

PRE-LISTING PAINT CHECKLIST

For Portland Realtors, Listing Agents & Home Sellers

A fast, practical field guide for deciding what to paint before photos, showings, inspections and listing launch - without wasting seller money.

Use this when a seller asks: “Should we paint before we list?”

The goal is not to repaint everything. The goal is to remove visual objections, improve photos, protect buyer confidence and avoid ugly little paint problems becoming negotiation grenades.

Best fit:

- Pre-listing walkthroughs
- Photo-day prep
- Seller budget triage
- Curb appeal checks
- Inspection-risk spotting

How to use this checklist

Walk the property in buyer order: curb, entry, main living areas, kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms and exterior risk areas.

#	Priority	Why it matters
1	Look for buyer-visible damage first	Peeling, stains, scuffs, flashing, dirty trim, worn doors and bad touch-ups show up fast in photos and showings.
2	Separate cosmetic fixes from scope creep	A quick entry refresh may be smart. A whole-house repaint may be overkill unless the listing truly needs it.
3	Prioritize paint that protects the sale	Focus on anything that hurts photos, makes the home feel neglected, or gives buyers inspection-negotiation ammo.
4	Document the plan before spending	Write down must-do, nice-to-do and skip-for-now items so the seller does not get talked into painting the moon.

1. Exterior and curb appeal check

Done?	What to check before listing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peeling or flaking paint visible from the street, sidewalk or driveway.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Faded, dirty, or scuffed front door that weakens the first impression.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Failed caulking around windows, trim, siding joints, fascia, or entry details.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mildew, moss staining, water marks, or dirt buildup on siding, trim, steps, railings, or porch areas.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exposed wood, swollen trim, cracked boards, or obvious paint failure that could trigger buyer concern.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Garage door, side gate, porch posts, railings, or shutters look neglected compared to the rest of the home.

2. Entry, living room and main traffic areas

Done?	What to check before listing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Entry walls have scuffs, handprints, bag marks, pet marks, or patchy touch-ups.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baseboards, door casing, stair railings, and trim look dirty or chipped.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Main living walls have outdated bold colors that distract from the room or hurt listing photos.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ceiling stains, flashing, nail pops, drywall patches, or uneven sheen are visible in natural light.
<input type="checkbox"/>	High-traffic hallways have enough wear that touch-up paint will look worse than a fresh coat.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Accent walls help the room or hurt it. If buyers will remember the wall more than the room, reconsider it.

3. Kitchen, cabinets and buyer confidence zones

Done?	What to check before listing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cabinet doors, drawer faces, islands, or end panels are chipped, yellowed, greasy, or heavily worn.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kitchen wall color clashes with counters, cabinets, flooring, or staging plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trim near cabinets, pantry doors, toe kicks, and window sills looks beat up.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Old DIY cabinet paint shows brush marks, tackiness, chips, poor adhesion, or uneven sheen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Backsplash edges, caulk lines, and wall patches look unfinished or sloppy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The kitchen photographs darker, dirtier, or more dated than it feels in person.

4. Bathrooms, bedrooms and utility spaces

Done?	What to check before listing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bathroom walls show moisture stains, mildew spotting, peeling near showers, or failed caulk lines.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bedroom colors are too personal, too dark, too loud, or too kid-specific for broad buyer appeal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Closet interiors, laundry rooms, mudrooms, and utility spaces look neglected compared to main areas.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trim, doors, and casing are chipped from pets, furniture, bags, or daily traffic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ceiling patches, old leak stains, or flashing might make buyers wonder about hidden problems.

5. Photo-day fast touch-up list

Done?	What to check before listing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Front door and entry trim are clean, touched up, or repainted before photography.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Main hallway and living room walls have no obvious scuffs at camera height.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Baseboards are clean enough to photograph well. Dirty trim kills “fresh” fast.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kitchen cabinet chips and high-contrast wall scuffs are handled before wide-angle photos.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exterior entry, porch railings, garage door, and visible trim are photo-ready.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No wet paint surprises on photo day. Schedule painting early enough to cure and air out.

Paint scope decision matrix

Use this table to decide where seller dollars should go first.

Scope	Cost	Best when	Agent note
Interior touch-ups	\$	When wear is isolated and matching paint is known.	Small scuffs, trim chips, door marks, minor wall damage.
Main-area repaint	\$\$	When touch-ups will flash or walls look tired in photos.	Entry, living room, halls, stairwell, dining area.
Front door / trim refresh	\$	When curb appeal is close but the entry looks worn.	Fastest visible win for photos and showings.
Cabinet refinishing	\$\$\$	When cabinets are structurally sound but visually outdated.	High-impact kitchen upgrade before listing.

Exterior condition review	\$	When peeling, caulk failure, exposed wood, mildew, or water staining is visible.	Best first step before guessing at a full exterior repaint.
Full exterior repaint	\$\$\$\$	When the home clearly shows widespread failure or curb appeal is hurting value.	Plan early. Portland weather does not care about listing deadlines.

Pre-listing paint timeline

Use the earliest window possible. Last-minute paint prep is how good listings turn into circus acts with ladders.

Timing	Best action
30+ days before listing	Walk the home, identify paint priorities, get pricing, choose colors, review exterior risk areas.
14 days before photos	Complete larger interior areas, cabinet work, exterior touch-ups, entry refreshes, trim and door painting.
7 days before photos	Handle targeted touch-ups, small repairs, final trim, stain blocking and detail fixes.
48 hours before photos	Clean trim, check lighting, verify no wet-paint smell, inspect for missed scuffs or photo-visible flaws.
Day before photos	No new painting unless it is tiny and controlled. Fresh wet paint is not staging. It is panic in a can.

Seller budget triage: spend here, not everywhere

If the seller has a tight budget, rank paint work by sales impact, not by what annoys everyone equally.

Priority	Examples
Must fix before listing	Peeling exterior paint, obvious water stains, failed DIY patches, major scuffs in first-impression rooms, damaged trim near entries, visible cabinet chips.
Worth doing if budget allows	Main living repaint, front door refresh, kitchen wall repaint, bathroom moisture repaint, stair rail and hallway trim refresh.
Usually skip unless it hurts the sale	Low-visibility closets, garage touch-ups, full repainting of bedrooms with acceptable neutral colors, painting areas buyers will not see or care about.

What to say to sellers

Short scripts agents can use without sounding like they are trying to upsell paint.

Say this	Avoid this
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “We do not need to paint everything. We need to remove the paint issues buyers will notice first.”• “Let’s spend where it helps photos, showings and buyer confidence.”• “The goal is to avoid a small paint issue becoming a negotiation tool later.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “You have to repaint the whole house.”• “Buyers will not care about that.”• “Just touch it up. It will be fine.”

Portland-specific paint notes for listing prep

Portland homes have a few recurring paint issues that show up around moisture, siding, trim and cloudy-light interiors.

- Exterior peeling, failed caulk and exposed wood can look like maintenance neglect to buyers, especially before inspection.
- Mildew and moss staining should be cleaned or evaluated before assuming paint alone will fix the problem.
- Dark or cool interior colors often photograph heavier in gray Portland light. Warm neutrals and clean whites usually show better.
- Cedar siding, older trim and previous DIY paint jobs need a closer look before promising sellers a quick repaint.
- If the exterior is questionable, a condition review before listing is safer than guessing from the driveway.

When to bring in Lightmen Painting

Bring us in when paint could affect photos, buyer confidence, inspection risk, seller budget or listing timing.

Need a pre-listing paint read before the seller spends money?

Lightmen Painting helps Portland-area agents and sellers decide what to repaint, what to touch up, what to leave alone and when a paint issue needs a closer look.

Call or text: 503-389-5758 | Email: scheduling@lightmenpainting.com | CCB# 228370

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This checklist is provided as a free planning resource by Lightmen Painting for Portland-area real estate professionals and sellers.