



VOLUME IX

## First Impressions: Realtor Etiquette to Reach Final Sales

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Twenty-seven seconds. That's how long it takes for someone to form a first impression. And for Realtors who are looking to impress prospective tenants and landlords, the results from a **OnePoll/ Dollar Shave Club** of 2,000 Americans is particularly relevant. Before a Realtor speaks, clients may be sizing up their facial expressions (smiles and eye contact), mannerisms, **wardrobe**, and even smell.

And as soon as Realtors start talking, whether it's behind a computer screen or in person, clients will be paying attention to whether they're good listeners and can hold a conversation well.

Did the Realtor understand what kind of home the tenant is interested in? Will the Realtor make sure the options are in the tenant's price range? Will the rental showings be in the **specified neighborhood**? Does this rental have specific amenities? Realtors should be able to request and reiterate all of these tenants' needs.

After that happens and assuming the prospective tenant has a good credit history, then comes the most important part: showing the rentals.

Here are six Realtor etiquette tasks for showing a rental home that should seal the leasing deal.

### Arrive to the Location Before the Tenant

The tenant is responsible for the security deposit, **applicable pet deposits/fees**, rent, the application fee and the **Realtor's commission** (usually the first month's rent). However, the tenants are not responsible for showing themselves around. So if the Realtor is late, that leaves the prospective client standing around and aimlessly waiting.

Life happens, and people are busy with family, other clients and even traffic. However, if Realtors think they're cutting it too close to arrive at the rental property at a specific time, pick a safer meeting window of time. Or, make sure to get the prospective tenant's cell phone number and email address to text, call and/or email long before the Realtor can be more than five minutes late.

### Know How to Access the Unit

While the Code of Ethics for the National Association of REALTORS specifies that two Realtors should not be competing to show the same property, access to the unit can still be problematic even without multiple people. Sometimes landlords may need to enter the location. Other times a tenant who hasn't moved out yet may move the key. The combination numbers may even be changed.

Make sure that access is available for all who need it. Whether it's a key under the door, a

secure lockbox, a combination lockbox for keys or a Wi-Fi smart lock, the Realtor should be able to access the rental at all times until a lease is signed.

If the rental showing is in an occupied residence, follow the leasing agreements regarding the maximum number of hours before arrival. For empty units, there are other ways to keep a home secure, including a fingerprint smart lock or facial recognition software. If the property owner wants that level of high security, then the Realtor will need to be included—or the property owner will have to tag along.

However, a property owner requesting to be at each walk-through further complicates scheduling. Avoid making walk-throughs a trio visit each time, if at all possible. By arriving early and opening the unit before the tenant arrives, this saves time for everyone.



#### Get Familiar With the Best Times to Park

There are few things more distracting during a walk-through visit than both the Realtor and the prospective tenant constantly checking their watches to make sure they don't overstay their visit. If there are times where parking is not permitted for street cleaning or paid parking, try to avoid visiting during those times.

For single-family homes, this may not be as much of an issue. For example, **in Dallas**, property owners are responsible for cleaning the street curb in front of their property. **In Houston**, street sweepers arrive at varying times during the morning and early afternoon. Regardless of the neighborhood and city rules, the Realtor should check city schedules (or neighborhood signs) ahead of time for any parking issues. Neither the Realtor nor tenant want to end any visit with a parking ticket.

#### Dress for the Job

While the tenants can wear whatever they want, they're also not at the location to impress the Realtor. On the other hand, the Realtor wants to make the best first impression and remember that they are "at work" as long as they're with a client.

"Something about getting in a nice car and thinking about having to pay for it got me in gear," said Joseph "Joe" Diosana during a recent episode of Go4Rent's **"Conversation In Real Estate."**

"Then wearing nice things got me in gear," he continued. "Now that I'm in gear, I'd like to stay here. If I'm going to [visit] my doctor, that guy or girl better be wearing scrubs and a stethoscope. [Professionals] better look the part."

While the fanciest car and suit jacket won't guarantee a signed rental agreement or lease approval, it does show the client that the Realtors care about the appearance of the property as well as themselves.

#### Remember, Then Reiterate the Amenity Favorites

Prospective tenants are aware that they're not the Realtor's only client. However, while with that client, it adds a notable level of personalization if the Realtor remembers the amenities that the client wants. Instead of assuming the clients know that these perks are here, guide them through the home and point them out during the walk-through.

Whether it's closet shelves, kitchen cabinet space, stairwell storage or a wall-mounted bidet, the client will be that much more impressed by Realtors who knew they wanted these

specific things. Sometimes Realtors will get wrapped up in what they think are perks as opposed to the client. The goal of a walk-through is to narrow down what makes a tenant feel at home though.

If the location is still occupied, going on a walk-through when the current tenants aren't inside will help a new tenant see themselves. (Arriving early also ensures that the current tenants did a fair amount of cleaning up beforehand.)

Make the best of rental cons, too. For example, a low-hanging chandelier may be concerning for a taller client. Suggest workarounds like putting a table or chair in that spot in the dining room or living room to avoid bumping into it. A **windowless bathroom** may bring about **concerns of mildew and mold**. But the client with a green thumb will light up at the opportunity to know of houseplants that grow well in low light and help to keep the air clean.

The more the Realtor knows about the client, the better job that representative will do at finding a happy medium. Before the client arrives, look around for as many potential complaints as property perks.



#### Finding the Perfect Rental Home

Even in a home that a Realtor thinks is perfect, there will be that client that wants something else. It may check off all the amenity boxes, everything from nearby schools to public transportation access, and the tenant is still hesitant. Patience is key. A seasoned Realtor knows that the home that wants the tenant may not be the same as the tenant that wants the home.

Realtors have to be honest with their prospective renters though. If the open rental options are the only ones that fit the renter's financial background and rental history, then the tenant is going to have to ease off some of the "wants" and look for the "needs." Or, the tenant may have to be more flexible on the financial end, possibly paying an extra month's rent or a security deposit to explore more high-end places or a different neighborhood.

#### With Acceptance Comes Rejection

Realtors who have been in the industry long enough are prepared for a "no" as quickly as they are a "yes"—although "yes" is clearly the more ideal answer. By being professional (dressing the part, arriving early, accessing the unit, not interrupting another tenant) and understanding a tenant's wants and needs, these are all ways to show proper Realtor etiquette.

If that location doesn't work out, at least the tenants know they can count on this Realtor for another property. And if everything goes well, that tenant will tell a friend who'll tell another friend, and that top-notch etiquette could lead to a steady rotation of business.