

Svetlana Leahy Photography

Refined Capture

A GUIDE TO PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

A Note Before We Begin

Your listing photos are the single most powerful marketing tool in your sale. They are your first showing, your first negotiation, and often the reason a buyer decides your home is worth seeing in person. This guide exists to make sure your property is ready to make that impression.

Areas We Do Not Photograph

Unless specifically requested, the following spaces are not included in your session. We encourage you to use them freely for storing items during the shoot:

- Garage
- Water closets within master bathrooms
- Closets
- Kitchen pantry
- Storage sheds
- Laundry room

A note for agents: Please hold off on installing yard signs until after the session is complete.

Throughout the Home

These guidelines apply to every room being photographed.

- Tuck away clothing, shoes, and personal accessories
- Store away storage bins, suitcases, cleaning supplies, brooms, and vacuum cleaners from all visible spaces
- Personal photographs may be removed or replaced with neutral artwork. This is a personal choice, not a requirement
- Remove sports memorabilia, collectibles, or items that reflect strong personal opinions
- Pull up small area rugs to reveal the flooring beneath
- Remove floor fans, space heaters, air purifiers, humidifiers, and portable speakers where possible
- Unplug and tuck away all phone and tablet chargers throughout the home. Lamps may remain plugged in
- Hide trash cans and close all toilet lids

Each room is photographed from multiple angles. Please store items in closets, the laundry room, or the garage rather than behind doors or beneath furniture, as these areas will be visible in the images

Exterior

The Front of the Home

Your exterior is the first image most buyers will ever see. It sets the tone for everything that follows.

Close all garage doors

Clear vehicles from the driveway and front of the property

Store trash cans out of view

Tidy the landscaping. Mow the lawn, trim shrubs, and clear any debris or fallen leaves

Remove empty planters or replace with fresh greenery if possible

Tuck away garden hoses and outdoor equipment

Clear children's toys, sports equipment, and recreational items

The American flag is always welcome.

Back Yard, Decks and Docks

Arrange outdoor furniture neatly. Straighten cushions and remove any worn or mismatched pieces

Clear all toys, balls, and recreational items

Clean the pool prior to the session. Remove the vacuum hose and all cleaning equipment well in advance so that any water drips on the surrounding surfaces have time to fully dry before we arrive

Store pool cleaning supplies out of sight

Activate pool fountains, hot tub jets, and water features. These photograph beautifully

Tuck away garden hoses and store trash cans from the area

Kitchen

For Sale Properties

The kitchen is one of the most important rooms in your listing. A clean, lightly styled counter reads as spacious and aspirational.

Edit countertops down to a few intentional pieces such as a fruit bowl, a small plant, or a simple decorative object. Store knife blocks, bulky appliances, and anything that does not belong on the surface

Clear the exterior of the refrigerator completely. No magnets, papers, or photos. The top of the refrigerator should be empty or styled with a single green plant if space allows

Store the trash can in the pantry or a cabinet

Clear the sink area entirely. Tuck away paper towels, sponges, dish soap, and drainers

Wipe stainless steel appliances clean of fingerprints and smudges

For Vacation Rental Properties

Please follow all of the above, with one exception. Appliances and kitchen tools provided for guests such as a coffee maker, toaster, blender, and utensils may remain visible on the countertops.

Living Room and Family Room

Store stacks of magazines, mail, papers, and remote controls

Clear and simplify the fireplace mantel and hearth

Ensure furniture does not obstruct the fireplace

Fluff and arrange all throw pillows

Store children's and pet toys and check beneath furniture for anything that may appear in the frame

Bedrooms

Primary Bedroom

Make the bed with care. Layered pillows against the headboard with decorative accents photograph beautifully. Please ensure the bedspread is the correct size for the mattress, covering all sides evenly without gaps or exposed mattress edges

If your bed has a bed skirt, please ensure it is properly fitted and tucked so that the length is even on all sides. The skirt should just kiss the floor lightly, neither dragging nor sitting too high

Tuck away personal items from nightstands, especially phone chargers

Remove toiletries, perfume bottles, and personal items from dresser tops. Leave only intentional decorative pieces

Store anything beneath the bed that may be visible in the frame

Guest Rooms and Children's Rooms

Personalized name signs and wall decals may be removed if you prefer a more neutral presentation. This is entirely your choice

Remove wall stickers and posters

Make all beds neatly. For bunk beds, ensure blankets and bedspreads do not overhang the sides

Store any items beneath beds that may be visible in the frame

Bathrooms

For Sale Properties

Bathrooms photograph best when they feel like a private retreat, serene and uncluttered.

Clear countertops as completely as possible. Tuck away toothbrushes, medications, deodorant, soaps, and personal care items

Lower all toilet seats

Close closet doors

Store shampoo, conditioner, razors, and loofahs from showers and tubs

Replace used towels with fresh, neatly folded ones

Remove floor mats

Wipe mirrors, shower doors, and sink basins free of water spots

For Vacation Rental Properties

Please follow all of the above, with the exception that guest-provided toiletries and supplies may remain visible if you wish.

Pets

Tuck away food and water bowls in the pantry or a cabinet for the duration of the shoot

Store pet beds and toys out of sight

Use a lint roller on upholstered furniture to remove pet hair if desired

Dogs are welcome to go for a walk during the session. Senior or unwell dogs may remain in the home but should not be left unattended. Please be present to assist

Cats tend to find their way into every room. Please be available during the session to gently redirect them. There is a fee to remove pets from images in post-processing.

Clear the back yard of pet waste and toys

Holiday and Seasonal Decor

Seasonal decorations can date your listing images quickly. We gently encourage you to minimize holiday decor for the session, though we understand this is a personal decision and will never require its removal.

Twilight Photography

Twilight sessions begin at sunset. The exact time varies by season and will be confirmed with you in advance. These tips are in addition to the exterior preparation guidelines above.

- Turn on all interior and exterior lights throughout the home
- Open blinds and window treatments fully
- Ensure windows are clean and unobstructed
- Light all visible outdoor fire pits and fireplaces
- Activate landscape lighting
- Confirm pool lighting is operational
- Test all timers and lighting systems prior to the session and replace any burned-out bulbs or broken fixtures
- Turn on pool and patio lights
- Ensure the hot tub is open and ready before we arrive

30 Minutes Before We Arrive

This final walkthrough makes a significant difference in the quality of your images.

- Move all vehicles out of the driveway and store trash cans inside the garage
- Turn on every light and lamp in the home. Bulb color temperature does not need to match. Any working bulb is fine. If you are not present, we will handle this upon arrival
- Open all light-blocking curtains and turn blinds to the open position. We will adjust window treatments as needed during the session
- Turn off all televisions, ceiling fans, and any moving objects. Turn off background music
- Unplug and store all plug-in air fresheners. Please do not spray any scented products before or during the session
- Remove all pet-related items including bowls, leashes, beds, and toys
- In each bathroom: lower toilet lids, tuck away toiletries and toothbrushes, store plungers and toilet brushes, hang fresh towels, clear scales and sponges, and remove any personal items from door hooks
- Clear everything from around the kitchen sink that is not decorative
- If there is anything unique about your property or situation, please reach out in advance so we can plan together

A Final Word

We ask that your home be fully prepared before we arrive. This allows us to dedicate our entire session to creating images that do your property justice.

If you have any concern that your home may not be ready in time, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are always happy to reschedule so that your session is everything it should be.

We can be reached by call or text at 443-614-5957.

We look forward to creating something beautiful together.

A Note on Air Fresheners and Sprays

This section matters more than it may seem, and we ask that you read it carefully.

Please unplug all plug-in air fresheners before we arrive and store them completely out of sight, including away from outlets and off the floor. Please do not spray any air fresheners, fabric sprays, or scented products in the home on the day of the session.

We work in enclosed spaces all day. Concentrated chemical fragrances cause genuine physical discomfort, including headaches, difficulty breathing, and lingering effects. When a home has multiple plug-in units running in every room, the cumulative effect makes it very difficult to work with the focus and care your property deserves.

If your home has natural odors from pets, moisture, or age, please leave them as they are. We are far more comfortable with natural smells than with chemical ones. Once we have completed the session and left the property, you are absolutely welcome to freshen the space.

We raise this not to be difficult, but because the quality of your images depends on our ability to be fully present and focused. A clear space to breathe is part of that.