

# Get a Picture-Perfect Home Sale

By [AMY HOAK](#)

## Good pictures are a crucial marketing tool for a home sale.

Just ask Clarissa and Mark Padilla, who were able to get a contract on their Sherman Oaks, Calif., condo unit in less than two weeks—and at the price they wanted.

Ms. Padilla attributes the quick sale to the professional photography used to market the home, which lured about 25 people to an open house the first weekend the house went on sale.

Professional photographs, using the right angles and staging, show off a kitchen's best features



"When we saw the photos, we fell in love with our place all over again," she says. "The colors were so bright, and it made it look fresh and very spacious. It's only 950 square feet. [The pictures] made it look huge."

According to research from the National Association of Realtors, **98% of home buyers who searched for a home online said photos were among the most useful features of real estate websites.**

**"Photography is at the center of all your marketing,"** says Brian Balduf, chairman of VHT, a provider of photography services to agents and brokers in the Chicago area. "It's not just documenting that there is a house for sale. You want people to say, 'What a house,' " and be motivated enough to take action, he says.

Listings of homes with photos taken by professionals have about 61% more views than listings without—and that's across all price tiers, according to research from Redfin, a real estate brokerage firm.

"When people are searching for homes, they search by price range, location [and the numbers of bedrooms and bathrooms]. But then once they have the list, the visual piece becomes a larger and more important part of the decision," says Jani Strand, spokeswoman for Redfin. **"Photos are the first impression, and can generate interest and excitement, which leads to good offers."**

Redfin believes so much in the power of professional photography that it has been paying for clients' professional pictures since 2008, Ms. Strand says. Redfin is in the process of revamping its website, she adds, and larger photos are a predominant new feature.

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Below are some of Mr. Balduf's tips for making sure photos of your property are the best they can be.

**Evaluate the agent:** Look at a real estate agent or broker's current listings and evaluate their property photos. If the pictures are blurry, grainy, crooked or poorly composed, you may be better off choosing another agent.

**Use compelling shots.** Do the photos make you want to visit the home? Do they look like they are pulled from a home and garden magazine? Those are the kind of pictures that will appeal to prospective buyers.

**Pick the right amount.** How many photos does the agent post with each listing? One photo is too few and 30 is too many.

The first several photographs in the listing are the most important, and should feature a front shot, main living area, kitchen, master bedroom and master bathroom, as well as another attractive feature.

**Don't do it yourself.** Don't plan on shooting your own photos, unless you're a professional photographer. This is a service that the agent should offer you, and an important one at that, Mr. Balduf says. Ask the real estate agent for the credentials of the person who would be snapping shots of your home.

**Pick the best views.** Before the photographer does the shoot, present a list of various shots that might be helpful. Perhaps there is a view you love from your patio. That's helpful information for the photographer to know, before he or she gets on site.

**Give final approval.** Ask to see the photos before they are posted online, and compare them to homes that are similar to yours. If they didn't turn out well, ask for a reshoot with another photographer.

Ms. Padilla, the home seller, says that a condo unit in the same building, and comparable to hers, sat on the market for five or six months before her home was listed. But the photos of the other unit weren't taken by a professional.

Meanwhile, some of the prospective buyers who walked through the Padillas's house thought it was a staged model home. The Padillas had multiple offers right away.

"We were so proud of the photos we showed our parents, we showed everybody," Ms. Padilla says.