

Guide to selling your house

This guide has advice on how to sell your house through Trade Me Property. It goes through recommended steps for selling your property privately, and also has information about using a real estate agent.

Please note: this is a guide only and Trade Me recommends sellers seek legal advice.

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1. Getting ready to sell

The first decision you have to make is how to sell your house.

Trade Me Property is the best way to sell your home to the largest real estate audience* in New Zealand. And from \$349- \$399 (until sold) it's also the best value promotion you'll find for selling your property.

If you choose to sell your house privately, you will have control over the sales process, be able to deal with potential house buyers directly and won't have to pay a commission fee on the sale of your property.

But private sellers need to be well-informed before and during the house sales process. The following resource is a basic guide only; for more information, check out the resources listed at the bottom of this page. There is also information on using an agent in this guide.

Please note that by law, you can only sell your own home. Selling somebody else's property for a fee would require you to be a licensed salesperson and work as a real estate agent.

Preparing your home for sale

If you don't have time to get your home in good condition for sale, you should consider paying someone to do it for you. There are plenty of professional companies that can do this for you.

Be careful spending large amounts of money making home improvements before you sell. Major renovations may make your house sell more quickly but not necessarily for more money. Low cost, high impact improvements, if they have the potential to increase the value of your property, are recommended.

Some examples of things you can do to make your property more attractive to buyers include:

- cleaning your oven and kitchen thoroughly
- ensuring you have all the knobs for your appliances and that they work
- tidying the pantry and cupboards
- getting rid of clutter
- making sure the doors are not sticky or jammed
- cleaning the windows inside and out
- washing and polishing the floors
- replacing any light bulbs that don't work
- repairing dripping taps
- washing the walls inside and out
- sweeping or water-blasting the path and driveway
- weeding and tidying the garden
- ensuring gate and door handles work properly.

Recommended resources for selling your house

- My Conveyancing: [Home page](#)
- Citizens Advice Bureau: [Other ways to sell your house](#)
- QV: [Selling a Property](#)
- Consumer: [Property Buying & Selling](#)
- Auckland District Law Society: [Web Forms](#)

* Since its launch, Trade Me Property has been New Zealand's most visited real estate website according to Nielsen//NetRatings. It also has the longest visit times of any real estate site in New Zealand.

2. Choosing your sale price and method

Setting your house sale price

In order to set the price for the sale of your home you will need to decide which fixtures and chattels (non-fixed assets) you will be leaving with the property. It is standard to leave the stove, dishwasher, curtains, light fixtures and any flooring/carpeting.

Next, you need to determine the sale price of your house. There are two important considerations here: the price you need and what the current market price is.

There are two types of formal valuation commonly used: rateable valuation (RV) and registered valuation. Rateable valuations are available free of charge for any property (just contact your local council). However, we do not recommend relying on just a rateable valuation alone, as they may not be re-evaluated regularly and therefore may not reflect recent improvements. Registered valuations tend to be a more accurate reflection of the current market but will need to be organised and paid for by the seller. For a registered valuation, contact QV or approach a registered valuer directly.

Another good way of understanding what price your property may sell for is to have a look at what's currently on the market in your neighbourhood. Have a look at similar properties for sale and try to visit their open homes.

Finally, our onsite Property reports will provide you with a sample of recent sales in your neighbourhood from only \$11.95 (plus some other interesting info). You'll find these reports on most listings that contain full street addresses.

Choosing a sales method

There are a number of different sales methods for selling your house, including auctions, tenders by negotiation and 'buyer enquiry over...'. However, for those selling their property privately, an asking price is generally considered the easiest and fastest way to sell. Consider setting a price slightly higher than what you're prepared to accept, to leave room for negotiation.

3. Marketing your property

Selling your house privately means you are in an excellent position to market your property by using your first-hand knowledge to show off the benefits of the house and surrounding neighbourhood.

To do this make sure you have a good selection of photos of your property from the inside and out, make sure its spick and span and in the most flattering light. If you plan on moving out before putting your house on the market, then make sure to get uncluttered pictures of the house furnished so potential buyers can picture it as a home rather than just a house.

Once you've done this you can list the property for sale on Trade Me Property, using your photos and a thorough description of the property. When writing your property description you could look at other listings online to get inspiration, but above all be clear and concise in your wording of the property and the surrounding area.

Whether you plan to have open homes as part of selling your house - which can be a time saving exercise over individual appointments - or take buyers through your house individually consider the following tips:

- Make sure both the house and garden are looking their best.
- Put together a one page fact sheet with details of the house. This may include an aerial photo from Google Maps, rateable valuation, floor size, land size, property age, rates information or any other details that may be of interest to buyers.
- Ask visitors to sign in at the door so you have their details to follow up on potential offers.
- Ensure the house is warm, dry, light and inviting.

You may also like to have a professional property for sale sign made that you can display outside your house to catch the attention of those passing by.

4. Getting legal help

It's essential that you involve a lawyer or solicitor early in the process to make sure you are doing everything you need to.

You will need a solicitor who is experienced in property conveyancing (the transfer of legal titles). Contact a few solicitors to get quotes for the work required or you may have some friends who can recommend a solicitor. Alternatively, consider using My Conveyancing who provide online legal support in 3 easy steps, as well as a free phone number where you can contact them on 0800 650 016. As well as checking availability, you should also agree on the cost of their services (an hourly rate or flat fee plus GST and disbursements).

Your solicitor should manage or provide guidance on the following for you:

- **Advise you on any relevant legal issues.**

- **Deal with the Sale and Purchase Agreement.** This is the legal contract between the buyer and seller. Make sure you read the contract and understand the 'fine print'.
- **Communicate with the buyer's lawyer.**
- **Manage the possession and settlement process.** Your lawyer should manage the exchange of money and keys, as agreed between you and the buyer.
- **Assist you in paying off your home loan.** When you sell your house, you will need to pay off your home loan and discharge any mortgage that you may have on the property, before putting what's left over into your bank account. If you don't have a mortgage, they will be able to put the entire net proceeds of the sale into your bank account.
- **Send notice to the local authority.** This will advise your council of the change of ownership. The lawyer will also arrange for the division of local rates charges between you and the buyer.

5. Negotiating the sale

One of the first steps you should undertake before entering into negotiations to sell your house is to get a Sale and Purchase Agreement drawn up. This can be done by your solicitor or purchased directly from the Auckland District Law Society (which was created in conjunction with the Real Estate Institute of NZ).

When negotiating a house sale remember:

- you can use a solicitor to negotiate the property price if you don't feel confident doing this directly with the buyer
- any changes to the agreed price or terms are written on the Sale and Purchase Agreement with accompanying signatures
- conditions can play a big part in the agreement (e.g. the offer being subject to sale or finance).

Once you have agreed a sale price for your house with the buyer (and other related conditions), finalise the Sale and Purchase Agreement and ensure it includes the following:

- The settlement date.
- Any chattels included in the sale.
- The deposit and when it must be paid.

Most offers on houses for sale will be based on conditions, such as the buyer securing finance on the property and a satisfactory LIM report or building inspection. These should have a deadline before which the buyer must satisfy the conditions.

6. Using an agent

If you decide to sell your property via a real estate agent, it's important that you choose an agent whom you feel comfortable with. They will be spending a lot of time in your home and working closely with you. They will be responsible for looking after your possessions and representing you in sale negotiations.

Before you call just anyone it pays to do some research. Talk to friends, family, workmates, your lawyer or your financial advisor to find out if they recommend someone in particular.

Exclusive vs. general marketing

Exclusive marketing means you give your property to a single agency for a set time – normally a minimum of 3 months. Some marketing is usually included by the agency if you go exclusive.

General listing means using several agencies at once. General listings are often less effective as agencies tend to commit more time to their exclusive listings. You can of course try going general for a period and then go exclusive with the agent you develop the best relationship with.

Interviewing the agent

Once you have determined which agent has the most potential then meet with them to discuss your requirements. Make no mistake – you are interviewing them! If they want your business and are the right person to sell your property, you should be able to tell. Examples of questions to ask include:

- How many properties in your area have you sold?
- How many salespeople in your office?
- How much house selling experience have you got?
- What do you know about the principles of negotiation?
- How did you rank, in terms of sales, in your office in the last 6 months?
- Can I contact referees?
- What internet marketing will you do?

Negotiating the fee

Using the services of a real estate agent can be expensive – both in marketing expenses and their commission fee on the sale of your property. You should look to negotiate the fee up front. Money saved here is money you keep. Remember that GST is often additional.

However, don't choose an agent on their commission rate alone. An agent that can negotiate an extra \$5,000 to \$10,000 is well worth their fee.