THE DOOLAN GROUP | LUXURY REAL ESTATE ADVISORS

The 10-Step Home Seller's Guide

Everything a seller should know about the selling process -- from pricing it right to closing day and your next move.

Selling well is a skill, not luck. The sellers who net the most aren't the ones who ask the highest price -- they're the ones who price smart, market hard, and negotiate calmly. This guide walks you through all ten steps in order, with action checklists, pro tips, and the costly mistakes to avoid at each stage.

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How to use this guide

Work it in order. Each step builds on the last -- and the early steps (pricing, agent, prep) decide how hard the later ones have to work. Selling for the first time? Read it cover to cover. Sold before? Skim for the Florida-specific notes -- insurance, portability, and disclosure rules have all shifted in recent years, and even experienced sellers get tripped up.

Every step gives you three things: what actually happens, your action checklist, and the traps -- the mistakes I watch sellers make, and how you avoid them. Check items off as you go. By step 10, the proceeds are wired.

The 10 steps at a glance

1. Price It Right From Day One
2. Hire the Right Listing Agent
3. Prep Your Home to Sell
4. Launch Marketing That Moves Homes
5. Showings: Be Invisible, Be Flexible
6. Receive & Evaluate Offers
7. Navigate Inspections & Repair Requests
8. Protect Your Number Through Appraisal
9. Clear Title, HOA & Closing Prep
10. Closing Day & Your Next Move

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STEP 1 OF 10

Price It Right From Day One

The first two to three weeks on market set the tone for your entire sale. Price it right and buyers compete; price it wrong and you chase the market down.

Pricing is strategy, not hope. Your agent builds a comparative market analysis from recent SOLD homes -- not active listings, not what you paid, not what the neighbor claims theirs is worth. In Florida, price must also survive the buyer's insurance math: a high premium shrinks your buyer pool, so the price has to work with the full monthly cost, not just the mortgage. Overpriced homes sit, collect days on market, and sell for less than if they'd been priced right from the start.

Your action checklist

- Get a real CMA from your agent -- sold comps from the last 3-6 months, adjusted for condition.
- Understand your buyer pool's insurance reality; price so the monthly payment still works.
- Study competing listings: your price must beat what's sitting, not match it.
- Choose a strategy deliberately: priced at market, or just under to spark competition.

PRO TIP

Homes priced right sell faster AND often for more -- early momentum and competing buyers beat 'testing the market' every time.

Watch out:

Chasing the market down with small cuts is the most expensive pricing strategy there is. Every reduction trains buyers to wait for the next one.

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STEP 2 OF 10

Hire the Right Listing Agent

The agent you choose determines your photos, your pricing, your negotiation -- and ultimately your net. Interview like it matters, because it does.

A listing agent's job is marketing, pricing strategy, and negotiation -- not just 'putting it in the MLS.' Interview two or three agents. Ask for their written marketing plan, their recent sales in YOUR micro-market (not just their total volume), how they handle multiple offers, and how often you'll hear from them. Understand the compensation structure clearly before you sign -- every fee, every scenario, in writing.

Your action checklist

- Interview 2-3 agents; ask for the written marketing and launch plan, not a brochure.
- Review their recent sold listings near you -- photos, days on market, list-to-sale ratio.
- Clarify communication: who updates you, how often, and how fast they respond.
- Read the listing agreement fully: term length, fees, cancellation terms, and what happens if you get an offer day one.

PRO TIP

Ask to see the actual marketing from a recent listing -- photos, video, ads. That's the product you're buying, not the pitch.

Watch out:

The agent who suggests the highest price to win your listing, then pushes price cuts 30 days later. The flattery fades; the days on market don't.

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Prep Your Home to Sell

Buyers pay more for homes that feel cared for. A few focused weeks of prep routinely returns multiples of what it costs.

Declutter and depersonalize first -- buyers need to picture their life, not yours. Then spend where it pays: fresh neutral paint, caulking and touch-ups, landscaping and curb appeal, deep clean everything including windows. Fix the small stuff buyers use to justify big discounts: drips, sticking doors, tired fixtures. In Florida, the roof's age and condition deserve honest attention -- it drives insurance, which drives your buyer pool.

Your action checklist

- Declutter every room; pack personal photos and half the closet contents.
- Paint in warm neutrals; refresh caulk, grout, and tired hardware.
- Maximize curb appeal: trim, mulch, pressure-wash driveway and entry.
- Deep-clean top to bottom, including windows, baseboards, and AC vents.

PRO TIP

Fresh neutral paint and landscaping are the highest-ROI pre-sale dollars you can spend. A few thousand here routinely moves the final number five figures.

Watch out:

Over-renovating for your market. You won't get $40,000 back for a $40,000 kitchen in a $300,000 neighborhood -- prep to sell, don't remodel to live.

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Launch Marketing That Moves Homes

Buyers decide whether to visit in the first ten photos. Professional marketing isn't a luxury -- it's the difference between traffic and silence.

Insist on professional photography -- it's non-negotiable -- plus video or a virtual tour, a floor plan, and twilight or drone shots where the property earns it (waterfront, acreage, striking architecture). Your listing should syndicate everywhere buyers look, backed by social promotion, agent outreach, and open houses timed to the launch. In Florida, sell the outdoor living as hard as the interior -- lanai, pool, and lot are buying decisions here.

Your action checklist

- Confirm pro photos, video/tour, and floor plan are in the launch plan -- in writing.
- Time the launch: list mid-week so weekend showings and open houses hit at peak traffic.
- Make sure the listing copy sells lifestyle and specifics, not generic adjectives.
- Ask how your agent markets beyond the MLS: social, email, agent network, open houses.

PRO TIP

The launch is your moment of maximum leverage -- every buyer sees it as 'new' at once. A soft, sloppy launch wastes the one week your listing will ever be the freshest thing on the market.

Watch out:

Agents who 'put it in the MLS and pray.' If there's no written launch plan with dates, deliverables, and promotion channels, you're not getting marketing -- you're getting a listing.

Showings: Be Invisible, Be Flexible

The easier your home is to see, the more it gets seen -- and showings are where offers come from. Your job during this phase is simple: disappear.

Keep the home show-ready at all times: beds made, counters clear, lights on, temperature comfortable, pets and their evidence gone. Leave for every showing -- buyers can't speak freely with the seller hovering, and agents can't sell past your presence. Say yes to every showing request you can; 'appointment only with 24 hours notice' quietly costs you buyers who buy something easier to see.

Your action checklist

- Create a 15-minute 'show-ready' routine the whole household can run.
- Leave for all showings; take pets with you.
- Keep lights on, blinds open, temperature comfortable for every showing.
- Make access easy: lockbox or supra, flexible windows, fast confirmations.

PRO TIP

Ask your agent for showing feedback within 24 hours, every time. Patterns in feedback -- price, condition, layout -- are early intelligence for strategy adjustments.

Watch out:

Hovering during showings or grilling the buyer's agent afterward. It kills candor, and candor is how you learn what buyers actually think.

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STEP 6 OF 10

Receive & Evaluate Offers

An offer is a package, not a price. The best offer is the one most likely to close -- on terms that protect your timeline and your net.

Evaluate every offer on the full picture: price, financing type (cash, conventional, FHA/VA), earnest money deposit, contingencies (inspection, financing, appraisal, HOA review), and closing timeline. A cash offer slightly below a financed one with shaky pre-approval often nets you more -- and with far less risk. In multiple offers, your agent should create a clear process: deadline, highest-and-best or escalation terms, and a calm comparison of net proceeds and certainty.

Your action checklist

- Compare net sheets, not just prices -- financing risk and timelines change the math.
- Verify proof of funds for cash offers; scrutinize pre-approvals, not just pre-quals.
- Weigh contingencies: fewer contingencies usually means a smoother path to closing.
- In multiple offers, set a deadline and let competition work -- don't negotiate against yourself.

PRO TIP

Ask your agent to rank offers by likelihood to close, not just price. A bird in the hand at 98% of asking beats a 102% offer that falls apart in week three.

Watch out:

Falling for the highest price while ignoring weak financing or an unrealistic timeline. The most expensive offer is the one that collapses and puts you back on market.

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STEP 7 OF 10

Navigate Inspections & Repair Requests

The buyer's inspection is coming -- plan for it. How you handle repair requests determines whether you close on time or watch the deal wobble.

Expect the buyer to inspect within the first week or two. They'll flag roof, AC, electrical, plumbing, and moisture -- and in Florida, insurance-driven items (4-point and wind mitigation findings) often drive the request list. Decide your posture in advance with your agent: credit versus repairs, and your walk-away number. Credits usually keep closings on track; repairs you manage invite delays, re-inspections, and arguments about quality.

Your action checklist

- Discuss your repair-credit posture with your agent BEFORE the inspection happens.
- Get contractor eyes on anything you know is aging -- roof, AC, water heater.
- Respond to repair requests quickly; counter with credits where it makes sense.
- Keep perspective: negotiate the big, real issues, not every line item.

PRO TIP

A credit at closing is almost always smoother than you doing the repair. No scheduling, no re-inspection fights, no liability for the workmanship.

Watch out:

Blowing up a deal over $2,000 in repairs, then sitting 60 more days carrying the mortgage, taxes, and insurance. Do the real math before you die on a small hill.

Protect Your Number Through Appraisal

If the buyer is financing, an appraiser has to agree with your price. Know the playbook before the number comes back -- low or otherwise.

The buyer's lender orders an appraisal, and the appraiser values your home from recent sold comps -- the same discipline as your original pricing. You can help: provide the appraiser a packet with your upgrades list, permits, and the best comparable sales. If it comes in low, the options are renegotiate, the buyer covers the gap, you reduce the price, or in some cases a second appraisal. Discuss appraisal-gap language BEFORE you're under contract.

Your action checklist

- Prepare an appraiser packet: upgrades with dates, permits, standout comps.
- Make sure the home shows well on appraisal day -- condition influences perception.
- Discuss gap strategy with your agent in advance: who covers a shortfall, and how much?
- If it's low, get the full report -- errors in comps or square footage can be challenged.

PRO TIP

The listing agent providing comps and upgrade details to the appraiser is standard practice, not interference. Make sure it happens.

Watch out:

Killing a solid deal over a $5,000 appraisal gap while burning two months of carrying costs. Sometimes the cheapest money is the money you concede.

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STEP 9 OF 10

Clear Title, HOA & Closing Prep

While the buyer finalizes financing, your side gets buttoned up: title, liens, HOA estoppel, and disclosures. Surprises here are almost always preventable.

The title search hunts for liens, judgments, open permits, and ownership issues -- resolve anything early, because it all must clear before closing. If you're in an HOA or condo, the estoppel states exactly what's owed and can take days or weeks, so order it early. Florida sellers: check for unpermitted work (it surfaces at the worst moment), and if you're a foreign seller, FIRPTA withholding rules apply -- plan for them with your agent and CPA.

Your action checklist

- Disclose everything you know -- Florida sellers have real disclosure obligations.
- Pull permit history early; address unpermitted work before it becomes a closing crisis.
- Order the HOA/condo estoppel as soon as you're under contract.
- Review your seller closing disclosure: prorations, fees, and your net proceeds.

PRO TIP

Ask your agent to run a preliminary title check at listing, not at contract. Finding a lien in week one is a task; finding it in week six is a crisis.

Watch out:

Forgetting what you owe: HELOCs, tax liens, HOA balances, and contractor liens all come out of your proceeds. Know your true net before you negotiate.

Closing Day & Your Next Move

Sign, fund, record -- and the proceeds are yours. Then two money moves most sellers leave on the table.

At closing you'll sign the deed, settlement statement, and disclosures; once funded and recorded with the county, ownership transfers and proceeds wire to you. Plan your move so you're out on time -- delays cost you daily. Then handle the money moves: if you're buying again in Florida, file for HOMESTEAD PORTABILITY to carry your Save Our Homes benefit to the next property (real tax savings, strict deadlines), and talk to your CPA about the capital gains exclusion -- up to $250,000 single / $500,000 married on a primary residence -- before you assume you owe.

Your action checklist

- Confirm your move-out date and have the home empty and clean on time.
- Bring a valid photo ID to closing; confirm wiring instructions by phone, never email alone.
- File homestead portability on your next Florida home -- don't leave the tax savings behind.
- Talk to your CPA about capital gains exclusion and any 1031 exchange if it's an investment property.

PRO TIP

Portability is the most overlooked seller windfall in Florida. Your accumulated Save Our Homes benefit can transfer to your next home and cut its taxable value dramatically -- but only if you file.

Watch out:

Spending the proceeds mentally before the deed records. Funding-day hiccups are rare but real -- wait for 'recorded and disbursed' before you celebrate.

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READY WHEN YOU ARE

Let's sell your home right.

If this guide helped, imagine having someone in your corner for every one of these steps. That's what I do -- all day, every day -- for sellers across South Florida.

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