

“Let us help you sell your home!”



The Truth About Selling Your Home ... Effectively!

All these experts are happy to tell you how to sell your house successfully.

But are they right? Cunningtons review all the guides and come up with a definitive and tested guide to really get the most from selling your home.

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The Truth About Selling Your Home ... Effectively

It looks like exciting times for the homeowner with itchy feet: the housing market's looking buoyant, with demand far outstripping supply (they say).

The economy's on the up, interest rates are still at a historic low – it's a perfect time to sell your home! Pretty much wherever in the country your home is, there are buyers panting to take it off your hands.

And there are plenty of people willing to hand out helpful advice ...



Selling your home – whose advice do you trust?

Selling Your Home Isn't A Simple Choice

When you sell your home, you will also probably need to buy another – unless you don't mind renting for a while. If you move around a lot, owning a home can definitely tie you down and renting is a much more flexible way to live.



Follow the expert guides for a successful result

There is also the consideration that if you decide not to sell, you free up a lot of cash that can be spent on revitalising your existing home. Just to sell your home the costs can easily reach over £20,000 – this includes stamp duty, estate agent's fees, legal fees and the cost of removals.

So moving house is very expensive, and staying put might be more sensible – who

knows, once you've got your house in tip-top order you might fall in love with it again!

But you've thought about it: you need more – or less – space and you need – or don't need any longer – to be handy for local schools. You really do want to move away from – or to – the city, and you have to have – or have had enough of – a large garden.

You've watched the video about [selling your home](#) in the [conveyancing pages](#) of the Cunningtons website, and now it's time to make sure you sell your home for the most money. So what steps do you take, and whose tips do you listen to?



Selling Your Home in England and Wales

The steps you, your solicitor and your estate agent
take to help you sell your home - with minimum stress



Video: The steps to follow when selling your home

We've looked at a number of property-selling guides and put them together with an example of one of our clients to come up with what we think is a *definitive* guide to getting the most from selling your home.

Top Guides For Selling Your Home

There are some very useful guides to take you through what you should do to increase the selling price of your home.

There are also some 'tips' from those who clearly have a vested interest in how you approach the sale – so reader beware!

We've looked at guides from [Rightmove](#), [Zoopla](#), [The Daily Mail](#), [HomeOwnersAlliance](#), [Sarah Beany](#) - even [The Mirror](#) has a 'hot' tip to sell your home successfully. We've also added the US website [HGTV](#) for an international slant.

All this is compared to the actual steps that were taken by a Cunningtons client to secure a healthy sale on a 2-bedroom flat in Hove in December 2014. There's nothing like an actual case study to put all the expert advice into perspective!

The guides we looked at:



House to Home



RightMove



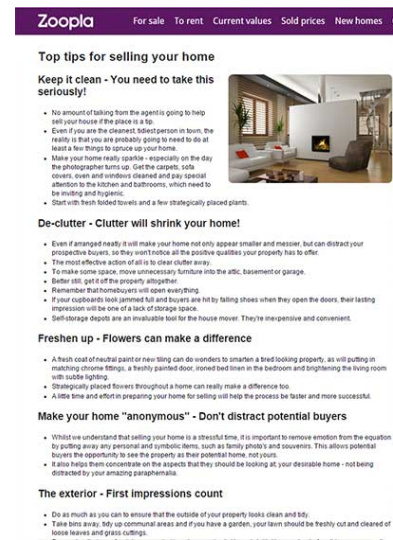
HomeOwnersAlliance



The Daily Mail's This is Money



Home & Garden: HGTV



Zoopla

There are of course things that effect the saleability of your home that you can do nothing about. You can't build a good school, reduce local crime rates or pick your home up and move it to a better area.

But there are a few other issues you can deal with, and we will talk you through what you can do, easily!

In the next chapter, we start looking at the steps you should follow to make the most from your most valuable asset ...

Chapter 1: Tidy up, Declutter and Clean



Selling your home? They all agree about decluttering

When Selling Your Home, Start With A Declutter. And A Clean Sweep!

All the guides we looked at advise a seller to declutter before showing potential buyers around their home.

In the real-life example of Patrick – our conveyancing client in Hove – the decluttering process was undertaken earlier, before the photographs were taken and as part of the moving process.

Decluttering is a win-win-win choice, no matter how much of a struggle it is. Think about the numbers – a day or two spent organising and taking rubbish to the tip and charity shops could add thousands to the price you achieve, making it a very attractive (tax-free) investment.

Cleanliness comes before a sale

A clean & bright entrance starts selling as soon as buyers step through the door.

The same goes for cleaning – clean and tidy everything, including the windows, carpets and especially the all-important entrance area.

Cleaning and decluttering are a vital part of getting the sales process going – bear in mind that you are selling a home, not just a house. This means making it easy for buyers to imagine living an attractive lifestyle in their new home.



Clean & bright entrance

As you declutter and clean, you might find the paintwork needs a little attention –

[Rightmove](#) and [HomeOwnersAlliance](#) both suggest fixing up the paintwork, and let's be honest, it's something that is unlikely to break the bank.

When it comes to the front door, there is universal agreement that it's worth repainting – even if it's a shared front door for your flat!

Mirrors are also a key tip from the [HomeOwnersAlliance](#) and [The Daily Mail](#). They amplify your space (also reflecting the quality of your paintwork and cleaning) – reflecting light into dark areas.

To de-personalise or not?

There is some debate about this one – most suggest brutally de-personalising before you attempt to sell, but [HomeOwnersAlliance](#) suggest deliberately *personalising*, but only in a way that shows your life in the home was fantastic and that anyone who buys will have that too.



Is this 60s wedding photo too personal?

You are selling more than bricks and mortar, and you're asking people to make a very personal decision.

To sell his flat in Hove Patrick got rid of all family photos – apart from a large wedding photo from the early 60s. [The Daily Mail](#) suggested removing artwork, but he bought some generic IKEA pictures to fill in gaps. It seemed to work; the eventual purchaser said how much she liked one of the pictures, but it didn't necessarily encourage her to buy.

It seems to be important that your home looks lived in – but by a very house-proud owner who has an attractive lifestyle. And good taste in art.

If your home is very new / modern, buyers will be more likely to expect more minimal and sparse furnishings – think about the sort of buyer you need to appeal to.

In the next chapter: Step 2: On Flowers ... And Smells

Step 2: On Flowers ... And Smells



Selling your home? Mixed views on flowers & odours

Appeal to all the senses – and don't forget the nose!

When your house goes on the market it can be easy to concentrate on the look of the place, as this is obviously vital when the photos are being shot. And the photos are genuinely how potential buyers first meet your home.



You may love your dog, but their smell lingers ...

However, when the fabulous photos have done their job and you have people booked in to actually *visit* the property, remember that they are bringing all their senses with them – and ideally you need to appeal to all 5, and not just sight. So let's have a quick word about smells.

Not everyone has a sensitive and discerning nose, but the key thing is to at least remove any negative odours. So when selling your home it would be a very good time to give up smoking, as well as banning anyone else from smoking in your home. And you really should lose your pet for viewings, and if possible for a time before showing people round!

Some unpleasant smells – such as cigarettes and dogs – might have been around for so long that you don't notice them any more, but you can be sure that potential buyers will not all have such a forgiving sense of smell! A thorough clean will of course help to get rid of some pongs, as will having the windows wide open if possible.

Replace bad smells with something more alluring ...

It might seem to be an expensive habit, but there was a lot of encouragement from the

'experts' to fill your home with fresh flowers before a viewing – almost as if they were all secretly promoting a chain of florists.

There is something to be said for the old 'fresh flowers' trick; [The Daily Mail](#) and [Zoopla](#) both agree that they can be a handsome addition, though only [HomeOwnersAlliance](#) thinks that fragrance plays a part in making your home alluring.

Our clients' flat in Hove compromised, using plastic flowers as they don't wilt and last longer than fresh flowers. As a compromise, they followed the [HomeOwnersAlliance](#) guide and made sure all the houseplants were pruned and watered.

Instead of the fragrance of freshly-cut flowers, you might want to turn to those old staples, coffee and bread to work for you. Or even distribute tasty and fragrant biscuits on viewing days.

In a nutshell, the right smells sell

All agree that pleasant smells can appeal to the instincts of the buyer, and they can be achieved in a cost-effective way. Remember, you are selling a home, a feeling and a lifestyle – and not just a property.

The pleasant smells of fresh bread, coffee and flowers are your friends – but more importantly the pong of rotting rubbish, cigarettes and dogs can lose you the deal!

In the next chapter: Step 3: Light and Bright



Flowers look good and are a recommended sales tool!

Step 3: Light and Bright



Illustration 1: If you've got nothing to hide, light it up!

Now Your Home Has Nothing To Hide, Let The Light Shine In!



Patrick waited for perfect weather for this shot

There is a reason that the best time to sell property used to be the spring: after the dark days of winter, everyone wants to live in a cheery and bright home.

These days the spring effect on the housing market isn't so pronounced, with autumn now a hot contender for the title of peak housing sales time, but people are still more drawn to property they've seen in the sun. And natural light bouncing around the interior of your house helps too, glinting off pristine surfaces through newly-washed windows and not being banished from dark corners.

Though none of our guides advises knocking in new windows to allow more

light in, [The Daily Mail](#) recommends removing bulky furniture, your dining table and “a sofa” (though it may be difficult to find somewhere to store them!). It also suggests stripping floorboards and removing doors for the same reasons.

[HomeOwnersAlliance](#) also recommends “removing bulky furniture that makes the room feel small and replacing it with smaller furniture”.

Artificial Lighting – For When The Sun’s Not Helping

You can’t always rely on the sun to illuminate your entire home, and that’s where good lighting comes into play. Almost all of the guides (except [Sarah Beany’s](#)) stress lighting:

[HomeOwnersAlliance](#) advocates “lamps on in any dark corners” and “a soft lamp in the bathroom can create a warm glow”; [Rightmove](#) says that “the wrong lighting can make your home feel dark and drab so install brighter modern lights to make your home seem sunny, cheerful and up to date”;

[HGTV](#) agrees, you should “change the lampshades, increase the wattage of your light bulbs”.

[The Daily Mail](#) has a minimal “buying new/brighter lights/bulbs” tip.



Artificial light helps you out if the real thing’s in short supply ...

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall ...

Now you’ve organised and ditched all your rubbish, given everything a good clean, freshened up the paintwork and increased the amount of light falling on it all, why not make the whole property look bigger using mirrors?



A mirror by the entrance is a great investment

If you haven’t got enough mirrors to make your home look bigger, then it might be a good time to buy some – they don’t have to be expensive.

[HomeOwnersAlliance](#) says they make a room look “bigger and lighter”, and that you should “consider putting some up, especially in smaller rooms or hallways”, and [The Daily Mail](#) agrees, suggesting the use of “strategically placed mirrors to increase the impression of space”.

The use of mirrors worked for Patrick in Hove, but only once the flat had been fully cleaned and decluttered! “Mirrors improved the saleability of the flat without using artificial light”, he says.

Mirrors can also be a way for potential buyers to literally see themselves at home in your property!

Interestingly, the guide that doesn't recommend using mirrors is ... [The Mirror](#).

At the end of these brightening tips, you will have light streaming in through clean windows into your airy home, glinting off gleaming mirrors and any dark spaces lit up with lamps that show that your home has nothing to hide.



"Mirror" by Cgs - English Wikipedia

In the next chapter: Step 4: Photos Make First and Lasting Impressions

Step 4: Photos Make First and Lasting Impressions



Why is there no advice on photography in their property guides?

Why are photographs of your property so important?

So you've done everything to make your home look fabulous for the first viewing, and most of the 'Sell Your Home' guides just concentrate on this first visit. However, we would respectfully suggest that they are missing a huge trick ...



The Internet makes photos even more important when selling your home

In reality, the first time most buyers see their new home is on RightMove or Zoopla.

The job of a website listing – and the property photographs that go with it – is to make people feel that this may be the perfect home for them and to encourage them to take the time and trouble to come and see for themselves.

In a nutshell:

- 1 Photographs act as your home's CV, and should help it stand out from the crowd.
- 2 They should be a positive souvenir of your home after a viewing, to remind a potential buyer of what they've seen and good images may encourage a second viewing.
- 3 Your photographs are also something buyers can show to other people; family and friends are a key part of their decision-making process.
- 4 If buyers see a property in less than ideal climate – in the dark or on a rainy day –

photographs can show what your property looks like in better conditions!

5 And if a buyer has to retrace property viewings after a sale falls through, good photographs may also encourage them to think again.

Why not just let your estate agent take your property photographs?

Not enough emphasis was given to photographing properties as a key part of the sales process in the guides we looked at. Perhaps they all thought it was something best left to estate agents!

The problem is that your agent might not be there when the light is right in each room, or when traffic has died down, or when the sun's shining.

With many estate agents spending no more than an hour with a camera at each property on their books, it can be worth taking a hand yourself. An hour could be enough, but often spending a day with a professional photographer can make all the difference.



Property photographs are helpful to show the family after the viewing

Our client Patrick was fortunate when selling his flat because he IS a professional photographer, but most of us will have a friend with a decent camera and a tripod who might help you out.

General photography advice ...



No cars, sunshine ... a perfect setting

A sunny day with no parked cars is definitely worth waiting for!

Make sure the photos are of a **clean and tidy** home, taken in good light and at the right time of day (this varies from room to room).

If you need to **wait for a sunny day**, then do. And take your time – you may have to wait a couple of days to get the light right.

The most important photo is the **front view** – to get the right shot for the Hove flat, Patrick tells us he had to wait till there were no cars parked out front – not an easy task, but the moment came. To fully capture it, he

stood on his parked car!

Following the advice from the rest of our posts on this issue, your property should have **minimal clutter**, and look **light and bright**. Even though you can't yet photograph smells the presence of **flowers** and the absence of dogs helps!

In the next chapter: Step 5: Ready For The Market!

Step 5: Ready For The Market!



Your hard work is over: time for the market!

Your home is now ready to go on the market ...

We hope you have enjoyed our round-up of the main 'selling your home' guides: the message is simple:

Make your home **clean** and **bright**, the sort of place other people could **imagine** themselves living – then **photograph** it as well as you can. And don't get caught out spending **time** and **money** that you won't get back.

If you've followed the guides so far, your home should be ready to do well in the property market.

We've covered so far:

- 1 **Tidying** up and **decluttering**;
- 2 **Smells** – good and bad;
- 3 Introducing **light**;
- 4 **Photographing** your property.

... and that's just about the end of the first stage.



Your home: spruced up and ready to market!

Some leftfield property selling advice ...

There are one or two pieces of advice that didn't fit into these categories. There are also a couple of areas where the guides we looked at disagree – mainly about how much you need to de-personalise. There are some intriguing extras, if you're brave enough to try:

The otherwise sensible [HomeOwnersAlliance](#) recommends **upgrading your plumbing** and your **white goods**, while [The Daily Mail](#) suggests you park a **shiny new executive**

car in the front and for some reason 'add an integrated sound system'.

We also uncovered some bizarre selling advice that was admittedly 5 years old, from Phil Spencer of *Location, Location, Location* fame. We don't know what Kirsty Allsopp would have thought about his '[20 Ways To Add Value](#)' piece, but we don't think they let him out alone these days!

Suffice to say, if you **knock down your interior walls, convert your attic, build a conservatory and dig out a basement** you will definitely need to add to your selling price to pay for it all!



Install an integrated sound system?

There's 'leftfield', and then there's *The Mirror*



Why bother fixing your home when pretty estate agent will do the job?

And then there was the tip from [The Mirror](#) about picking an estate agent ...

We all know that it's important to use the right estate agent to show people over your property, if you decide to use an agent at all. They should be personable, a good listener, keep buyer and seller up-to-date, be realistic when it comes to the negotiations and ... according to the Mirror:

"Forget the smell of freshly made bread wafting through the house – you need to find a good looking estate agent to boost your house price"

So we've covered the practical preparations to get your home ready, covering guides from property specialists.

Now for the next steps – estate agents and conveyancing solicitors!

In the next chapter: Step 6: Estate Agents and Conveyancing Solicitors

Step 6: Estate Agents And Conveyancing Solicitors



Time for the professionals – estate agents and solicitors

Your home is ready to go on the market, what do you do next?

Selecting an agent and sorting out the legal side is such a contentious area that none of the guides we found had any information to help; so we hope that this section is useful to you when you're selling.

Estate Agents: Online or High Street?

These days there are basically two different ways of selling your house, and in both you end up using agents.

First, there are the **traditional estate agents** you see on the high street – they suggest a **price**, take the **photos**, put your property in their **shop window** and on their **website**, list your home on [Rightmove](#), [Zoopla](#) and other key websites, organise **viewings**, and then – you hope – help move the process toward a sale at a price that suits you. Usually the agent will charge an agreed percentage of the price they achieve.



The sign you want when selling your home!

And the other way is increasingly to use an **online estate agent** yourself for a substantially reduced fee – your property will be listed on their site, **Rightmove** and **Zoopla**, and you **organise the viewings** and the rest of the process yourself. Fees tend to be a **standard upfront fee** instead of a percentage commission.

These days most sellers are somewhat unwilling to entrust the entire process to an online

agent, preferring the 'security' of the traditional route.

The choice depends on the amount you want to delegate against the amount you are willing to hand over to an agent. The numbers are changing, though, with increasing numbers opting to save considerable sums of money on estate agents' fees. You can read more about using an online agent [here](#).

Picking the right high street estate agent

If, like most sellers, you decide to stick with a traditional agent, then make sure you research them well.



Traditional High St. estate agents are still a favourite

Use [this useful tool](#) at EstateAgent4Me to ascertain their **share of the local market**, the **percentage of properties sold**, the **average time it takes them to sell**, their **asking price vs sale price**, the **sites they advertise your property on** and their **fee structure**. Note: don't be fooled by the 'asking price vs sale price' statistic – if you undervalue your home, it's easy to get more for it!

In any case, remember that you are probably in a position to organise better photography than your agent,

Our clients in Hove chose to use a traditional agent using the [calculator on EstateAgent4Me](#), and were very picky throughout the selection process. Pat explains the route they followed:

"I had 4 estate agents visiting the flat to value it and tout for my business:

Number 1 was from a large chain, very friendly and businesslike. He valued the flat at **£500,000**, well above my expectations. My girlfriend thought we should go with them because of their valuation, but we looked at the figures for the branch and they really hadn't sold that much locally, and that the high valuation was probably just a marketing ploy.

Number 2 was a local agent who had sold several flats and acted as if it was his right to sell our flat. A quick look at their record was enough to show that the reason they'd sold so many local properties was that *they routinely undervalued* their properties to achieve a quick sale – their valuation was **£425,000**.

Then Number 3 came in, smelling strongly of cigarettes and a bit scruffy. Though they were a very well-established local agent with good sales figures, they suggested an asking price of **£400,000**. In fact when we hadn't heard back from them for a while a quick phone call told us that they had written my email address down wrong even though they had my

business card!

Number 4 was another local agent. They were very personable and suggested a price of **£450,000 to £475,000**. They gave off an air of friendly professionalism, and asked all the right questions – and *listened* to the answers. When I was considering the agents the next day they rang back and asked if they could show a genuine buyer round that afternoon – before I’d even signed up with them.

“This was enough to convince me to go with Number 4, and within a few weeks **I had an offer of £460,000**. Coincidentally it was exactly the same as the automated valuation displayed on Zoopla.

“I think the key to my success in selling the flat were making sure it **looked good**, using the **right estate agents**, taking **great photos** and making sure the **valuation on Zoopla** was as good as possible.”

The Importance of Online Shop Windows

The major online portals **Rightmove** and **Zoopla** are key to successfully selling your home – most initial viewings still happen through **Rightmove** and the suite of tools at **Zoopla** help with the specific numbers and market intelligence.

Other property sites like **PrimeLocation**, **Nestoria** and **OnTheMarket** can be helpful too, but at the moment they’re no substitute for the main two.

When your property is featured on these websites, you have to catch people’s eyes with **great photos** and a **readable description**. We’ve all seen descriptions in block capitals, but which of these would you prefer to visit?

A beautiful
cottage
nestling in the
Downs

or

A BEAUTIFUL
COTTAGE
NESTLING IN
THE DOWNS



Buying your home: the modern way

Capital letters are the equivalent of shouting, and won’t help attract visitors – but they might even scare them off.

Now The Legal Bit – Conveyancing

Early in the sales process you need to find a conveyancing solicitor to make sure the legal side goes smoothly. Quite apart from the large sums of money involved, you need to make

sure that you are actually buying what you think you are buying. Your solicitor will conduct searches to check that there are no nasty surprises like motorways planned through your garden or issues with disused mines.

They will also liaise with the lender to make sure the money ends up in the right account, inform the Land Registry of the change in ownership, organise payment of your Stamp Duty, and answer any of your questions about the sale / purchase.

So how do you choose a Conveyancing Solicitor?

If you don't already know a good conveyancing solicitor, your first step will be to ask for personal recommendations from friends and family who have recently had positive experience with buying and selling property.

If you don't know anyone personally, you can ask an estate agent, as agents and solicitors often work together.

Your solicitor should be **SRA licenced** and accredited by the **Conveyancing Quality Scheme (CQS)**. A **Lexcel** accreditation is also a sign of good customer service.

And a **few awards** can help!

We hope you enjoyed reading this *Guide To Selling Your House – Effectively.*

Please pass on any thoughts or comments through our [Facebook page](#),

or Tweet us at [@Cunningtons](#)

