

H **YOUR** HOME



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It's in the Wash When It Comes to Dream Homes

We spend seven to nine hours on this chore a week, so it's no surprise a room devoted to it has become one of the make-or-break conveniences sought out by prospective home buyers.

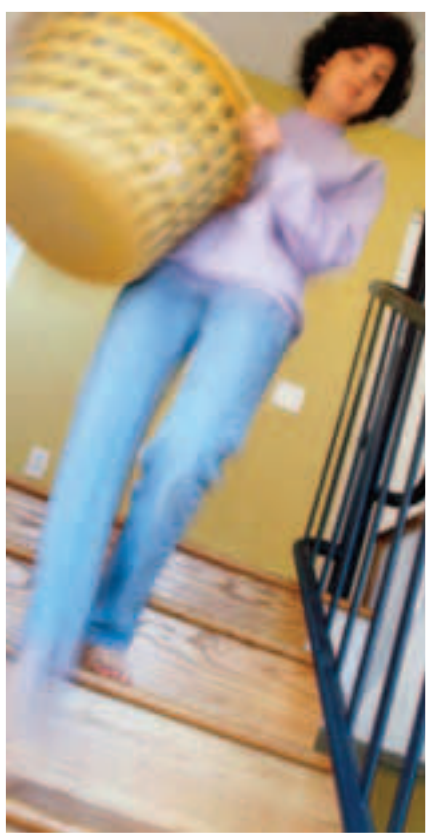
Laundry. It's piling up in importance for homeowners, as the washer and dryer come into their own. According to a recent survey by the National Association of Home Builders, 95 percent of participants said they either desire or must have a separate laundry room in their new home. And it doesn't end with the machines. Homeowners also want an expanded space that can accommodate multi-purpose tasks—such as sewing, ironing and a table for folding clothes.

Location. The laundry room is also moving up in the world in terms of its location within the home. No longer banished to the basement or mud room, "today's laundry room has moved upstairs into the living quarters, and it is spacious, practically rivaling the kitchen in finishes and gadgets," says 2004 Remodelers Council Chairman Douglas L. Sutton Sr. of Sutton Siding and Remodeling, Springfield, Ill. "People want comfortable workspaces no matter what activity they are doing, and they don't want to lug laundry up and down stairs."

Laundry Trends. The newest trend in laundry room remodeling reflects homeowners' demand for convenience while doing this chore. Laundry rooms are moving into spaces adjacent to kitchens, bedrooms or bathrooms, according to Remodelers Council members. And no expense is spared, say these members, reporting that some homeowners are asking for their laundry room to be outfitted with crown moulding and hardwood or tiled floor to match adjacent rooms and the rest of the house.

And, say Remodelers Council members, homeowners' laundry room wish lists are only growing:

- cabinets to store laundry detergent and other products, often in wood finishes normally used in the kitchen;
- bigger, high-end appliances—washers and dryers that can handle growing wash loads and even two dryers to keep up with the washer; and
- built-in cabinets or closets to hide the appliances when not in use, giving the laundry room a more sophisticated look.



Home at **First** Glance

When looking to purchase a home, here's a handy checklist of things to evaluate at first glance. They'll help you understand the scope of work needed and will inform you and your REALTOR® as you evaluate the price you are willing to pay.

- Inspect the conditions of walls, ceilings and floors, including carpeting, doors, windows and other structural units. When inspecting these areas of your prospective new home, check to see if the paint or carpets are in good shape.
- Next, check out whether the plumbing and electricity work effectively in all the rooms, including bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Look at the front yard, back yard and porches to make sure they are in reasonably good shape.
- Finally, check the little things, like faucets and all doors, hinges and doorknobs.
That done, you're ready to evaluate the big picture.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

This newsletter is for informational purposes only and should not be substituted for legal or financial advice. If you are currently working with another real estate agent or broker, it is not a solicitation for business.



The Right Move: Avoiding Scams

More consumers each year are victims of moving scams. Many of the so-called "moving companies" creating these problems obtain consumers' information from various Web sites in which prospective movees provide basic information online in exchange for a competitive quote. Companies then vie for your business, offering low prices and a nice demeanor. But don't be deceived.

Then the movers arrive, dramatically increase the price and tell you to pay the money up front, while simultaneously loading your furniture and other valuables into their truck.

Enter Moving Direct. Two years ago, Jason Rhodes started working as an Internet consultant for a moving company. After a week, Rhodes figured out the company was scamming consumers out of their money.

"They were fraudulently discounting work price and inflating prices after they had the consumer's belongings," says Rhodes, founder and president of Moving Direct.

He left the company and dedicated the next year to researching the moving and storage industry. "I wanted to know why problems occur and how compa-

nies get away with it," he says. After thousands of hours of research, Rhodes created movingdirect.net, the only company that does a background check to find licensed movers.

One major problem, according to Rhodes, is that most of the disreputable companies have posted disclaimers all over their sites saying they are not responsible for problems such as damages or increased prices.

It is important to research thoroughly the moving or storage company you choose. Also, avoid using the Internet to locate companies, and if you do, be skeptical of extremely low prices. If possible, ask friends for suggestions or referrals to find out about the company's previous performance. Finally, make sure to get a signed contract. While it's not 100 percent foolproof, it does serve as a good reference and form of defense.

When Only the Best Will Do: CRS

Are you in the market to buy? To sell? Knowing where to start and who to call is the first daunting step in a highly complex process. Here's one tip: Put experience to work for you by hiring someone in the top 4 percent of the nation's real estate agents. Hire a REALTOR® who's a Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) to help you make the best decisions for the best price in the ever-fluctuating housing market. To become a CRS, an agent must deliver outstanding results, including high-volume sales or a high number of transactions (or both), and undergo advanced training in a variety of subjects, including industry ethics, business planning, real estate investing and technology.

To find a CRS-Designated agent in your market, visit www.crs.com or call 800.462.8841.

