

YOUR COMPLETE PROPERTY SELLING GUIDE

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Selling your home can be a time consuming and stressful process. There's a lot to consider – should you buy or sell first? When is the best time to sell? How do you choose a sales consultant? What's the best way to market and sell your property? And those are only a few of the major considerations!

We want to make sure that you're well informed of the whole selling process and know exactly what to expect every step of the way. Your Complete Property Selling Guide will cover everything you need to know from start to finish.

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WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO SELL?

There are a few factors that play a part when it comes to listing your property that won't have much to do with the time of the year. Things like personal circumstances and market conditions are going to play the biggest role in choosing when to market your property. However, if the market is right and it is time for you to sell, then it makes sense to opt for the time of year best suited to attracting buyers. Here, we take a look at the benefits of listing your property at different times of the year.

Selling in warmer months

Traditionally, spring has long been considered the best time of year to sell a property. Your garden and outdoor area will probably look their best in spring, and temperatures mean more people will be out and about and likely to look into an open home. This being said, in South Africa, we see a lot of properties enter the market heading into autumn, with February, March and April usually attracting a large number of new listings. Whilst this means there's also a lot of buyer activity, if you want to set your property apart from the crowd you might consider listing your property earlier in the year.

Listing a property around February means you'll get the jump on listings that tend to come onto the market from March onwards, and it also means you'll start to attract buyers after a long holiday period. This may target buyers who have had time off over the Christmas and New Year period and have had time to reflect on their next big move for the coming year, including buying a new property.

Selling in cooler months

Whilst not the traditional time of year most agents will tell you to list your property, winter could still be the right time of year to list your home for sale. One advantage to listing your home during the cooler months is the relative lack of competition, with other sellers holding off until the spring period. With fewer homes on the market, your property has a much better chance of standing out.

The location of your home may also play a part. If your property is within an area where it snows, or is nestled at the foot of a mountain range that looks particularly beautiful in winter, you can use the season to capitalise on views and winter activities. It's also an opportunity to show how warm, comfortable and inviting your home can be in winter. Make the most of features like fireplaces and wood stoves, light candles, and use plush cushions and warm throws throughout living areas.

Selling over the school holidays

There's lots of commentary on whether or not listing your property for sale during a school holiday period is a good idea. One school of thought is that this is a great time of year, with people able to view open homes held mid-week. Another suggests this isn't the best time of year, with people often travelling away from home, or switching off during their downtime.

There are merits to listing your home at several different times of the year, so ask your Harcourts sales consultant which time of year they would recommend for your home and location, as they'll be able to draw on their market insights and knowledge and make an informed suggestion for your situation.

HOW TO CHOOSE A SALES CONSULTANT

When speaking with sales consultants, don't be afraid to ask the right questions to make sure you trust your consultant and to make sure you're confident they have the experience to sell your home quickly and for the best price.

Is your salesperson qualified?

To sell real estate in South Africa, you need to be a qualified sales consultant, and that means you need to hold the proper valid licence.

in South Africa the Estate agency affairs board issues Fidelity fund certificates enabling the estate agent to trade. The EAAB is a parastatal consumer watch dog that governs the industry and the fidelity fund that the agents contribute too is used to protect the consumer in the case of civil claims. Any agent that does not hold a valid Fidelity fund certificate is unable to transact in any capacity and should be reported to the EAAB on www.eaab.org.za.

Is your salesperson experienced?

Experienced sales consultants don't just know all there is to know about selling real estate, they also know about your local market, average house and unit prices, what kinds of homes and even features are popular with buyers, important negotiation strategies, and how to effectively market your home.

That's why it's vital to sit down with a prospective sales person and ask detailed questions about your market, how much homes have sold for in the area, and what they'll be doing to market your property.

An experienced sales consultant should be able to take you through all of this in great detail and answer any questions you might have.

Is your salesperson focused on you?

It's about people. Successfully buying and selling real estate is so often about understanding human needs and aspirations. That's why Harcourts people not only receive in-depth professional training (the benchmark for the industry) but are also committed to creating meaningful and genuine personal relationships.

Is your salesperson able to achieve the right result?

Achieving the quick sale of your property for the right price can depend on more than your sales consultant alone. A consultant needs the right tools at their disposal and the support to use them effectively.

At Harcourts our sales consultants have a full range of marketing, research and technological tools available to them at all times. Working within a highly motivated team environment, the business, customer support and online services that they can draw upon are truly impressive.

It's this network that helps produce the best results. That's what helps us to achieve over 60,000 written sales every year - that's one property sold by Harcourts every 11 minutes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our Promise

For us, all of this forms part of what we call *Our Promise*. Research has demonstrated that our clients expect an exceptional level of personal and professional service from Harcourts and their chosen consultant.

Our Promise is our way of being held accountable, and your way of assessing our performance every step of the way.

Here's how we make that happen:

- Written marketing plan and calendar
- Post inspection feedback
- Regular written marketing report
- Marketing review meetings
- All offers presented in writing

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Written marketing plan

Following initial consultation and property inspection, we will present a comprehensive marketing strategy specifically tailored for you, your property and the current market conditions. A fully detailed marketing action plan calendar will be prepared, which clearly identifies where and when all scheduled promotional activities and regular client contact will take place. Because we believe that our relationship is a partnership, your input is invaluable at this key stage.

Post-inspection feedback

Following each visit by an individual potential buyer and, of course, immediately after all inspections, we will keep you completely up to date on how your property was perceived, pertinent comments, price-relevant issues and prospective 'hot prospects'. Just like us, you need to know exactly what's going on at all times.

Weekly written marketing report

This is an important tool for assessing market reaction to your property and also to identify those prospective buyers who are showing the most interest. Based on this regular information, we will make ongoing recommendations to maximise the effectiveness of our targeted marketing efforts.

Marketing review meeting

It is during the initial few weeks after your property is first introduced to the market and has gained a high profile and maximum level of interest that it is most valuable to review the marketing progress to date. A frank and open discussion between client and consultant can often identify new opportunities and strategies and build upon the original marketing plan.

All offers presented in writing

Because it is your property, it is solely your decision whether to accept or decline a specific offer. For your consideration, we will formally present every offer received in writing so that you are better able to make an informed judgement. Obviously we are only too happy to offer advice, but we will always leave the final choice up to you without exerting any undue influence whatsoever.



PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SALE

Open homes are one of the most effective ways of marketing a property and attracting interest from a wide variety of buyers. Some of the advantages are:

- You have plenty of time to ensure your property is tidy and ready for inspections
- You can control the viewing times
- Open homes can create plenty of activity, even in a slow market
- Interest and activity can trigger urgency with buyers
- The sales consultant's time is put to best and most effective use. They will have the opportunity to talk to numerous people about your property
- Comments from open home visitors can provide feedback on price, presentation, sales appeal, etc.

De-clutter

The first tip is the simplest. It's obviously a must to clean and tidy your home before an inspection, but it's crucial to also get rid of clutter that could stand in the way of potential buyers picturing themselves within the home. That means getting rid of personal nick knacks and photographs, unnecessary furniture or furniture within a room not designed for that purpose, for example a bed within a space traditionally used as a living area. Even if it means putting belongings and furniture into storage until the property sells, the investment will be worth it.

Repair

Make any aesthetic repairs well before inspection. Things as small as a chip in paint in an interior wall could detract from the overall feel for the home, so get these things up to date before your open home. You could also invest in updating features like tired curtains, older fixtures and fittings, or laying new turf if you have a patchy lawn.

Style

Once clutter free, consider using a home stylist or home staging service. The results can be dramatic. Home stylists will take a look at your space, and then loan you the furniture in the size and style best suited for your home, which will make a space look bigger, comfortable and liveable. Again, this will help potential buyers to see themselves living in the space.

Photography

Before even getting to your first home inspection, consider using a professional photographer to take quality, well-lit pictures of your home. After going to the trouble of updating, de-cluttering and staging your property, the last thing you want to do is turn people away before they've even inspected your home. Professional photos are taken with professional equipment to make spaces look bigger, well-lit and showcase them in the best possible way. Plus, you benefit from the experience of someone who knows exactly how to take a photo that appeals to buyers. This way, you attract buyers looking online, scanning through ads, and looking through the paper. It's about piquing interest to attract buyers to inspect in the first place.

Your property may not need all of the above, so it's really about taking a look at your home objectively from a potential buyer's perspective and assessing what needs to be done. What would distract you if you were inspecting the property? What would you want to replace or update if you were thinking of making an offer? If you were to say to yourself "this place is great, but…", how would you finish that sentence?

Once you've made a list of the possible things your property needs, you can employ the top four tips above to make your home a standout to the sea of potential buyers out there.

PRICING YOUR HOME FOR SALE

The price of your home must be right. Too low and you lose money. Too high and you lose buyers. That's where the intimate local market knowledge and expertise from your Harcourts marketing consultant comes in. Coupled with Harcourts advanced information technologies, this knowledge proves invaluable.

The price of success

The most difficult task for most sellers is determining the value of their home. Many different elements can combine to create unrealistic expectations - be it uninformed and optimistic opinion, the cost of improvements a seller hopes to recover or the final amount needed to realise future plans. The best method is to study the current real estate market facts and figures. Your Harcourts sales consultant will show you comparisons of other similar homes in your area - those which have sold, those which have yet to sell and those which will represent your competition. Quite simply, the current property market determines the value of your home.

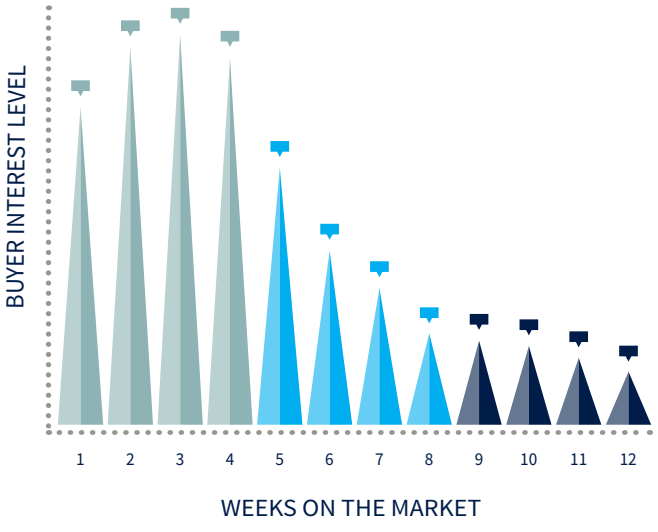
Buyers will see your home for what it is and, while they may still look, if the price is too high, they'll pass on your property for one elsewhere. This is backed by research clearly showing that properties that sell quickest also sell closest to their initial asking price.

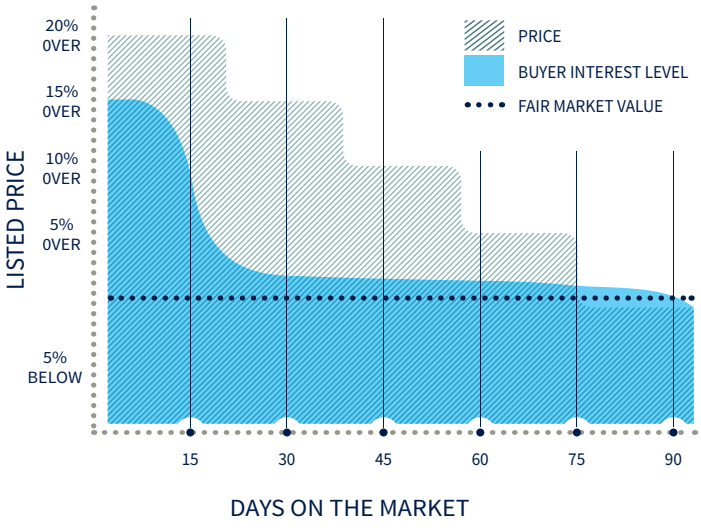
Time limits

Buyer interest is greatest for your property within the second and third week of its entrance into the market. After this, interest falls away quite dramatically. To maximise this window of opportunity your Harcourts sales consultant will design a marketing programme that peaks during this prime period. Your property will have the highest profile for this vital time. If you have decided to market your property with a price remember that it must be valued correctly right from the outset to benefit from this initial surge of interest.

A realistic return

It's a fact that over-priced properties take longer to sell and do not attract the optimum number of potential buyers, particularly during the prime selling period. The longer properties sit on the market the lower price they achieve. After three or more months this can often be 20% to 25% less. To ensure this doesn't happen, your Harcourts sales consultant has all the relevant information necessary to help you price your property correctly for the best return.





THE BEST WAY TO SELL YOUR HOME

With market conditions constantly changing and no two properties ever the same there's never one 'tried and true' method of selling. The type of property you wish to sell and the timeframe in which you want to do it ultimately determine the most appropriate and effective marketing strategy.

Exclusive listing

By exclusively signing with Harcourts, your home is immediately entered into our extensive international database, gaining exposure to over 5,200 sales consultants in over 790 offices internationally.

It is also featured on our website. Exclusive listing avoids the frustrations and lack of action so often experienced when dealing with a number of different real estate companies. It sidesteps the conflicting agendas and different procedures and maintains a strong brand grounding for your property. Most importantly, listing your home with Harcourts ensures your home is backed with the best possible resources come sale time.

Harcourts people are top achievers, no matter what it takes. And while the result should always be what's best for you, that outcome can be achieved in a number of different ways.

"THE BEST OPTION IS LISTING EXCLUSIVELY WITH ONE COMPANY."

TECHNOLOGY

With successful real estate business based around establishing excellent personal and professional relationships, strong paths of communication are a necessity. Due to the highest level of technological support, we have the ability to access vital information and communicate this to potential purchasers. It's this capability that keeps Harcourts on the cutting edge of technology-based support.

Information at your fingertips

The Harcourts website receives hundreds of thousands of unique visitors every month. These aren't just domestic enquiries – there are also a large number of international hits.

The number of people who log on in search of property is only getting larger. The majority of these prospective buyers shop at their leisure and have definite ideas about exactly where they want to live, what kind of home they want and what they can afford to buy.

The information provided on the Harcourts website is comprehensive, to say the least. It offers a detailed property search with virtual and video property tours. And that's just the start.

The highest visibility – from the moment you list

List your property with Harcourts and it will be entered into our own listing system, *Harcourts One*. Harcourts One spans every single office in our group and enables buyers and sellers to be matched far more effectively.

Of course your home will also be automatically listed on our website. The comprehensive detail of each listing enables potential national and international buyers an ease of access that's unparalleled.

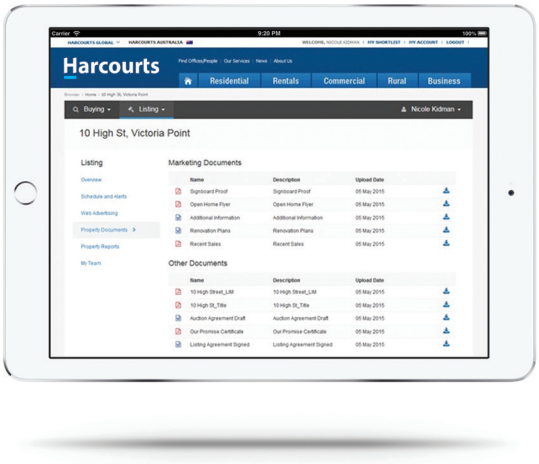
With just a few clicks of the mouse, a virtual tour of your property affords these buyers the opportunity to visit without ever leaving their computer.

A buyer-seller matching system that can't be beaten

Harcourts also offers the services of your own personal account online. This is an intelligent, reliable system that automates the process of matching buyers with properties that meet their criteria. And it's all done fast, automatically and confidentially online.

Mobile technology – 'mobile agent'

Harcourts has responsive websites and you can view all our properties and search any agent or office on this mobile platform. This will also give you easy access to communicate with any office or agent nationally. Also feel free to use our LiveChat functionality and we will assist you on all your property enquiries.



ACCEPTING AN OFFER

At Harcourts, our commitment to you is to bring you each offer formally in writing. We will do this by providing interested buyers with a contract, and will give both you and the potential buyer the opportunity to add conditions when negotiating the sale of your property.

Common conditions of sale are subject to:

- Finance
- Sale of another property
- Specialist inspection or approval

Your sales consultant will have the purchaser sign a standard approved contract with their offer and any conditions of sale either you or the purchaser has requested. Once this process has been completed your sales consultant will check whether any other interested parties are putting in an offer. This system ensures it remains fair to all parties in a multiple offer situation.

As the seller, you can then accept the offer, reject it or counter sign it. Counter signing occurs when you are not satisfied with the price offered and/or conditions included and wish to subsequently alter them. The contract will then be brought back to the purchaser for their consideration. If accepted, the purchaser will initial your alteration and the property is under offer subject to any conditions that the contract may contain. Alternatively the purchaser also has the right to counter sign. Your sales consultant will continue negotiations between you and the purchaser until you are both in agreement.

After an offer is accepted

Once an offer has been accepted and all parties have signed the contract, the purchaser will be asked to pay a deposit. In some cases, however, a 100% bond is accepted.

Once paid, this deposit is held in a trust account until the contract is confirmed, i.e. becomes unconditional in all respects. If the contract does not become unconditional the deposit will be repaid to the purchaser.

Selecting a conveyancer

You will need to nominate a conveyancer to act on your behalf once your offer has been accepted.

Your Harcourts sales consultant can refer you to our conveyancing business partners for your conveyancing needs, so you can at least take some of the stress out of this important process and rest assured that you are being looked after by a qualified professional.

COMPLETING THE SALE

Transfer generally takes place between you and the purchaser and your legal/financial representatives. Officially, it's where ownership passes from you to the purchaser, and the balance of the sale price is paid to you or your financial institution.

Transfer usually occurs about 90 days after the contract has been signed depending on the speed of the deeds office administration process.

The purchaser is entitled to inspect the property at a reasonable time of the week prior to settlement, and as the seller, you must hand the property over in the condition in which it was sold.

Possession of the property usually takes place on the transfer day although you and the buyer can agree for these dates to be different.

The next steps are to ensure you're well prepared for the move to your new home.

Remember to cancel

- ❑ Newspaper and/or milk delivery
- ❑ Telephone, internet and satellite TV
- ❑ Gas, water and electricity (arrange a final meter reading)

Organise for moving day

- ❑ Obtain supply of boxes (the supermarket can be one supplier)
- ❑ Get packaging tape and heavy marker pens
- ❑ Arrange for furniture removal (get quote, confirm time)
- ❑ Arrange care of your children on moving day
- ❑ Make suitable arrangements for any pets
- ❑ Arrange transit insurance and contents and fire insurance for your new home
- ❑ Organise shifting times with the purchaser of your old property and the previous owner of your new one

Notify your change of address to

- ❑ Bank, credit card and charge card companies
- ❑ Post office for redirection of mail
- ❑ Elections registrar
- ❑ Registrar of motor vehicles and drivers license
- ❑ SARS
- ❑ Insurance companies
- ❑ Hire purchase or finance companies
- ❑ Investment companies
- ❑ Local council
- ❑ Clubs and organisations
- ❑ Police (if you own and store firearms)
- ❑ Friends and relatives
- ❑ Magazine subscriptions
- ❑ Doctor, dentist, accountant, lawyer

Don't forget

- ❑ Clean the stove and defrost the fridge/freezer
- ❑ Tidy the yard
- ❑ Ensure that the chattels that have been sold with the property aren't accidentally packed
- ❑ Disconnect all appliances
- ❑ Disconnect the TV aerial
- ❑ Return any borrowed items
- ❑ Throw out items that you don't intend taking with you
- ❑ List valuable items for special care when moving
- ❑ Advise removal company of dangerous goods being moved (i.e. ammunition, petrol, spirits, chemicals)
- ❑ Securely pack all jewellery, money, special documents and papers (i.e. legal, tax, insurance etc.)
- ❑ Set aside items you will need on the day of the move so you can take them with you (i.e. food, drinks, cleaning products)
- ❑ Pack each room leaving the boxes stacked and labelled with the room they are to be moved to. It is a good idea to write on each box a list of its general content
- ❑ Clearly label boxes containing breakables as 'fragile' and identify these items to the removal people
- ❑ Pot and pack away the plants and cuttings you're taking
- ❑ Explain your packing procedure to the removal people and be at your new home when they arrive

Don't....

- ❑ Put breakables or liquid filled containers in drawers
- ❑ Overload drawers and make furniture too heavy to move (too much weight can damage furniture)
- ❑ Move netting, barbed wire, timber, wood, coal etc. without special arrangements being made
- ❑ Store perishable goods where they might be overlooked

Make arrangements to

- ❑ See your conveyancer to sign transfer documents / bond discharge documents
- ❑ Enrol children in new school
- ❑ Coordinate the forwarding of any files from the children's previous school to their new one

Organise for you new home

- ❑ Newspaper delivery
- ❑ Telephone
- ❑ Internet and satellite TV connection
- ❑ Gas, electricity and water

The week before moving

- ❑ Remind and confirm dates, times and locations for furniture removal company
- ❑ Confirm moving in/moving out details and key exchange with your Harcourts consultant
- ❑ Say goodbye to neighbours

One last check

- ❑ Nothing left behind?
- ❑ No clothes at the dry cleaners?
- ❑ No gear stored away from your property?
- ❑ Electricity, gas and telephone disconnected?
- ❑ Water turned off and no taps left running?
- ❑ Windows and doors latched?
- ❑ Keys with attorney (if appropriate)?

After it's all over

- ❑ Have spare keys cut
- ❑ Make an insurance claim if any damage has occurred during the move
- ❑ Teach children how to get to their new school
- ❑ Enjoy your new home and keep in touch. We'd love to hear how you're doing

This guide is intended for general information purposes only. The content does not take your personal circumstances into account. You should obtain independent legal and financial advice before undertaking any transaction involving real estate.

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