

Home security systems

Looking for ways to increase the value of your home? Consider installing a home security system. According to SafeWise, an independent review site, buyers are more willing to pay more for a house that makes them feel secure, and a home security system can go along way toward creating that feeling.

Home security systems can also reduce the cost of home insurance for you and your potential buyers; according to SafeWise, many insurance companies offer discounts of up to 20 percent with the addition of a security system. SafeWise suggests the factors you should consider as you're considering a purchase or shopping for different systems.

Goals for a security system

Whether it's to deter potential burglars or to notify you about potential flooding or give you the ability to electronically check in on children, what do you want to get out of the system? What will potential buyers want? If you live in a neighborhood with low crime rates, the focus may be different. Think about what would encourage you to buy the house.

Available features

Security systems offer different levels of features. Some systems can connect smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to the system, which will contact emergency services in the event the alarms go off. You can also install wired and wireless surveillance cameras inside and outside your home. Depending on the system, it can do more than deter burglars; many systems now allow you to keep watch on your house via smartphone apps or alert you to someone trying to access gun or liquor cabinets or other sensitive areas.

What you can afford?

Security systems can be expensive. The installation can cost anywhere from \$250 to \$1,000, according to SafeWise. More cameras and monitoring options will cost more to install. Additionally, you have a monthly payment to the security company, which varies depending on the plan and levels of monitoring. Plans can be as inexpensive as \$20 to \$30 a month up to several hundred dollars a month for round-the-clock monitoring or regular security patrols.

Look at other features

Hardwood or reinforced exterior doors, commercial grade deadbolts on exterior doors, strong locks for windows that open and motion detectors on outdoor lighting.



An Exterior Paint Makeover

It's amazing what a little paint can do to change the appearance of the exterior of your home.

Whether you choose to touch up your trim or cover the entire exterior of a building, fall is a great time to get this job done.

Fall Conditions Cooperate

Since most regions don't experience much humidity during autumn, the chance that paint will dry evenly and adhere to surfaces are greatly enhanced. High levels of humidity can cause moisture from the air to get between the surface and paint, causing flaking and a dull color.

According to real estate experts at Zillow, spring is the time of year

when buyers face the most competition, resulting in homes selling faster and for higher premiums. If you're considering going to market after winter has passed, a fresh coat of paint can add value and curb appeal to attract homebuyers.

Touching Up or Major Operation?

When planning your exterior paint job, ask yourself if you are only focusing on a small area or aiming to coat your entire home. Small jobs are easy for a homeowner, but ensure you are using the correct paint for your region's conditions and stay safe if you'll be on a ladder.

Those who will be painting their

entire home should consider hiring a contractor. Especially for those with larger homes, getting those hard-to-reach areas can be extremely dangerous; a professional is well-trained and experienced. Plus, during the fall, the demand for painters may not be as high as it is in other seasons, meaning there shouldn't be a long wait list.

Refresh Trim

Don't ignore the trim of your home when painting the exterior. A fresh coat of paint to highlight your doors and windows can make a drab entrance area pop. To add an even more attractive ambiance, consider hanging shutters which match your trim color to surrounding windows.

Insulate Drafts

Cooler temperatures reveal places where cold air is sneaking in your home. Blocking off these areas can save you money and add to your comfort once winter comes in full force.

An easy way to find obvious issues is to walk around entrance points in your home with a lit candle. Place it around the frame of doors and windows and watch for the flame to flicker. Sometimes, a professional inspection is required to find the hard-to-find draft points. Some common ones can be attic holes, access hatches and fireplace dampers.

Fix Your Doors

If you notice drafts coming in through

an exterior door, there are several ways to correct the issue. Depending on the size of gap allowing cool air inside, here are some methods you can use to alleviate them.

- **Install new sweeps:** A door sweep seals gaps between the bottom of a door and its threshold. If your old one has been battered or appears dented, it may be time to install a new one to provide ultimate sealing.

- **Use foam tape:** If your door is warped or doesn't fit its frame snug, the answer can be to insulate it with foam tape. It's easy to use. Simply cut to size and secure it to drafty areas, per the manufacturer's instructions.

- **Use a door snake:** These weighted socks are available for the floor or to hang around the perimeter of a door. They are effective when trying to block small draft points.

Window Maintenance

The United States Department of Energy reports that air leaks through gaps around windows are responsible for 10 percent of a home's leakage. If the issue isn't too far gone, it can be easily resolved.

An affordable option is to apply window film. This wrap is meant to be put in place and heated with a hair dryer. It works to quickly shrink and seal the drafts let in by windows. Caulk is inexpensive yet highly effective. If you notice your windows can use a touch up, visit your local hardware store and choose a type that is meant for the exterior of your home.

If you've tried to resolve window drafts alone but are getting nowhere, it may be in your best interest to replace them completely. A professional can point you in the direction of Energy Star windows which will help lower your monthly utility bill.

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