



“Welcome to My Open House” C6217

**Basics and Beyond Real Estate Institute (S0216)
4235 SE Mile Hill Drive
Port Orchard, WA 98366
360-871-2332 or 800-488-7931
lori@cbparkshore.com**

www.BasicsAndBeyondRE.com

SESSION 1

Selecting the Right Homes & Right Reasons (30 minutes)

As a result of completing this session, you shall be able to:

- ✚ Name the 4 criteria you should consider when determining which home to hold open**
- ✚ Name 3 reasons why you should hold an open house**

SESSION 2

Understanding Your Open House Audience (30 min)

As a result of completing this session, you shall be able to:

- ✚ Describe at least 4 groups of people who may be considered TWIGS.**
- ✚ Describe at least 4 groups of people who may be considered BERRIES.**

SESSION 3

Considerations That Will Help Create Success (30 min)

As a result of completing this session, you shall be able to:

- ✚ Identify activities you can perform to ensure your open house becomes the “branded” event that better markets properties and better services customers.**
- ✚ Identify questions you can ask visitors at your open house & know why your understanding of their answers will facilitate your working relationship with them.**

SESSION 4

Using Checklists to Facilitate Your Preparation, Event Activities & Closings (30 min)

As a result of completing this session, you shall be able to:

- ✚ Describe the primary reasons you should hold a pre-reception meeting with sellers.**
- ✚ Describe what materials you should prepare for an open house.**
- ✚ Describe what items you might consider for the display table at your open house.**
- ✚ Identify 6 activities you should perform during your final check and prior to your open house.**
- ✚ Identify what actions you should take at the conclusion of your open house and follow-up.**

SESSION 5

Creating a Safe Environment for Your Open House (30 min)

As a result of completing this session, you shall be able to:

- ✚ Identify various activities you can take to help ensure your safety while conducting open houses.**
- ✚ Identify steps you can recommend to your clients to protect them from crimes.**

SESSION 6

Exam (30 min)

As a result of completing this session, you shall be able to:

- ✚ Successfully answer at least 70% of the questions correctly.**

SESSION 1

SELECTING THE RIGHT HOMES & RIGHT REASONS

The open house is one of those activities where you can differentiate yourself from the competition. You can make a significant change in the level of service to both the seller and the customer by looking at the open house as a reception – held for the seller – and conducted with extraordinary preparation and attention to detail. Potential buyers will feel welcomed with sincerity and enthusiasm because you are providing them with extensive information, and anticipating and addressing their needs and questions. It is your opportunity to make a very positive and lasting first impression – to exceed the expectations of your customers. BUT, you will need to do more than post a sign and prepare an ad announcing the event.



The odds of selling an open house to any given person or couple walking into an open house are at least 250-1 according to the National Association of Realtors®. So why sit one? Big money is made by agents who understand this promotional method. These agents do an excellent job of showing the house they're holding open. They take excellent care of their seller's interest and effectively work the other five reasons for holding houses open.

Don't make a mistake of equating open houses visitors with present-time buyers. Looking at houses is a minor (or a major) hobby for millions of people. Most of these millions will buy somewhere, sometime! Your mission is to discover the answer to both of these questions. Let's explore how with proper preparation you can hold a house open and increase your chances for success two-fold.

RIGHT HOUSES – There are four major ingredients you must consider when deciding whether to hold a home open to the public.

- ✚ The number one ingredient is **LOCATION**. Location questions you should ask yourself (even before the seller selects you to market their home) will determine whether you will offer this service as part of your marketing plan.
 - Is it easy to find? - Hard to find houses are sold by escorting buyers to them, not by holding zero-traffic open houses there. Avoid inconveniencing your sellers without purpose. Avoid wasting your time by holding open only those houses that can be easily found.
 - Can you guide house hunters to your open house by the most direct route (from a main thoroughfare) with no more than four arrows/signs? If not, you may wish to consider another choice. Inclement weather could wreak havoc by blowing down one critical directional arrow. And though this can occur even with just four signs, the possibilities of misdirection are greater the more signs you have pointing the way to your hard-to-find open house. Additionally, if you have properly prepared for your open house and you are still not attracting traffic, it's much easier to back track 3-4 signs to discover and correct signage problems.
 - Is there good traffic? Your primary open house sign must be located on a major traffic thoroughfare if you expect to draw immense interest. Promoting open

house traffic is similar to encouraging other activity – it’s a numbers game and requires your diligence and continual attention to help ensure the best possible results.

✚ **PRICE** is the second ingredient to consider before you agree to do an open house. Ask yourself the following “price” question before agreeing to spend your valuable time on this activity.

- Is it at market value or below? It is counterproductive to hold open houses on clearly overpriced properties. In order to maintain your professionalism and agency relationship, you can’t knock the price. It is your listing after all and you accepted it at the overpriced amount. It costs you money in time and dollars if the home you decide to hold open is overpriced. Additionally, it can maim your enthusiasm and reputation. Give properties with “at-the-market” prices first opportunity to your open house marketing time.



✚ **CURB APPEAL** – You have probably heard how important first impressions can be. But did you know that within 15 seconds buyers develop an opinion of a property. This is why establishing the right first impression is critical to achieving a successful open house. Not only should you be concerned about the outside curb appeal but also how well the home is maintained and ready to show inside. Your professional advice is critical to educating your sellers on setting the stage properly both for showings and open houses. Help the seller to understand that the buyer must be made to “feel at home” by creating an environment similar to that found in a model home. When walking into a model home you will notice how the environment is neutral, the colors and interior decorating accent the home’s features; the smell is new and clean, and the sound is either quiet or enhanced by subtle background music. Questions relating to curb appeal that you should ask yourself prior to deciding to hold the house open may include some of the following:

EXTERIOR

- Does the yard look well maintained?
- Are the trees and bushes trimmed?
- Is the lawn mowed and edged?
- Is the lawn free of weeds?
- Are the decks and patios clean?
- Does the house need painting? What condition is the siding?
- Are the roof and gutters free of moss and other debris? Are there missing or broken shingles or tiles?
- Are there any broken or cracked windows or missing screens?
- Are toys, lawn tools, patio furniture put away or neatly stowed/arranged?

INTERIOR – There are many ways to create a more exciting and saleable interior, at surprisingly little cost. Sensory selling tools can have enormous impact. Consider these:

- **Light** – It is proven that people react more favorably to property shown under bright light than dark.
- **Color** – A fundamental rule when selling a house is to keep colors neutral and light.
- **Sound** – The sounds of peace and quiet are some of the best sounds to have when a home is being shown to prospective buyers. Light classical or instrumental music can be effective in creating a pleasing atmosphere also.
- **Smell** – Smell has more impact than you might expect. It can work FOR or AGAINST you. The smell of newness and cleanliness are positive. Heavy odors from pets, tobacco, or cooking can leave a negative image.

- Packaging the interior both for showings and open houses is critical to leaving a positive first and lasting impression. From the entryway to the kitchen, from, bathrooms to the living or family rooms and from bedrooms to the garage, you will want to ensure that everything looks its very best when you hold your open house. Go through the checklist in Section 4 to ensure the house is prepared to show off its best features when you hold the house open.

- Advising your sellers to fix leaky faucets, remove clutter, clear the roof and gutters, put children’s toys away, mow grass and trim shrubs, open blinds or curtains, turn on lights, put away valuable, firearms, RX are all important aspects of your job as a professional. Leave them with a list of items that need attending to prior to your holding open houses.



✚ The final consideration for determining whether a house is the right house to hold open is to ask yourself, “Is this house **SUITED TO WEATHER CONDITIONS?**”

- Imagine it’s the middle of July and 90 degrees in the shade. Your open house doesn’t have air conditioning, but people are driving up in air-conditioned cars to look at it. They walk into your oven – and right out again. How good do you think your chances are of capturing them as customers when they can choose to look at other “cooler” properties?
- When it’s cold, pick a house to hold open that has a nice hearth, a big family room, and lots of homey appeal. Get the owner’s permission to build a fire in the fireplace, turn on cheerful music, and fill the air with the good old smells of baking.
- And most importantly, make sure the utilities are turned on. If there are NO lights, NO water, NO heat or air conditioning, there should be NO open house. This is important not only for your comfort but also the comfort of visitors.

RIGHT REASONS – Ask yourself – Why am I holding this house open? What types of people am I trying to attract? Why? There is a wealth of business that can be had with the right attitude

and the right attitude demands that you know and understand the right reasons for spending your precious time holding a house open. Consider these reasons:

- ✚ Are you looking to **capture present-time buyers** for the house you are contemplating holding open or are you looking to capture them for some of your other listings or even other properties listed in your multiple that are similar in price, features, or location?
- ✚ Or are you looking to make **contact with present time sellers** that will lead to additional listings?
- ✚ Or are you looking to make **contact with future buyers and sellers**. Remember, not everyone who visits your open house is ready to act now.

SECTION 2

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPEN HOUSE AUDIENCE

Deciding to hold the **RIGHT house** open for the **RIGHT reasons** is only the beginning of the preparation stage. Understanding who might visit your open house is equally as important. In her book, “How to List and Sell Real Estate in the 90s”, Danielle Kennedy describes people who come into any open house as either twigs or berries. Understanding who is who is crucial so that you protect your enthusiasm. “When the time comes, you don’t want your enthusiasm dull and sticky from overuse and discouragement chopping twigs. Your most effective afternoon-long approach will depend on your personality and energy level that day. Bubble over with all the twigs if that’s your nature—but dive not into the pit of despair when people leave without responding. You were simply chewing a dry twig, not a juicy berry. No harm done. That is, there’s no harm done unless frustrations with twigs make you do a hard-sell pounce that drives off a genuine, ripe berry.”

Your questioning technique will assist you in determining who are twigs and who are berries. More about questioning techniques later. For now, we will simply describe typical “Twigs” and Berries”.



TWIGS

Spies for your seller

No-dough dreamers

Sellers, already listed with another agent, checking their property’s competition

Recent buyers of the same type of home worrying whether they got a good deal

Curious time-killers of all kinds & descriptions

Owners looking for decorating, remodeling or landscaping ideas

Looky Lous – hobby for millions BUT remember most of them will buy somewhere, sometime.

BERRIES

Buyers moving up due to advancement, birth, elderly family member moving in.

Sellers moving up due to advancement, birth, elderly family member moving in.

Buyers moving sideways due to wanting new school system, new area etc.

Sellers moving sideways due to wanting new school system, new area etc.

Buyers downsizing due to retirement, medical condition etc.

Sellers downsizing due to retirement, medical condition etc.

Buyers moving in from outside area or sellers moving to another area/part of the country.

As Danielle Kennedy points out, “berries come through your open house in various stages of maturity.



- ✚ The Ripe Stage – These are people who need to move NOW. They are being pushed by some outside force or internal emotion. A sudden illness, transfer, or some other time-sensitive reason.
- ✚ The Semi-Ripe Stage – These are people who are interested AND able, but are not feeling rushed or pushed.
- ✚ The Green Stage – These are people who are facing possible changes in their lives. For example: people nearing retirement, people whose children will be leaving or even people who are currently obligated by a lease that will be expiring soon. It also includes people who want to move NOW but CAN’T act because of a real or imaginary obstacle. For example: Someone who currently rents but has never talked with a lender to determine their state of qualification.

No matter what stage your visitors are in, behaving professionally and courteously creates opportunities for you to practice: friendly and relaxed approaches, asking open-ended and cordial questions, moments of silence; evaluating and closing techniques.

SESSION 3

CONSIDERATIONS THAT WILL HELP CREATE SUCCESS



Understand that you will not capture everyone that comes through your open house. As Danielle Kennedy points out, you don’t want to “drive off a genuine, ripe berry.”

Acting professionally at all times extends beyond the way you work with your seller prior to the open house and with visitors during the open house. ***When you decide to hold a house open, there are more things to consider than placing an ad and putting up your open house signs.*** Yet, unfortunately, that’s all many sales associates do.

We will now begin discussing a number of items you should consider when you decide to hold a house open. For example:

- ✚ Are vacant properties or lived-in properties better to hold open?
- ✚ When is the best time to hold a house open?
- ✚ How can you generate business while holding a house open?
- ✚ How do you get sellers involved to help make this a successful experience for them and you?

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- ✚ What activities can you perform to ensure your open house becomes the “branded” event that better markets the property and better services your seller and the open house customers?
- ✚ What questions can you be prepared to ask visitors so that you better understand their needs and enhance your working relationship with them?



ENTHUSIASM AND PROFESSIONALISM: A successful open house begins with you protecting your enthusiasm and behaving professionally. A few key items to consider:

- ✚ **Ask permission** before you put a directional sign on someone else’s property. Common courtesy also helps build rapport for you, your company and the industry. You may even make a new contact that can lead to more business.
- ✚ Meet visitors with a **relaxed, alert, pleasant, helpful attitude**.
- ✚ Keep your presentation **low-key, non-dominating**. This allows your visitors an opportunity to “experience” the home.
- ✚ Have a guest log available in a conspicuous place and ask visitors if they’d mind leaving their name in your guest log, but don’t feel like you’ve failed if they won’t. Think about things you can do to encourage them to sign in – a drawing, a gift certificate, a plant that you display at your open house.
- ✚ Jot down information about visitors that you can refer back to when you contact them after the open house – maybe it’s something they mention to you, something you notice about them, or even a common interest you share with them.
- ✚ Be prepared to engage visitors and ask open-ended questions.
- ✚ Never eat the seller’s food, use their phone, or bake without permission

VACANT HOME OR LIVE-IN HOME: Another consideration when deciding which home to hold open is whether a vacant home or a lived-in home is better. Each has its benefits and inconveniences. But if you’ve done your homework and determined the home has a great location for potentially drawing a great deal of traffic, it’s priced “right to sell”, and it shows well both inside and out, whether it’s vacant or lived-in most likely will be an insignificant factor. Still, there are things you must consider:

- ✚ Vacant dwellings that are in good condition and well located for traffic flow make terrific open houses. Your sellers aren’t inconvenienced by having to stay away or spiff the place up. However, you must ensure ALL the utilities are on. Make it a rule, NO lights, NO water, NO heat, NO open house!). You also need to ensure you have a table and chairs. What simple staging techniques can you implement to help draw a visitors attention to key areas of the house.
- ✚ Lived-in dwellings require that you tell sellers well enough in advance so they can be GONE. You need to impart upon them that in order for people to reach a decision to buy a home, they must first become emotionally involved with the house. Buyers must see themselves, their furnishings etc living there. This is difficult to do with sellers present.
 - You must be prepared to deal with sellers who are afraid of pilfering during their absence. Encourage them to lock away or take with them their valuables,

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firearms, prescription drugs etc. not only during open houses but any time the house is being shown

- Some sellers may feel you don't know the features they think should be pointed out during showings. To calm these fears, ask them to demonstrate to you special features they would like presented. Taking a few moments to have them share how systems works in the home can go a long ways toward building a professional demeanor with them.

WHEN TO HOLD HOUSES OPEN: Saturday, Sunday, during the week, daytime, early evening? Saturdays may offer an opportunity to catch people who may be out shopping or running errands. Sundays may offer an opportunity to catch people who have gone to church or are out for a Sunday drive. Wednesdays or Thursdays, generally thought of as Professional's Day when doctors, dentists, attorneys etc. often take time off, may be a great time to attract professional and business people to your open house. You may not get many stops during a midweek open house, but what traffic you do get (other than curious locals) will often be high quality, ready and able to buy now.

What days you decide may also depend on what other local activities are taking place during your open house. Will those activities work in conjunction with your open house by drawing guests or against your open house by giving them reason to be out of the area. A holiday when visitors may be flocking to your area for a festival may be great for drawing traffic. If it's a weekend, however, when an adjoining town or city is drawing potential visitors to their festival and away from your town, you may want to consider another day or weekend.

If you live in a community where a lot of residents commute, considering a late afternoon or early evening open house may prove beneficial. People who are moving into the area (from outside the area) usually look for a home without regard to the day of the week. You stand a better chance of picking up these hot buyers midweek than on weekends when there's so much more competition. Obviously, it depends on the community where you have decided to hold a house open as to what is the best date and time. This lesson is not meant to answer which dates and times are best to hold a house open but rather to simply get you to ask questions that can help you determine when it's best for you to hold a particular house open.

ENGAGING VISITORS: Probably one of the most important aspects of ensuring a successful open house is to be prepared to engage visitors when they arrive. All your hard preparation can go for naught if you can not ask meaningful questions that will help you discover and anticipate the needs of your guests. A relaxed and informal manner is absolutely essential as you continue to develop rapport with your visitors. The questions shown below are meant only to get you started and to help you understand what their responses are telling you. You should be prepared to ask additional, more-probing questions depending on their responses and how comfortable you and they are with providing you more information. These questions are meant only as a guide; the purpose for asking the questions is delineated beneath each question.

Where are you living now?

- The response to this question will indicate what area the guests are from and whether they are first-time buyers, retirees, current home owners, etc., setting the stage for further questioning and service.

✚ Are you working with another agent?

- It is important to know whether guests at an open house are working with another agent, especially if they are committed to a buyer agency agreement.
- If the prospect is working with another agent and is happy with that agent, pressuring them to work with you can be counter productive. Instead, providing excellent service could result in working with the prospect when the term of their agreement expires, or they may refer you to other prospects.
- Regardless of whether guests are committed to another agent, always provide superb customer services.

✚ Are you interested in moving to this area? Where do you live now? How does it compare to this area?

- By asking these questions, you are able to find out whether the buyers are fixed or flexible about the area in which they wish to live. When buyers are flexible about an area, it greatly increases their selection of homes and price ranges.

✚ How long have you been looking for a home?

- It is important to know what stage in the buying process prospective buyers are in when you first meet them.
- If buyers have just begun looking for a home, you will need to help educate them regarding the buying process and ask more qualifying questions than if they have been looking for awhile and have a sense as to what they want in a home.
- If buyers have been looking for an unusually prolonged period, that can be an indication that they may not be highly motivated, are very particular, etc. and you will need to consider that information before working with them.

✚ Of the homes you have seen, which ones did you like the best and why?

- This is an excellent qualifying question which directs the buyer to provide you with explicit information about the features they want in a new home.

✚ Is your present home currently listed?

- If their house isn't listed, they are probably at the beginning of their search. This affords you the opportunity to list the prospects' home, or to refer the listing if it is out your market area, and to sell them a home.
- If the buyers' home is listed, it is wise to determine if they are working with the listing agent to find their new home. If they are not working with the listing agent of their current home, they are probably highly motivated and are very good prospects.

✚ How long have you lived in your current home?

- Most people live in their homes an average for three to seven years. The response to this question helps to establish the prospects' level of motivation.
- If prospects have lived in their home for a year or less, you need to probe to find out why the prospects are considering a move after such a short time (i.e. death, divorce, birth, care for elder parents etc) The information discovered will help further qualify the prospects and service their needs. Sometimes guests who have recently purchased homes will attend open houses for decorating and remodeling ideas. Whatever the reason, it is important to be courteous and helpful to everyone attending an open house.
- Guests who have lived in their homes three or more years will likely be better prospects.

✚ What features do you like/dislike about your present home?

- This question is great to focus guests on the features in a new home that are really important to them, and to reveal those that they don't wish to experience again.

✚ How does this home compare to your home?

- By comparing their home to the open house, guests convey to you very focused qualifying information.

✚ How many people are in your family?

- The response to this question can really help you learn about a family’s lifestyle, their priorities (school systems, sports), how much room they need, etc. It is important to remember that not all families include children and some people may be sensitive to the question. Today, many families include older parents or other extended family members. By asking how many people are in the prospects’ household, the question is all inclusive, isn’t offensive and gives you more exact information.

✚ How does your family feel about moving?

- Never underestimate the decision-making power of family members!
- When a family is not in total agreement about making a move, you can be placed in a sensitive, difficult situation which must be handled carefully. Asking probing questions can isolate differences of opinion and offer possible solutions without appearing to interfere.
- When a family is in agreement about a move you are in a more positive position.

✚ Do you work nearby? How important is it for you to live close to where you work?

- Knowing whether it is important for prospects to live close to work reveals whether the open house is a possibility. Remember, prospects who are fixed on living close to work often find that traveling a little further provides more options. What may be perceived as an inconvenience, can be outweighed by financial savings and options for buying more house.

✚ Have you been pre-qualified for a mortgage? Would you like me to arrange an appointment for you with a mortgage representative?

- If open houses guests have not been pre-qualified for a mortgage, this is an ideal opportunity for a sales associate to provide service, start the process of working for the buyers, and set the stage for a follow-up meeting.

✚ How do you like this home?

- The answer to this closing question will help you determine whether the prospects are seriously interested in purchasing the open house – they might be the 250 to 1 longshot! If they are not interested in the property, ask what features of the home didn’t work and offer to show the prospects other homes that better suit their needs. Comments and responses to this question can also serve as important feedback to the seller.

Incorporating these questions into a natural, conversational, and unobtrusive dialogue will help develop your rapport building skills. Practice role playing your “welcome at the door”, “your questions technique” and “the farewell” both before the open house and during those moments of lull as you await the next guest.



COME ON IN! An open door says “come in” so whenever weather and insects permit, leave the front door open during your open house. A closed door means they have to ring the door bell and stand there until someone comes or wonder if they should just walk into a strange house. Shy people need homes too!

GENERATING BUSINESS WHILE HOLDING AN OPEN HOUSE

Sitting at an open house waiting for prospects to come to you is what some in the business for awhile might call a non-productive waste of time, money and resources. And if you would be spending this time pro-actively seeking out buyers and sellers, you might want to consider leaving these responsibilities to someone who is not pro-actively looking for business. However, there are a number of activities that you can perform while you are waiting for those “twigs and berries” to appear at your open house. This list is by no means a complete list. Let your imagination help you discover other exciting and creative actions you can take to help turn “down time” into “productive time.”

- ✚ Prepare SOLD door hangers that you can post after selling the property. Take advantage of the powerful momentum of having JUST SOLD the home. Oftentimes you get so busy doing other things after the sale that you lose the opportunity when the home actually sells. Leave them out on the table as you hold the open house sending subliminal messages to your visitors. It shows buyers that you are confident that it will sell.
- ✚ Prepare post cards or flyers for future distribution
- ✚ Draft newsletters, prepare mailings, update your mailing list
- ✚ Call your farm, expireds, neighbors – prospect every opportunity you get!
- ✚ Review your Multiple Listing Service for new listings, similar listings to the one you’re holding open, other homes in the same price range, a list of FSBOs in the area.
- ✚ Role play – talk to an imaginary prospect so when a real one comes through the doors, you feel at ease. Practice your questioning techniques.
- ✚ Read industry periodicals.
- ✚ If you have your laptop with you and have access to the internet, update information on your advertising web sites.
- ✚ What else????

To help you generate business, consider having available various giveaways that will continue to promote you long after your visitors have left your open house. Scratch pads with your name, pictures, and contact information offers you an opportunity for telling visitors that they can use them to take notes of any of the homes they’ll be looking at. It keeps your name in front of them.

Another useful giveaway may be local maps or coupons to local restaurants and stores, brochures from your local Chamber of Commerce, brochures from local Emergency Management Offices detailing emergency preparedness ideas and actions. Most importantly attach your business card to any of your giveaway items. If you really want to separate yourself from other sales associates, give your visitors a high-quality personal brochure.

PROFESSIONALISM ABOVE ALL!

Unprofessional behavior affects your reputation and your company’s image! Whether you know it or not, you’re being watched! It may be subtle and unobtrusive in most cases. How you handled yourself and questions by visitors is important for future listings and buyers. You don’t want visitors reporting that you did a bad job; that you allowed people to drop food all over the seller’s home; that you were telling people more about other homes you have listed or down the block than about the home you’re holding open, or that you believe the seller will accept less. Your tone and manner must be friendly, relaxed and interested.

When you held your pre-reception meeting with the sellers before holding the home open, you most likely learned points of interest from the seller. Use these points as a means of interacting with the visitors – point out the features, then pause and wait for a response before moving on. Point out special systems or features in the home that may not be readily identifiable. And remember - **ATTITUDE** is a key ingredient to holding a successful open house.

SESSION 4

USING CHECKLISTS TO FACILITATE YOUR PREPARATION, EVENT ACTIVITIES AND CLOSINGS

Pre-Reception Meeting With Sellers – This is an opportunity for you to discuss how your sellers can prepare for the open house. Provide them a “to-do” list or a home enhancement guide that will help them package the interior and exterior so that it looks its very best. Remind them about the First Impressions philosophy that you most likely discussed with them when you accepted the listing.

This time is also an opportunity for you to learn which features of the home or neighborhood were most appealing to them when they bought the house. Demonstrate your genuine interest in the home, by familiarizing yourself with different systems, how they work, what stays, what goes. Take the time to learn about nearby schools, shops, churches etc. Get to know all the houses for sale (or those recently sold) in the immediate area, including FSBOs, what they are, their condition, price and features.

And most importantly, assess whether your sellers are emotionally ready for an open house! If they are not willing to partner with you to ensure the house looks its best, you may want to reconsider holding it open.



PRE-RECEPTION MEETING CHECKLIST

Following is a checklist of items you may wish to consider accomplishing during your pre-reception meeting with the sellers.

- ▶ Set the time and date of the Open House with the Sellers
- ▶ Preview the property, preferably with the sellers, touring the home as a buyer would
- ▶ Ask owners to point out features of the home that impressed them when they purchased it
- ▶ Ask what special things they like about life in this house that may not be apparent to an Open House visitor
- ▶ Discuss with owners how to operate different system of the property: heating, air conditioning, security systems, sprinklers etc.
- ▶ Describe the preparation for and the process of an Open House to sellers
- ▶ Discuss with sellers the importance of not being present during the open house, making sure pets are out of the way (not on the property is best), and putting away valuables and prescription drugs.
- ▶ Ask for permission to serve food and/or drinks

► Emphasize how a clean, neat house and a well-manicured and maintained lawn and garden will position their home for the best possible showing. Give them ideas for staging. After all, that’s part of why they hired you.



PREPARATION OF OPEN HOUSE MATERIALS

Preparation for any event or activity is the most important aspect for ensuring its success – be it a listing or buyer presentation, negotiating, speaking engagements or holding an open house. Preparing open house material well in advance will insure:

- ✚ That the property is given maximum exposure through advertising, open house signs, door hangers, open house post cards or flyers etc. If you’d prefer to take advantage of on-line marketing, spice up your post card invitations with an online tool like Sendomatic (www.sendomatic.com) They will transform your invitations from plain text emails to interactive presentations.
- ✚ That you are well informed about recent activity in the area. This can be accomplished by simply driving through the area just prior to holding an open house to see what new signs have been posted, checking the multiple listing service and preparing reports of other similar listings either by price range, type of home or location.
- ✚ That all necessary materials (see checklist below) have been replenished and are in order.
- ✚ That your digital camera, key entry, laptop, and other real estate tools are functional. On the day of the open house, take your digital camera and arrive early to take up-to-date photos. Transfer them into a power point slide show on your laptop and have it running while visitors are attending.

PRE-RECEPTION MATERIALS & MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

- Place open house ad with newspapers in time to make weekend publication deadline. (Make sure ad conveys both the emotional and physical appeal of the homes. Include clear directions.)
- Make a set of directions for the front desk/floor book or agent to fax or read to customers who may call the office on the day of the Open House.
- Have a CMA on the subject property and prepare information on all recent sales (within the last 6-12 months) of homes in the area of the Open House.
- Preview homes on the market which are in the vicinity of the subject property. Collect fact sheets on each one to take to the Open House.
- Prepare a list of other company properties being held open that weekend with written directions to each home.
- Make neighborhood calls to inform neighbors about the Open House dates and time.
- Make strategic calls and mailings to:
 - Homeowners in the neighborhood who might be interested in the property (or) who might know someone who would be interested in living in the neighborhood.
 - Past customers and clients who might be interested in the home
 - Your Sphere of Influence
 - For Sale By Owners and Expireds

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- ▶ Prepare Display Table materials:
 - Guest Register
 - Feature Sheet: Photo/Features on front; statistics on back
 - Mortgage information – 3 monthly payment options
- ▶ Utility Records
- ▶ Buyer Agency Information
- ▶ Home Warranty Information/Security System Information
- ▶ Community Information (Schools, Athletics, Shopping, Conveniences, Theater, Museums)
- ▶ Buyer’s Guidebooks, Buyer and Seller Guarantees (if available)
- ▶ Listing Presentation Book
- ▶ Photos of the home (especially seasonal photos if available)
- ▶ Prepare Special Feature Cards
- ▶ Check signs to insure they are clean and in good repair, banners, flags, balloons etc
- ▶ Prepare Marketing items and materials to build new relationships:
 - Open House bag with coupons
 - Kid’s treat bags
 - Personal brochure
- ▶ Check and Replenish Open House Kit:
 - Plates, cups, napkins (if serving food)
 - Children’s items (videos, drawing paper etc)
- ▶ Check and replenish business supplies:
 - Laptop computer
 - Contracts
 - Business Cards
 - Calculator
 - Pens
 - Current Mortgage rates
 - Loan Officer’s business cards
- ▶ Order flowers or blooming seasonal plant for display table
- ▶ Order food (if serving food)



THE BIG EVENT – PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Proper preparation on the day of the open house is essential to position you as a service-oriented professional. When every detail has been attended to before the “big event”, you’ll be free to concentrate on servicing your guests and demonstrating a high level of competence and professionalism.

- ▶ Dress professionally – this is your ultimate first impression!
- ▶ Arrive 30-60 minutes early to check the state of the house and set up.
- ▶ Prepare your display table. Live plants and cut flowers have a way of warming up a room.
- ▶ Make refreshments/put out food
- ▶ Final check:
 - Rehearse your tour highlight comments as you go through the house
 - Place Special Feature cards

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- Turn on ALL lights. Move lamps to dark corners and arrange window treatments so that natural light floods the rooms. Brighter is better, and your rooms will look larger.

- Open shades, blinds
- Set a comfortable temperature
- Play soft music
- Secure valuables
- Secure pets

- Check curb appeal – roll out the red carpet for potential homebuyers by sprucing up the entryway. Set the stage by making sure the welcome mat or welcoming area is clean, fill planters with seasonal flowers and keep the foyer and hallways clutter-free.

- ▶ Place directional signs (add balloons, check signs as you return to house)

- ▶ Park car out of the way of guests (not in front of house or in driveway). You want to be able to leave the property quickly if the need arises. It also provides visitors an opportunity to view the curb appeal of the home).

- ▶ Have fun!



Whether it's a business meeting, a social event or an open house, you're always interacting with prospects. Knowing how to meet people, make a good impression, and maneuver yourself gracefully in any situation will help you succeed. These tips will let you better work your open house:

- ✚ **Set a goal for your open house before you begin it.** What do you want to accomplish? Maybe it's to meet five new people. Maybe it's to set three follow-up appointments. Whatever the outcome you want to achieve from your open house, use your time judiciously to achieve the goal.
- ✚ **Walk up to your guests and shake hands with confidence.** If you start with a positive attitude and a confident posture, people will be drawn to you. Offer a strong handshake with thumbs locked; don't grab fingertips or knuckles. Look the person in the eyes. Say your name slowly.
- ✚ **Eat first.** Don't try to eat, drink and mingle all at once.
- ✚ **Be ready to greet.** Keep your right hand free so that you're always ready to shake hands with your right hand and greet people.
- ✚ **Start conversations.** Say hello, introduce yourself, and ask people how they heard about your open house, what drew them to it. Be authentic.
- ✚ **Get the name.** When you meet people, make sure you catch their name, and use it in conversation. It's a sign of respect. Be sure to call people by the name they've given you, for example, Mrs. Jones, Charles or Mary Louise.
- ✚ **Keep the conversation going** when appropriate but don't fill the time with needless chatter. Allow them an opportunity to experience the home. When conversation is appropriate, ask open-ended questions. Try to strike a balance between asking questions and making statements so that you avoid a third-degree interrogation or talking too much about yourself.

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- ✚ **Repeat what you’ve heard.** Using phrases such as “when you said a moment ago that ...” or “you mentioned that...” demonstrates you are paying attention.
- ✚ **Don’t let your eyes or thoughts stray.** There’s nothing worse than scanning the room and not looking at the person you’re talking with.
- ✚ **Exit a conversation gracefully.** At business and social events, one the biggest fears is getting stuck in a conversation. When you feel the interaction should end, say, “it was great talking to you. I hope you enjoy touring the house.”
- ✚ **Make a request.** If your goal is to establish a relationship that will eventually turn into a deal or a referral, you need to have a reason to reconnect. Before leaving the conversation, clue people in to expect the follow-up. Say, “Can I e-mail (or call) you so that we can get together?”
- ✚ **Don’t be touchy-feely.** Hugging and kissing don’t belong in a business or networking situation.

Source: Miriam Bamberger, The Flourishing Co. LLC, Washington D.C. Rosalie Maggio, author of “The Art of Talking to Anyone and How to Say It”

CLOSING CHECKLIST & THANK YOU LETTERS

Concluding an open house on an enthusiastic and positive note will leave a lasting impression with both your sellers and guests. Be certain to attend to all the detail of closing by properly addressing the needs of your guests as they leave. If guests are not interested in the home and wish to move quickly through the house, don’t push the property. Instead, offer them the list of other company properties open that day, hand them your card/brochure, and offer to call ahead to other houses they might be interested in seeing. If guests seem enthusiastic about the house, review with them the features they seemed to appreciate and ask them if they are interested in purchasing the home. If they are interested, offer to call a mortgage representative to help financially qualify them, and **be prepared to write a contract.**

Closing the home and following up with sellers is also a sign of professionalism and can set you apart. Be sure to leave the house in better condition than you found it, straightening up the display table and packing your materials away.

Be prepared to stay at least 30 minutes after the scheduled end of the open house for returning guests or latecomers. Try to stay until the sellers return as they will be anxious to hear how the day went. Otherwise, leave a note and make sure to report to them later in the evening.

Double check to ensure all doors and windows are locked and all lights are turned off. And don’t forget to remove ALL of your open house signs.

Follow-up by calling guests as soon as possible to see if they have any questions regarding the property or need additional information or services. Invite guests to your next open house. You might also want to consider sending them a thank you note including information that will meet their needs. For example: school or community information.

A sample Guest Thank You Letter, Sign Placement Thank You Letter, Seller Thank You Letter are included at the conclusion of this course.

SESSION 5

SAFETY AWARENESS WHILE CONDUCTING AN OPEN HOUSE

An open house can be a great sales tool, but it also exposes you to numerous unfamiliar people at once. The National Association of Realtors® recommend you take the following step to ensure your safety.

PROTECT YOURSELF

1. If possible, always try to have at least one other person working with you at the open house.
2. Call the local police department and ask them to have a squad car drive by during your open house hours.
3. Check your cell phone’s strength and signal prior to the open house. Have emergency numbers programmed on speed dial. If you are unable to receive a signal, reconsider having the open house.
4. Upon entering a house for the first time, check all rooms and determine several “escape” routes. Carry a doorstop with you to prop open your exit. Make sure all deadbolt locks are unlocked to facilitate a fast escape.
5. Make sure that if you were to escape by the back door, you can escape from the back yard. Frequently, high fences surround yards that contain swimming pools or hot tubs.
6. Place one of your business cards, with the date and time written on the back, in a kitchen cabinet. Note on it if you were the first to arrive or if clients were waiting.
7. Have all open house visitors sign in. Ask for full name, address, phone number and e-mail.
8. Stow your valuables out of site.
9. When showing a house, always walk behind the prospect. Direct them; don’t lead them. Say for example, “The kitchen is on your left” and gesture for them to go ahead of you.
10. If a visitor acts suspiciously, let the person know someone else will be stopping by at any time.
11. Identify places you could be trapped – bedrooms, bathrooms, laundry rooms. Avoid attics, basements and getting trapped in small rooms.
12. Notify someone in your office, your answering service, a friend or relative that you will be calling in every hour on the hour. And if you don’t call, they are to call you.
13. Inform a neighbor that you will be showing the house and ask if he or she would keep an eye and ear open for anything out of the ordinary.
14. Don’t assume that everyone has left the premises at the end of an open house. Check all of the rooms and the backyard prior to locking the doors. Be prepared to defend yourself, if necessary.

PROTECT YOUR CLIENTS AGAINST CRIME

Real estate professionals are not the only ones at risk when showing a property. Follow these steps to help your clients protect themselves against crime.

1. Remind clients who are selling their house that strangers will be walking through their home. Tell them to hide any valuables in a safe, secure place. This includes prescription drugs.
2. At an open house, be alert to the pattern of visitors’ arrivals, especially near the end of showing hours. In some areas, a group of thieves will show up together near the end of

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the open house and, while a string of supposed potential buyers distract the Real Estate professional, the rest of the group walks through the house, stealing any valuables they come across.

3. Finally, when you leave a client’s property, whether after an open house or a standard showing, make sure that all doors and windows are closed and locked. Thieves commonly use open houses to scout for valuables and possible points of entry, then return after the agent leaves.
4. Let your clients know that you will take all of the above safety precautions, but that when they return home, they should immediately verify that all doors are locked and all valuables accounted for.

CONCLUSION

The information presented here is not all inclusive of actions you can and/or should take when preparing for and conducting an open house. Let your imagination be your guide not only in the promotion of the event, but in how you conduct the event. First and foremost, always keep safety mind – listen to your intuition. It’s there to protect you. And be sure to have FUN!



SAMPLE

GUEST THANK YOU LETTER

(Date)

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear (Name),

Just a note to thank you, (Name) for visiting my Open House at (Listing Address). It was a pleasure meeting you, and I do hope I was able to answer all your questions.

If you thought of any other questions on your way home, I would be happy to answer them at your convenience.

Additionally, I would be pleased to show you some other well-priced homes to aid you in your comparisons.

I can be reached during the day at my office, (phone number), or by email at (email address). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

SAMPLE

SIGN PLACEMENT
THANK YOU LETTER

(Date)

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear (Name),

This weekend you did me a favor you didn't have to do, and I appreciate it – you let me place a directional arrow on your property to help direct people to an open house I was conducting at (Listing Address).

Your allowance was important to me as well as to your neighbor because if no one could find the house, no one would see it, so who could buy it? That's why I appreciate the cooperation of neighbors like you.

Incidentally, if you know of anyone who might be interested in seeing the property, I'd welcome the chance to show it. And, if you or anyone else you know has an interest in buying or selling in the near future, I'd like everyone to know that no one gets better results or has a greater range of services than my company! All I need is a short time to show that person how I work and what can reasonably be expected from today's market.

In any case, thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

(Sales Associates Name)

SAMPLE
SELLER THANK YOU LETTER

(Date)

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear (Name),

I was very pleased with the response to our Open House today. (Number of guests) people stopped in to see the house and their comments were quite positive. I received many compliments on how clean, neat and nicely decorated the house is. You did a great job preparing it for today. Thank you!

I will be in touch with you tomorrow to answer any questions you might have and to plan our next Open House event.

Again, thank you. It was such a pleasure to show your house.

Sincerely,

(Sales Associate Name)

Complete and attain a minimum of 70% on the following exam of multiple choice, true or false, and fill in the blank.

Name 3 of the 4 major ingredients you must consider when deciding which house to hold open

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. T or F - It doesn't matter how many signs you have to use to direct traffic to your open house.
5. Successful open houses begins with you protecting your _____ and behaving _____

Name 3 of the 4 sensory selling tools

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. Wednesdays or Thursdays may be excellent days to hold an open house because these days are generally thought of as _____ Day.
10. The ultimate first impression at the Big Event (Open Houses) is to _____ professionally.
11. Buyers develop an opinion of a property within _____ seconds.

Match the following as either “twigs” or “berries”

12. _____ No-dough dreamers
13. _____ Buyers down sizing due to retirement or medical condition
14. _____ Buyers wanting a new school system
15. _____ Owners looking for decorating or remodeling ideas
16. _____ Recent buyers of the same type home or in the same neighborhood
17. _____ Sellers moving up due to advancement, birth or elderly family members moving in.
18. When considering holding a vacant house open, make it your rule: NO _____, NO _____, NO _____ = NO Open House.
19. The purpose of the pre-open house meeting with sellers is:
 - a. Set date and time for the open house
 - b. Provide sellers with a “to-do” list to prepare for the open house
 - c. Discuss the importance of not being present for the open house
 - d. All of the above.

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20. T or F - One of the most important aspects of ensuring a successful open house is to be prepared to engage visitors when they arrive.

Name 3 “Final Check” activities discussed in this lesson in the Preparation Checklist that you should complete when you arrive at your open house:

21. _____
22. _____
23. _____

24. T or F - Your attitude is a key ingredient to holding a successful open house.

Write 4 important questions you should ask of visitors at your open house and give at least one purpose for asking it:

25. Question 1:
Purpose:

26. Question 2:
Purpose:

27. Question 3:
Purpose:

28. Question 4:
Purpose:

Name 3 actions you should take to protect yourself at an open house.

29. _____
30. _____
31. _____

32. T or F - Upon entering your open house, check all rooms and determine several “escape” routes.

33. T or F – When showing a house, it doesn’t matter whether you lead the prospect or follow behind them.

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MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

Course Title: “Welcome to My Open House”

School: Basics & Beyond Real Estate Institute

Instructor: Loraine Du Paul

Delivery Method: Distance Education

Please check your answer to each question	Yes	No
Did you receive a copy of the course curriculum/objectives?		
Did the course content conform with the published description?		
Did you read the material in the booklet on this date?		
Did you complete the quiz for the course & use the enclosed answer sheet?		
Did you complete this course evaluation and sign the form below?		

Why did you choose to take this course? Circle all that apply: TOPIC TIME COST EASE or OTHER _____

Course (5 being excellent, 1 being poor)	Exc				Poor
How useful was the information acquired from this course?	5	4	3	2	1
How current was the information presented?	5	4	3	2	1
How would you rate the organization of the information?	5	4	3	2	1
How would you rate the quality of the materials used?	5	4	3	2	1
What is your overall evaluation of this course?	5	4	3	2	1

DELIVERY METHOD (DISTANCE EDUCATION)	ANSWERS
How many hours did it take you to finish the course?	
Was your assessment of your clock hours inclusive of homework assignments? If yes, then break down the seat time.	
Did the course have periodic measures of time spent and progression towards completion?	
Did the delivery method allow interactivity with an instructor? Was the instructor available?	
Additional comments about the course, instructor or deliver method?	

Would you take another correspondence course from Basics & Beyond Real Estate Institute? Yes No

Why?

Thank you for taking this course: _____
Your signature

To file a complaint regarding any education issues, you can download the Education Complain Form from www.dol.wa.gov/forms/620013.htm

DISCLAIMER: No denial of full continuing education credit for the subject course may occur as a result of completing this evaluation form.