

5 Dos and Don'ts on Property Tours

Property tours are fun! You get to imagine yourself living in new spaces and, perhaps, learn something new about your priorities and preferences.

It's also relatively easy to make mistakes while touring properties—mistakes that could anger the seller, hurt your negotiating position, or worse. For the best results, follow these tips:

✗ 1. Don't bring an entourage.

Relatives and friends may enjoy tagging along or providing personal advice, but they're also a distraction, shifting the focus away from YOUR interests and concerns. Plus, the things they say and do could hurt your negotiating position.

If it's essential to include other decision-makers, discuss this in advance with your buyer's rep.

✓ 2. Do assume the owner is watching and listening.

Surveillance cameras are increasingly common and used to monitor buyers' behavior and comments on property tours. It's an easy and effective way for owners to safeguard their property and gauge a buyer's interest, for negotiating purposes.

Comments and movements outside the home, in the driveway or the yard, may also be scrutinized, with or without cameras. Owners have been known to watch from neighbors' windows or recruit neighbors to spy on their behalf.

✗ 3. Don't take photos or video (or use live-streaming services).

In today's world, people take photos wherever they go. When touring homes, however, remember that you're on someone else's property. Unless the owner has granted permission, you may be violating state laws.

Even if you're allowed to take pictures, don't share them on social media sites. It's another way to hurt your negotiating position and invade the owner's privacy. Wait until it's YOUR house.

✓ 4. Do use your imagination.

Every homeowner has different tastes. If a house doesn't reflect your style, what easy and potentially inexpensive changes can you make, including fixtures, window treatments, and paint?

Several paint companies offer augmented reality (AR) apps to view walls in different colors, via your phone. Similarly, some retailers provide AR apps for viewing virtual furniture in a room. Use these tools to help envision your own style in a home.

✗ 5. Don't help yourself to the bathroom.

Yes, it's fine to flush the toilets and test the water faucets. It's also okay to open cabinets, drawers, and closet doors. But check with your buyer's rep before "using" a toilet. The owner may have preferences regarding this. Better yet, schedule a pit stop before starting the tour.