

# YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

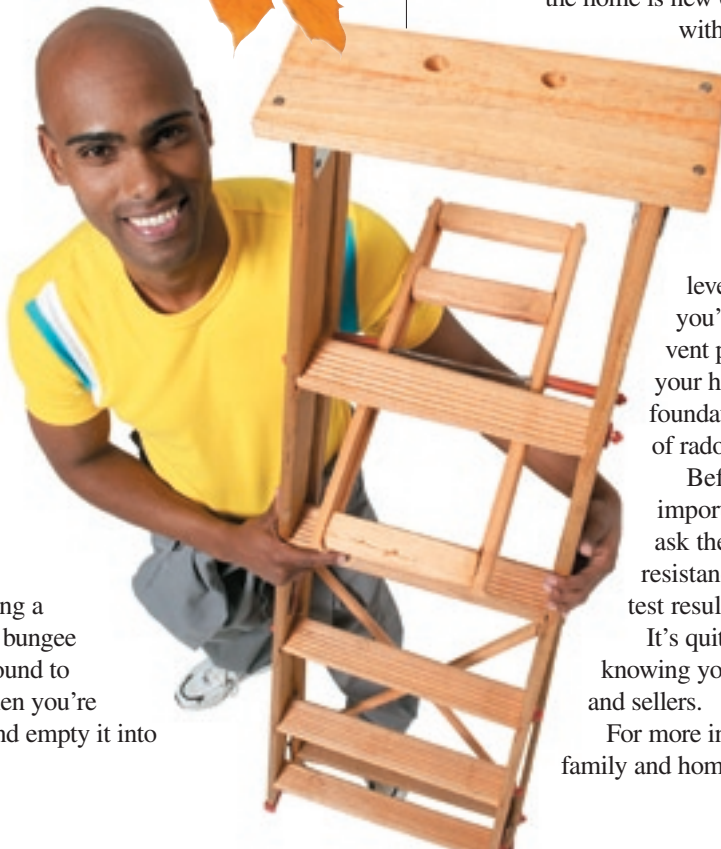
## Gut(ter) Check

For most homeowners, cleaning the gutters is near the bottom of the proverbial to-do list. But keeping your gutters clean can really save you a lot of headaches; overflowing gutters can damage roofs and wreak havoc on your foundation.

Keeping the water flowing properly isn't as big a deal as you might think. And if you clean your gutters every six months, you'll save yourself time and money.

According to [www.hgtv.com](http://www.hgtv.com), you can tell if a gutter needs cleaning by looking up at the gutter's top, outside rim. If it is discolored, there's a buildup and water is not flowing as it should.

- To clean the gutters, use a ladder. Make sure to be safe and cautious around power lines. If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, hire a professional.
- There are several ways to clean gutters. One is to simply put on a pair of gloves and dig the debris out by hand and rinse it with your hose. Or you can use barbecue tongs or make a scoop by cutting a plastic, two-liter soda bottle.
- To dispose of the debris, hang a bucket on the ladder with a bungee cord or lay a tarp on the ground to catch the falling debris. When you're done, just roll up the tarp and empty it into the trash.



## A Hidden Danger

You've checked everything in plain view — kitchen appliances, floors and windows. Now you're ready to sign a contract, right? Not yet. One of the most important things that should *never* go unchecked is actually invisible.

Radon is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas, but it may be a problem in your home. This radioactive gas comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. Radon leaks into the house through cracks or holes in the foundation and can cause lung cancer when you breathe it. Any home can have radon, whether the home is new or old, well-sealed or drafty — with or without a basement.

If you think your home may have radon, a radon test can provide you with answers. Radon test kits are available through the mail, but hiring a qualified radon tester will give you the most accurate results.

If your home tests positive (a radon level of four picocuries per liter or higher), you'll want to hire a professional to install a vent pipe and fan to filter the gas away from your home. Sealing or caulking openings in the foundation and walls also can reduce the amount of radon entering through the soil.

Before buying or selling your home, it's important to test your house for radon. If buying, ask the seller for information on any radon-resistance systems in the house and their radon test results.

It's quite easy to test your home for radon, and knowing your radon level is worth it — for both buyers and sellers.

For more information on how you can protect your family and home from radon, visit [www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon).



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## A Bright Idea

Are you ready to take the plunge and remodel your bathroom? Keep lighting in mind when making plans. Recessed lighting fixtures may be a popular recent home trend, but they can often leave you in a “shadow trap” when illuminating your new room. Focused lighting such as halogen or floodlights creates unwanted shadows in your new bathroom design, making it look spooky rather than inviting.

To avoid this lighting pitfall, use a soft-focused or diffused light fixture and mount it at eye level or just above. Positioning light this way will cause it to shine at your face, not down from above. Other types of light, such as decorative or recessed lamps also can combat shadows.

If you do choose recessed lighting, place the lights close to the mirror and center them above the faucet. A dimmer switch at the vanity area helps control the lighting, allowing you to adjust for day and nighttime levels. Follow these steps and you’ll be brilliantly pleased with your new bathroom.

## Say Yes to

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## \* DID YOU KNOW?

Real estate appraisers say that landscape design is a top reason that homes sell.



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

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