



Ottawa Real Estate Imaging

Professional Photo & Video Services for Ottawa Realtors

Preparing Your Home for Professional Photos & Video

A Guide from Ottawa Real Estate Imaging

Professional media is often the first showing of your home. Strong preparation ensures your property looks bright, spacious, and inviting — and makes a powerful first impression online.

There's a difference between capturing a home and showcasing one. Photos that simply document a space tell buyers what's there. Photos that showcase it make them want to be there.

Every tip in this guide is aimed at the latter.

The tips below are drawn from hundreds of properties photographed each year. They are not meant to be restrictive — they are meant to help bring your home to its best for marketing to prospective buyers.

1 Lighting Is Critical – Use Daylight Bulbs Only

Of all the preparation steps in this guide, this one will have the single greatest impact on your listing media. If you only do one thing, make it this.

Where at all possible, swap all bulbs in the home to 5000K (Daylight) colour temperature before photo and video day. Warm bulbs (2700K–3000K) feel comfortable in everyday life, but cameras respond to them very differently than our eyes do. They create heavy yellow and orange colour casts throughout the space – and when different bulb temperatures are visible from one room into another, the inconsistency becomes very apparent on camera.

Here's the part most people don't realize: when warm interior bulbs are mixed with natural light from windows, the camera has to choose which light source to expose for. The result is almost always either an orange-tinted room, or windows that look unnaturally blue and cold. Daylight bulbs eliminate that conflict entirely.

Daylight bulbs:

- Create clean, bright, true-to-life colour
- Ensure visual consistency between rooms
- Make spaces feel fresher and more modern
- Free up editing time to enhance your home rather than correct colour problems

It's also worth taking a look at your fixtures more broadly. Some lighting – track lights in particular – is designed to spotlight specific areas rather than illuminate an entire room evenly. On camera, this can result in bright hotspots on walls and cabinet faces alongside underlit areas in the same space. If a fixture struggles to light a room evenly, it may be worth considering a replacement before listing. Modern fixtures with broader, more diffused coverage tend to photograph significantly better, and are often a worthwhile investment regardless of the sale.

Pro Tip

Bulk daylight bulbs are inexpensive and widely available online. This is the most affordable improvement you can make – and by far the most impactful.

2 If Painting, Keep It Light & Neutral

If you're planning to repaint before listing, lighter and more neutral tones tend to photograph beautifully and appeal to the widest range of buyers. This isn't a hard rule – it's just worth keeping in mind if the decision is still open.

- White or light grey tones are generally the safest choice (kids' rooms may be the exception)
- Where possible, keeping the same colour across an entire floor creates a sense of flow and space
- Heavy accent colours or bold wallpapers can work well in person, but tend to compete for attention in photos

3 Clean Windows for Maximum Natural Light

Natural light is one of the most valuable elements in real estate media, and clean glass makes a noticeable difference. If time allows before the shoot:

- Clean windows inside and out
 - Remove screens if possible – it's a small thing that adds real clarity
 - Fully open or straighten blinds
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4 Keep Sightlines Open

The camera uses visible corners and straight lines to convey depth and spaciousness. When corners are blocked, rooms can appear smaller than they actually are. It's worth doing a walk-through of each room before the shoot with this in mind:

- Remove any furniture that feels unnecessary or oversized for the space
 - Set aside pieces that are broken, leaning, or worn
 - Tall dressers placed on walls near doorways can unintentionally block the camera position – moving them where possible helps
 - Open corners make a real difference to how spacious a room feels on camera
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5 Straight Lines Matter

Small alignment issues are more noticeable on camera than in person. A quick pass through the home before we arrive goes a long way:

- Check that wall-mounted TVs are level – including any forward tilt
- Tidy, remove, or tuck away visible cords
- Straighten artwork and mirrors
- Be mindful of mirror placement relative to doorways – doorways are typically where the camera is positioned and where video walkthroughs begin. A mirror placed directly across from an entry will almost always reflect the camera or photographer. Bathroom mirrors are the natural exception here, as they're fixed in place – we'll work around those.

One last thing – we'd love to keep the photographer out of the photo too. Mirrors opposite doorways have a way of making that tricky.

6 Curtains & Window Coverings

Open curtains fully where you can – curtains bunched into corners tend to interrupt the vertical lines of window frames, which help anchor and frame shots. Drapery that blocks a room corner can also reduce the perceived depth of a space.

- Open curtains fully before the shoot
- Avoid thick curtains bundled into corners
- Try not to let drapery block visible room corners

Considering New Window Coverings?

Minimal treatments or high-quality blinds that don't cover the frame tend to photograph very well. In some rooms, no window covering at all can be the most architectural and modern-looking choice.

7 Exterior Presentation Is Crucial

The exterior photo is typically the MLS cover image – it's the first thing buyers see, and it sets the tone for everything that follows. A little attention here goes a long way:

- Trim trees, bushes, and hedges
- Cut the lawn and clear any weeds
- Clear pathways and driveways
- Close garage doors

A Note on Overgrown Foliage

A cohesive listing package tells the full story of a home – and that story starts at the curb. If large trees or heavy growth are making it difficult to capture a strong, welcoming front image, it may be worth considering some trimming before the shoot. We want the exterior to set the same tone as the beautiful interior we'll be capturing inside, and a clear, unobstructed view of the front goes a long way toward that. As a bonus, opening up the foliage typically brings more natural light into the home as well.

8 Move Vehicles Before Arrival

Please have vehicles cleared from the driveway before the scheduled arrival time. Exterior lighting can shift quickly – clouds, shadows, and weather can change conditions within minutes of our arrival. Being set up and ready means we can move fast when the light is right.

9 Plan to Step Out During the Shoot

It works best if the home is empty during the shoot, or if you're able to stay on a separate floor. Reflections in windows, mirrors, and glass surfaces can pick up movement from adjacent rooms in ways that aren't always obvious in person. For the cleanest results, plan to be out of frame for the duration.

10 Kitchen & Bathroom Finishing Touches

Clean, uncluttered surfaces let the space speak for itself. A few minutes of tidying before we arrive makes a noticeable difference:

- Clear countertops of small appliances and toiletries
 - Remove dish racks and garbage bins
 - Store bath mats out of sight
 - Set out fresh, neutral hand towels
 - Close all toilet lids
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A Final Thought

Professional media isn't just documentation – it's marketing. These small preparation steps can meaningfully improve how your home presents online, generate stronger buyer interest, and create a better first impression before anyone sets foot inside.

If you have any questions about preparing your home, we're always happy to help.

