



# A Low-Cost Approach to First Impressions

*By Brian Madigan*

You only get one chance to make a first impression, so let's make it count.

Oftentimes, when sellers are getting their homes ready for sale they concentrate on the inside of the house. There's nothing wrong with that. That's what all the magazines say to do; but what about the outside?

There may be some low-cost ways to substantially improve the first impression the potential buyer will have of your property. In short order, here they are:

- Paint the Front Door
- Paint the Garage Doors
- Paint the Front of the house
- Powerwash the Driveway and Sidewalks
- Powerwash the Bricks
- Powerwash the Fence
- Re-seal the Driveway
- Fix the Front Step
- Fix the Lawn
- Repair the Doorbell

## *Paint the Front Door*

For one full minute possibly more, the potential buyer will be standing about 4 to 6 feet away from your front door. Make this time count! Paint it, so that it's perfect.

## *Paint the Garage Doors*

Two car garages are quite common and frequently they dominate the exterior appearance of the home. When prospective buyers are walking up the driveway, this is all they can see.

### *Paint the Front of the House*

If you are painting some of the front, then, why not the whole front? This will really set the tone for the purchasers. And, while we're on the subject of painting, you can use an inexpensive paint if you're selling. No one will know the difference.

### *Powerwash the Driveway and Sidewalks*

Get rid of the accumulated debris and dirt. Restore the driveway to its original colour.  
along with your sidewalk. This is simple and straightforward.

### *Powerwash the Bricks*

If you have a new home with a brick facade you may find that the first three or four feet are covered with mud. Some builders will clean this off with a powerwasher and some won't. If it's still there, then you should remove it.

### *Powerwash the Fence*

Most new wood fencing is the "green wood" variety. Chemicals are applied under pressure and the overall appearance is a greenish colour. After a few years it turns dull and after fifteen years it turns a rather weather-beaten grey. It is at this point that many home owners decide to paint or stain the fence. However, why not just pull out the powerwasher? You will be able to restore the colour to about 70% to 85% of its original colour if you wash it just one. If you do it a second time, you should be well over 90%. It was just dirt, dust, mould and other bacteria that discoloured the surface. And, as an added bonus, there's no cleanup.

### *Re-Seal the Driveway*

This is one of the largest surfaces around your home, and most of the time it's actually the first thing that prospective buyers get to see up-close. If you have an asphalt driveway five or more years old, then re-seal it with a blacktop finish. If it's interlocking brick, then there are special sealers

available. If you need to remove the oil stains, consider just turning the bricks upside down.

### *Fix the Front Step*

The front step is a quite common problem. Right in front of the door you will likely find an extension of the foundation, but just a few feet away your sidewalk begins. The winter frost will make every effort to prevent these two areas from ever being in alignment. So, you might want to address this issue. If you do, purchasers will immediately conclude that this is a well-maintained home.

### *Fix the Lawn*

If your lawn is not covered in snow, then you should make sure that it looks great. Fertilize it, water it and pull out the weeds! And, if you have a garden, it wouldn't hurt to plant a few flowers.

### *Repair the Doorbell*

And I don't mean put a sign out saying "please knock, doorbell doesn't work". Just fix it. You would be surprised to see how many houses are listed for sale and the front doorbell doesn't work. This creates a very negative first impression, and running through the prospective purchaser's mind is the question: "what else doesn't work", and what do you think that they are thinking about the asking price?

All of these items are quite inexpensive. It will only take two weekends and will pay off handsomely.

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