

How to determine how much house you need

Potential home buyers typically have lists of requirements they would like to find in a new home. Although there are many features that are universally appreciated, certain elements may appeal to particular buyers more than others. For example, a swimming pool may be coveted by active families, but may not be as desirable to retirees looking for less upkeep.

Size is consideration that merits significant attention. The The more rooms you need, the larger a home should be.

Potential life changes

It's important to consider life changes on the horizon, and buyers should decide if they want to move as a result of those changes or if they want to set down strong roots and stay in one home. For example, a starter home may be perfect for newlyweds, but the space may be too tight when kids come along. Also, those who anticipate caring for a parent in the



mantra "bigger is better" is well known, but homes with significant square footage may not be ideal for all buyers. "How much home do I really need?" is an important question for buyers to ask themselves before they embark on their home-buying journeys. Here's how buyers can identify how much house they need.

How many occupants will be living in the home?

The first consideration in home size is the number of residents. Rocket Mortgage says a good rule of thumb is to give each person 600 square feet of space. So that means a family of four would ideally live in a home that is 2,400 square feet, while a couple may be fine in a 1,200 square foot home.

Number of rooms

Generally speaking, the more rooms in a home, the larger the house. Potential buyers should identify rooms they feel are essential. While formal dining rooms once were de rigueur, they largely fell out of favor in recent years in lieu of open floor plans. future may want a home that will accommodate an extra resident in the years ahead.

Tiny house movement

The trend to live in very small houses has gained popularity in recent years. Many people have chosen to live with less and downsize to diminutive homes. Most "tiny" homes are less than 400 square feet and are not much bigger than some owner's suites in larger homes. There are merits to small homes, and that includes a small environmental impact, less clutter, financial advantages, and other perks like spending more time outdoors.

Housing budget

Sometimes how much house a person needs comes down to how much he or she can afford. Small homes tend to be less expensive than large ones. However, even small homes in urban areas or those close to the water or other attractive amenities could still cost quite a bit.

Housing size is a personal preference that potential buyers must consider when they are shopping around.

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Renovations that help sell homes



The adage "there's a lid for every pot" suggests that, even in relation to the real estate market, there's bound to be a buyer for every home on the market. Price is a significant variable in the minds of potential buyers, but there are additional factors that can affect the impression people get of a given home.

Certain home features can tip the scales in favor of sellers. In fact, various renovations can help sell homes more readily. And these renovations need not cost a fortune. Putting a home on the market can be stressful, but these renovations may help it sell fast.

• A fresh coat of paint: Although painting is relatively inexpensive and a job that some doit-yourselfers can tackle, it's not a task relished by many. Painting is messy, it takes time, and requires moving furniture. In fact, prepping a room for painting often is the toughest component of any painting job. But fresh coats of paint can create a strong first impression. Choose a neutral color and get painting. Jennie Norris, chairwoman for the International Association of Home Staging Professionals, says gray is a "safe" color that has been trending in recent years.

• Minor bathroom remodel: Remove dated wall coverings, replace fixtures, consider re-glazing or replacing an old tub, and swap old shower doors for fast fixes in a bathroom. If there's more room in the budget, replacing a tub, tile surround, floor, toilet, sink, vanity, and fixtures can cost roughly \$10,500, says HGTV. You'll recoup an average of \$10,700 at resale, making a minor bathroom remodel a potentially worthy investment.

- Redone kitchen: The kitchen tends to be the hub of a home. This room gets the most usage and attention of any space, and it's a great place to focus your remodeling attention. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry estimates that homeowners can recover up to 52 percent of the cost of a kitchen upgrade upon selling a home. Buyers want a functional and updated kitchen. Trending features include drawer-style microwaves and dishwashers, commercial ranges, hidden outlets, and even wine refrigerators.
- Updated heating and cooling system: Better Homes and Gardens reports that homeowners may be able to recoup 85 percent of the cost of new HVAC systems when they sell their homes. Heating, cooling and ventilation components are vital to maintain. You don't want buyers to be taken aback by an older system, and many millennial buyers are not willing to overlook old mechanical systems.
- Fresh landscaping: A home's exterior is the first thing buyers will see. If they pull up to a home with eye-catching landscaping and outdoor areas that are attractive yet functional, they're more likely to be intrigued. Often buyers will equate a home that features an impressive exterior with upkeep inside as well. The American Nursery Landscape Association says the average homeowner may spend \$3,500 for landscaping.

Improving a home's chances to sell quickly and at a higher price often comes down to making smart improvements that catch the eyes of buyers.







Safety measures to consider before offering a property as a vacation rental



Vacations have changed dramatically over the last several decades. Social media has opened doors to new places, as millions of people are inspired to visit locales they first caught sight of via platforms like Instagram. But it's not just where people are going that has changed, but where they're laying their heads when they arrive at their destinations.

The online marketplace for vacation rentals has no shortage of inventory, as popular websites such as Vrbo and Airbnb continue to attract property owners and renters alike. Property owners may want to consider using a home or apartment to generate some extra money. According to Alltherooms.com, the average annual host earnings on Airbnb in North America exceeded \$41,000 in 2021. That income is notable, and it's undoubtedly one reason why Airbnb reported adding more than one million active listings in 2023.

Property owners must ponder the pros and cons to listing homes via a vacation rental service. Those that decide to go forward can take the following steps as they prepare to offer their properties as vacation rentals.

• Hire a home inspector. A certified home inspector is typically hired when individuals enter a contract to purchase a home, but these skilled professionals can be just as useful when preparing to offer a property as a rental. Certified, experienced professionals can identify any potential problems or safety issues with a home that could cause trouble when renting a home down the road. Address any safety or structural issues with a property prior to offering it through a rental service.

• Install new safety devices. New smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, locks on exterior doors, and other safety features should be upgraded prior to renting a property. In between each rental, test batteries in alarms and detectors to ensure each device is operating at peak capacity. A new security system with external cameras also can reassure prospective renters that a property is safe. Remote locks that allow for keyless entry to a home is another upgrade that can make it more convenient for hosts and renters to access a

• Do your insurance home-

work. Existing homeowners insurance coverage likely will not apply when renting a home as a vacation property. Prior to listing a property for rent, confirm with your homeowners insurance company the coverage you need to ensure you are protected when renting a home or apartment. Liability and accidental damage coverage are two of the many variables prospective hosts must consider.

• Keep emergency supplies on site. A fully stocked first aid kit, functioning fire extinguishers (more than one) and a listing of local emergency responder contact information (i.e., police department, fire department, nearest hospital, etc.) should be made readily available to renters. Check supplies before each new group of renters gains access to the property, and restock when

Renting a property as a vacation home is a great way to generate extra revenue. But prospective hosts must take steps to protect themselves and their guests before renting a home or apartment.

How to organize a home's interior



The dawn of a new year marks a convenient time to turn over a new leaf. Much attention is paid to individuals' intentions to eat healthier and exercise more at the start of a new year, but those goals are not the only ways to embrace positive change come January.

A quick look around a home's interior may lead some to conclude that their home environments could benefit from a little less clutter and some improved organization. A more organized home may be easier to navigate and can even have a positive impact on residents' mental health. In fact, a 2021 study published in the journal Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology found that women who cared for infants in cluttered homes experienced higher levels of physical stress than those whose homes were more organized. That study suggests an organized home is a less stressful environment, which itself can pay numerous dividends, as the Mayo Clinic notes chronic

stress increases a person's risk for various health problems, including anxiety, depression, digestive issues, heart disease, and weight gain, among others.

With so much to gain from an organized home, individuals can consider these strategies to make interior spaces around the house less cluttered.

• Avoid procrastinating. A weekly, if not daily, routine that involves cleaning up spaces like the kitchen and living room can ensure a home is not overtaken by clutter before residents even realize it. Each day, go through the mail and discard papers like grocery store circulars and junk mail so they don't pile up. Parents of school-aged children can organize papers kids return home with each day so all that homework and event announcements does not create clutter.

• Purchase an entryway shoe rack. It might seem simple, but an entryway shoe rack can set an organized tone in a home. Whether the primary entryway is through the front door or a side door, a shoe rack just inside the door can ensure shoes are not strewn about and reduces the chances that floors are muddied.

• Consider furniture that doubles as storage. Many people utilize storage furniture so common spaces like living rooms are not overwhelmed by clutter. For example, a storage ottoman can hold blankets, pillows and other creature comforts so these rooms project a clutter-free vibe when not in use. Similarly, storage benches at the end of beds in each bedroom can help to establish a serene, clutter-free vibe, which can promote a better night's sleep.

• Discard older items. Clutter can pile up when storage areas like closets, dressers, nightstands, and home offices fill up with items people tend to accumulate over the years. For example, a linen closet can be overrun by bath towels that are rarely used, while nightstands can become junk drawers over the years. Periodically go through these areas and discard older items that are no longer used. These tasks won't take long, but can free up ample space throughout the home.

These are just a handful of the many ways individuals can effectively organize their home interiors and reap all the rewards that such efforts produce.





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Tips to make a living room a more comfortable, welcoming space

A kitchen is widely recognized ing room. as the most popular room in a home. Though it might be true that the hustle and bustle of home life runs through the kitchen, many a memory is made in the living room as well.

Living rooms tend to be go-to spaces for family movie nights, game watches with fellow fans and places to gather during holi-

• Incorporate the outdoors into the room. The great outdoors can have a calming effect on anyone, so it makes sense that incorporating the outdoors into a living room can make the space feel more comfortable. Furnish the room with plants and look for items with earth-toned fur-



day celebrations. That's a lot of quality time spent in the living room, and those moments can be more enjoyable if the space is as comfortable as possible. With that in mind, people can consider various ways to make living rooms more comfortable.

 Prioritize comfort over aesthetics. In an era of Instagram, it's easy to fall head over heels with images when designing a living room. Aesthetic appeal certainly has its place in a living room, but it's important to remember how much living will be done in these rooms when designing them. Comfortable couches and furnishings like ottomans can make it easier to relax in the living room whether you're watching a movie, cheering on your favorite team or reading a book.

• Ensure there's ample seating. It can be hard to feel comfortable in cramped quarters whether you're welcoming friends and family into your home or simply lounging around on Sunday mornings. If comfort is your top priority, arrange the room so there's ample seating throughout and people don't feel like they're sitting on top of one another when spending time in the room.

• Consider neutral paint colors. Furnishings are not the only things that can affect how comfortable people feel in a living room. The home improvement experts at The Spruce note that neutral paint colors with warm undertones help to establish a cozy feel in a living room. Various shades of white, beige, tan, or even gray can help to establish a warm, comfortable vibe in a liv-



nishings to create a calm and

comfortable vibe in the space. In

addition, new windows that al-

low for more natural light and of-

fer views into a yard can help lift

spirits and make the room feel

A comfortable living room is a

space where people will want to

spend their time. A few simple

strategies can help create an in-

viting and comfortable vibe in

more comfortable.

any living room.

(Family Features) A firepit can serve as a warm and inviting backyard retreat, perfect for roasting marshmallows for s'mores or stargazing while wrapped in cozy blankets. Before

you can share time around the

firepit with loved ones, however,

consider these tips to elevate

your outdoor space. **Choosing the Right** Design

When it comes to building a DIY firepit, the design you choose can significantly impact the aesthetics and functionality. From classic stone pits to modern metal designs, the options are nearly endless. Think about the size and shape as well. Circular designs are traditional and encourage conversation while square or rectangular pits offer a more contemporary look.

Gathering Materials and

Backyard Firepit

Create a Cozy Outdoor Space with a



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Tools

Essential materials include bricks, stones or metal parts for the structure, as well as gravel or sand for the base. Fireproof materials are a must to ensure safety and longevity. You'll also need tools such as a shovel for digging the base, a level to ensure even construction and adhesive or mortar for binding materials together. Depending on your design, you may require a metal fire ring, grill grate or mesh cover.

Keeping Safety in Mind

Safety should be your top priority when building and using a backyard firepit. Always place your firepit at least 10 feet away from any structures, trees or flammable materials. Make sure the area is clear of dry leaves and other debris that could catch fire. Consider installing a spark screen to prevent embers from escaping and always keep a bucket of water or fire extinguisher nearby.

Enhancing Ambiance with Seating and Lighting

Creating a cozy atmosphere around your firepit involves more than just the fire itself. Comfortable seating is essential for making your outdoor space inviting. Choose weather-resistant chairs, benches or DIY log stools arranged in a circle to foster conversation. Ambient lighting from string lights, lanterns or solar-powered path lights can elevate the mood and extend the usability of your firepit into the evening. Consider adding citronella candles or torches to keep insects at bay while enhancing the ambiance.

Visit eLivingtoday.com to find more ideas to enhance your liv-

Source: eLivingtoday.com









Budget-Friendly Ideas to Boost Curb Appeal

(Family Features) Your home's first big impression is its curb appeal, so if your place is in need of some sprucing up, you may wonder how you can make some updates without breaking the bank.

These 10 ideas are easy on budgets, but they can also make a big impact on your home's exterior image.

1. Paint your front door. As long as your front door is in good condition, there's no need to replace it completely. A fresh coat of paint can instantly update your home's facade. Go bold or stick with a classic hue - it's all up to

2. Dress up the windows. Add character and charm by enhancing your front windows. You might add wooden shutters, window box planters or both. Also look at the trim around the windows. If it's chipped and peeling, adding a fresh coat of paint doesn't just look nice, it can protect your windows from damage,

3. Clean up flower beds. An unkempt flower bed can drag down an otherwise stunning home. Keep beds tidy and vegetation trimmed, even during the offseason. Watch for weeds and replenish mulch or rock ground

cover as needed to keep the beds looking healthy and inviting.

4. Install new lighting. Replacing outdated light fixtures can give your exterior an instant upgrade. There's no right or wrong style; just choose a color and look that matches the rest of your de-

Replace worn welcome mats. A cheerful mat at your front door can be an inviting sight for visitors, but those mats inevitably wear with time, and what was once bright and charming becomes dingy and dull. A new mat can help bring back that cheery entry you once cherished.

6. Pressure wash the drive and walk. Over time, driveways and sidewalks collect an incredible amount of grime. Pressure washing not only eliminates the filth, but the clean surfaces also add to your home's visual appeal.

7. Add new vegetation. Landscaping is a relatively inexpensive way to introduce more personality to a yard. Aim for a mix of pretty and practical, such as some low flowering bushes and some trees or bushes that offer privacy and shade.

8. Keep up with basic maintenance. When your home is in poor repair, it shows. Pay atten-



Photo courtesy of Unsplash

tion to bent or rusting gutters, imperfections in the roof and other maintenance matters that aren't just aesthetic; left unrepaired, they can also result in major damage.

9. Pay attention to details. Functional items like the mailbox might not seem like much of a design element, but these small details can be a big distraction if they're not in good condition. Update or replace as needed to keep your aesthetic in sync.

10. Add seasonal decor. There's no need to go all out for every occasion, but some timely decorations that celebrate the holiday or season can make your entry fun and festive. Coordinate wreaths, planters, signs and other accent pieces for a cohesive look that says, "come on in."

Find more affordable ideas for upgrading your home and garden at eLivingtoday.com.

Common questions and answers about carpeting

No two homeowners are the same, and that's perhaps most evident in the design decisions individuals make when decorating their homes. Flooring is among the first things a person notices when entering a home, and the array of options consumers have when choosing flooring materials underscores how unique each homeowner is.

Carpeting is a popular flooring option. Many homeowners prefer carpeting because they feel it helps to create a cozy, welcoming vibe in a home. Consumers considering carpet for their homes may have some common questions, and answers to those inquiries can help homeowners determine if carpeting is for them.

Is carpeting expensive?

Home renovations are expensive, and the cost of a project is often the first question homeowners have. The cost of carpeting varies widely and is contingent on an array of variables unique to each home and homeowner, including square footage, materials chosen by the homeowner and the cost of labor associated with installation, which can vary significantly between locations. According to the online renovation resource HomeAdvisor, the average cost to install or replace carpet is between \$782 and \$2,812. That wide range illustrates how much the cost of the project will be affected by variables unique to each project. However, even homeowners who come in around or above the high end of that estimate may find carpet installation is among the more affordable ways to give the interior of a home an entirely new look and feel.

How different are carpeting materials?

Carpeting materials differ in their look, feel and function. The home renovation experts at Angi. com note that some carpet fibers are better suited to areas in a home that attract a lot of foot traffic, while others make for better options in areas with less use, such as a bedroom or home office. For example, Angi.com

notes that polyester has a luxurious, soft feel, making it a strong option for bedroom floors. Nylon carpet fiber is resistant to stains and damage and maintains its height under heavy weight, mak-

room of their homes. Is carpet padding a must?

ing this a good option in heavily

trafficked rooms. Homeowners

can discuss each carpeting ma-

terial with their flooring retailer

to determine which suits their

budget and which is best in each

Carpet padding is one of the costs associated with carpeting. When shopping for carpeting for the first time, homeowners may notice carpet padding costs on their estimate and wonder what it is and if it's truly necessary.

Carpet padding is necessary, as Flooring101.com notes that it keeps the underside of the carpet from wearing against the subfloor while absorbing the impact of foot traffic and furniture. That absorption helps to reduce stress on the carpet and thus extend its life expectancy. Carpet padding also can have an insulating effect and help to reduce sound in a room. So while carpet padding might be a costly expense on an itemized estimate, it's well worth the investment.

Carpeting can help make a home feel more cozy and welcoming. Homeowners can work with a local carpeting retailer to find a carpet that meets their needs and fits their budget.



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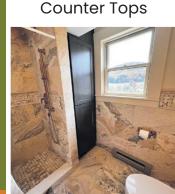


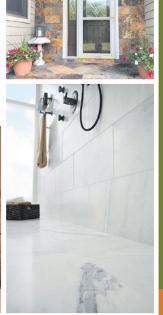


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