time of year, but those who are searching tend to be serious buyers, housing experts say. And that's good news if you are selling your home. The following tips from Bankrate.com and Coldwell Banker can help you get your house ready for winter showings.

First, pay attention to your home's exterior. Make sure outdoor lights and doorbells work properly. If you live in a cold-weather region, clear the sidewalks of snow and ice before visitors arrive. Plow the driveway as well as sections of the street so people have a place to park their car.

Holiday decorations are okay, but don't overdo it. Some REALTORS® believe that a decorated home helps buyers envision whether it could become their next home, but keep decorations light and simple, such as a strand of garland wrapped around the stair railings and a wreath on the door.

Indoors, set the thermostat to 70 degrees. Cold houses don't sell, and shivering buyers won't stick around to make an offer. A few scented candles, a holiday wreath and a crackling fire can create a warm, welcoming environment. A furnished, organized home appeals to buyers too, so make sure the beds are made and counter tops and closets are clutter-free.

Finally, be flexible with your plans. Winter weather can change quickly, so listen to the weather forecast and be ready to reschedule if a major storm heads your way.



## MUST-HAVE KITCHEN GADGETS

**W**hether cooking at home or shopping for someone who does, the right kitchen appliances can make it easier to prepare meals. The experts at Epicurious.com recommend a few must-have kitchen gadgets.

Professional chefs and savvy home cooks alike need a reliable knife for everyday use. Epicurious.com recommends the Global G-2 8-inch stainless steel knife, which is easy to use and ideal for precise dicing and heavy-duty chopping.



A mandolin makes it easy to slice, crinkle-cut or waffle-cut veggies such as potatoes, carrots and cucumbers. Epicurious.com suggests the DeBuyer swing mandolin, which has a smart handle designed to protect fingers, nonskid feet, and stainless-steel blades that can be easily removed for cleaning.

A standing mixer is one of the most useful appliances home chefs can have, and Epicurious.com recommends the KitchenAid Artisan 5-quart model. It takes up little counter space and has a tilting head for easy access to the bowl. Optional attachments do everything from grind meat to juicing fruits and vegetables.

Immersion blenders, such as the Cuisinart Smart Stick, make it easy to prepare soups and sauces. Home cooks can puree soups right in the pot without the danger or hassle of transferring hot liquids, and sauces can be thickened and emulsified without removing them from the stovetop.

Slow cookers, which were popular in the 1970s, are kitchen staples for many of today's savvy home chefs. For family-size meals, Epicurious.com recommends Cuisinart's 6.5-quart digital slow cooker which features a programmable 24-hour timer and high, low and stay-warm settings.

By having just a few great gadgets on hand, homeowners can make sure their kitchen is equipped to help them make great at-home meals for years to come.

### fast fact >> >>

**75 percent of home buyers say transportation costs are a key factor in choosing where they live.**

Source: 2012 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®  
Home Buyer and Seller Survey



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# THE TIPPING POINT

There are no hard and fast rules on holiday tipping, experts say. How much to tip, or whether to tip at all, depends on several factors, including the quality and frequency of service, the relationship you have with the provider, how long they have worked for you, where you live (since amounts can be higher in large cities), and your budget.

The Emily Post Institute offers the following guidelines for holiday tipping, but also advises consumers to let common sense and the holiday spirit be your guide. If financial circumstances limit what you can give, a handwritten note is always appropriate.

- Babysitter – One evening's pay, plus a small gift from your child(ren)
- Barber/Hair stylist – Cost of one haircut or a gift
- Child's teacher – Check the school's policy. If allowed, give a small token gift of appreciation, not cash
- Day care providers – \$25 to \$70 for each staff member, plus a small gift from your child for providers who give direct care to your child(ren)
- Dog walker – One week's pay or a gift
- Pet groomer – Cost of one session or a gift
- Personal fitness trainer – Up to the cost of one session
- Housekeeper/maid service – Up to one week's pay or a gift
- Doorman – \$15 to \$80
- Garage attendant – \$10 to \$30
- Massage therapist – Up to the cost of one session or a gift
- Handyman service – \$15 to \$40
- Yard/garden worker - \$20 to \$50 per worker



## Say Yes to CRS

Buying a home is one of the biggest and most emotional decisions you will ever make. So it's important to work with someone who can provide sound advice and a steady, guiding hand when you need it. That's why a CRS agent is the best person for the job.

A Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) is among the top 3 percent of all agents in the country. CRS agents have achieved a high volume of transactions and advanced training in areas such as business planning, real estate investing, marketing and technology. They must also maintain membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and abide by its Code of Ethics. Why work with anyone else when you can work with a CRS agent?



## DID YOU KNOW?

U.S. Post Office mail carriers may not accept cash, checks, gift cards or other forms of currency from customers.

*Source: EmilyPost.com*



**Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.**

This newsletter is for informational purposes only and should not be substituted for legal or financial advice.  
If you are currently working with another real estate agent or broker, it is not a solicitation for business.

