

A guide to selling in winter

EXPERT
ADVICE
INSIDE



Come Live By The Sea

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Hello,

My name is Damien Cooke, and I'm the Managing Director at Cooke and Co.

We've helped the people of Thanet sell their homes since 1992 and decided to use our many years of experience to create this helpful guide for people thinking of selling this winter.

While the thought of selling a home when the skies are grey and the temperatures are dropping may seem daunting, it actually presents some significant advantages.

First things first: why is selling your home in winter different?

Well, you'll be dealing with variables that don't typically affect summer sales – from shorter days and unpredictable weather to prospective buyers being more focused on Christmas pudding than property viewings. But that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Less competition and a more serious pool of buyers can lead to quicker and smoother transactions. And let's not forget a roaring fire or well-insulated living room can make your home look even more appealing.

In this guide, we'll delve into the nitty-gritty details that make winter home sales unique. We'll discuss how to add that wow factor to your home viewings and look at the importance of kerb appeal.

We'll give you expert tips on seasonal staging, setting the right price and even the legal considerations that come into play during winter.

So, grab a cuppa, find a comfy chair and let's get started.

Thanks for reading.



Damien Cooke MNAEA MARLA
Founder and Managing Director
Cooke & Co Estate and Letting Agents



*Disclaimer: The information in this guide does not constitute legal or financial advice.

The pros and cons of selling in winter

So, you're contemplating moving this winter.

For the serious seller, it can be a fantastic time to sell, but it has pros and cons like most things in life. Let's have a look at them.



The bright side

Less competition:

With fewer homes on the market, yours will naturally get more attention. It's like being the only snowman in the garden.

Serious buyers:

People house-hunting in winter aren't just window shoppers. They're more like the determined shopper braving the Boxing Day sales – they know what they want and are keen to get it.

Seasonal charm:

There's nothing like the cosy ambience of a warm home with inviting lighting to make potential buyers feel right at home.



The not-so-bright side

Shorter days:

With daylight scarcer than a turkey dinner in January, you've got fewer hours to show off your home in natural light.

Weather woes:

A dusting of snow might look pretty, but icy roads, rain showers and gloomy skies can put a dampener on viewings.

Holiday distractions:

Whether it's Christmas or New Year, festivities can slow the selling process as buyers and sellers get wrapped up in holiday plans (see what we did there?).

In a nutshell, selling your home in winter is like a Christmas cracker – pull it apart, and you may find a delightful surprise or a not-so-useful paperclip.

The choice is yours, but understanding these pros and cons will help you make an informed decision.

We're always on hand to give you open and honest advice to see if selling now is your best move.

Preparing your home for viewings

If you've decided that your home is going on the market this winter, it's worth noting these points below.

They'll help you show your home in its best possible light to potential buyers (even if it's gloomy outside).

Heating and insulation

First off, let's talk warmth. A chilly home is as inviting as a snowball to the face. Before you even consider showing your home, ensure your heating is up to scratch. Good insulation is a must. Potential buyers shouldn't just see your home; they should feel its warmth and comfort from the moment they step inside.



Show off those interior features

Winter is a great time to focus on your home's interior strengths. Have a fireplace? Light it up. Have you got underfloor heating in the bathroom? Make sure it's on. Any feature that warmly whispers 'cosiness' should be front and centre.



Make it inviting

The days may be shorter and darker, but your home doesn't have to reflect that. Strategic lighting can create a cosy ambience – maybe a warm lamp in the corner or fairy lights. Soft furnishings like throws and cushions add to the warm vibe.

Quick tips



- Welcome mat: Literally lay out the welcome mat. It's good for wiping shoes (obviously) but also symbolises an inviting home (subtly).
- First impressions: Clear coats and shoes from the entrance area – no one wants to clamber over your wellies when looking for their dream home.

Remember, winter has a unique charm that can be used to your advantage.

The role of kerb appeal

In winter, first impressions still matter, perhaps even more so.

Most people looking at your home for the first time will do it online through photos and videos.

Here's how you can ensure they'll like what they see and consider an in-person viewing.

Winter garden maintenance

Trim back any overgrown bushes, remove dead leaves and consider adding some winter plants for a pop of colour. Pansies and evergreens love the cold and can brighten up any garden.



Outdoor lighting

In winter, good lighting is essential. Path lights or even some tasteful fairy lights can guide visitors to your front door and add a touch of magic to your property.

Door appeal

A fresh coat of paint on the front door can add instant appeal. But at the very minimum, remember to clean your door before viewings.



Quick tips



- Windows: Clean windows make a world of difference. They not only look good but also allow more natural light into the home.
- Bins: If your rubbish bins are visible from the road, consider moving them to a less conspicuous location for viewings.
- Phone a friend: A great way to get an honest opinion on the first impression your home gives is to ask a trusted friend for their opinion. You could also ask an experienced estate agent for their view.

We're always on hand to share our expertise and experience to make staging your home successful.

Seasonal staging tips

Right then, you've got the basics sorted, from your garden to your gleaming front door.

Now, let's start thinking of setting the stage.

Seasonal décor

We're talking tasteful, not tacky. A little winter décor can go a long way in creating an inviting atmosphere. A wreath on the door, a vase of winter flowers like amaryllis, or a bowl of pine cones can all add seasonal charm without overwhelming the space. Remember, less is often more.



Creating a warm atmosphere

Let's focus on the senses. Soft, cosy blankets draped over the sofa, cushions piled high and candles flickering (safely!) can all give a snug, homely feel.

Focus on natural light

Daylight might be in short supply, but you can still make the most of what you've got. Open all curtains and blinds to let in as much natural light as possible, and place mirrors strategically to bounce light around the room. This will not only brighten the space but also make it feel larger.



Quick tips



- Personal touch: Consider adding small, personal details like a stack of good books or a board game ready to play. These conjure images of happy winter evenings spent indoors.
- Music: Soft background music can complement the atmosphere. Opt for something neutral and calming.
- Follow the nose: Smell is a powerful sense. Freshly baked biscuits sound (and smell) tremendous, but let's face it, who has time to do that for every viewing? A more straightforward idea is to use strategically placed scented candles.

The dos and don'ts of winter viewings

Winter brings its own set of challenges when it comes to property viewings.

But don't worry – a little preparation and foresight can ensure the process is as smooth as possible.

Check out these dos and don'ts.



Do schedule viewings during optimal light

Aim to schedule viewings during the day, specifically late mornings to early afternoons. This is when natural light best showcases your home, making it easier for potential buyers to appreciate its features.



Do be prepared for last-minute viewings

Winter weather can be unpredictable, as can buyers' schedules. Keep a 'quick clean' kit handy with essential cleaning supplies to spruce up your home at short notice.



Do think about safety considerations

Ensure pathways and steps leading to your home are safe. A scattering of grit or salt can prevent icy patches, reducing the risk of slips or falls.



Don't be inflexible

Be open to rearranging your schedule for viewings, especially if a sunny day is forecast, as this could make your property look even more appealing.



Don't neglect aroma and atmosphere

While your home may look the part, an unpleasant aroma or a cold, unwelcoming atmosphere could turn buyers away. Make sure your home smells fresh and feels warm during viewings.



Don't ignore small details

Little things can make a big difference. Fix any visible wear and tear, replace broken lightbulbs and ensure the doorbell works. First impressions count.

Legal and seasonal considerations

Selling your home in winter isn't just about making it look appealing – it's also about understanding the season's unique timing constraints.

Legal processes and the Christmas break can all impact your timeline, so it's important to ensure your sale doesn't get snowed under.

Speeding up the sale process to avoid long winter waits

Winter can sometimes lead to slower response times, whether it's solicitors who are snowed under with work or local authorities taking their time with searches.

To speed up the sale process, ensure all legal documents are in order and easy to access. Have your estate agent or solicitor set expectations with buyers about realistic timelines, and be proactive in nudging things along when needed.

Allow for holiday periods

Winter comes packed with Christmas and bank holidays. These can slow down the selling process, with key people going on leave and offices closing. Plan for these breaks by getting your ducks in a row well ahead of time. If a deadline is approaching, be upfront about it and try to negotiate timeframes in advance to avoid last-minute stress.

Quick tips



- Be proactive: Keep a checklist of legal tasks that need completing, and chase them up actively. The early bird catches the worm, even when it's frosty outside.
- Keep everyone in the loop: Regular communication with your estate agent, solicitor and potential buyers can go a long way in preventing delays.
- Be transparent: Honesty is the best policy. Keep all parties informed of any potential slowdowns and work collaboratively to find solutions.

Understanding the seasonal and legal landscapes allows you to navigate the winter sale process like a pro.



Setting the right price: The agent's role

Selling a home during the winter sometimes requires more effort and know-how.

This is where an expert estate agent becomes your best friend.

Here's why...

The expert's toolkit

An experienced estate agent will delve into comparable property sales, seasonal trends and local market dynamics to craft a price that's not just a shot in the dark. They offer a valuation rooted in real-world evidence, not wishful thinking.



Why trust an expert?

An expert estate agent will steer you away from the common pitfall of overpricing, which could leave your home gathering metaphorical (or real) cobwebs. Likewise, they prevent you from undervaluing and missing out on maximising your investment. It's their job to get you the best possible price within the realms of reality.

Realistic and optimised pricing

An expertly set price tag doesn't just make you happy; it also entices buyers. A competitive, evidence-based price gives potential buyers the confidence that they're making a smart move, not taking a gamble.



Quick tips

- Consult early: The sooner you bring in an expert estate agent, the more informed your pricing strategy will be.
- Trust but verify: It's good to trust your estate agent, but do your research, too. The best decisions come from collaborative efforts.
- Evidence speaks loudest: Buyers tend to trust a price backed by solid, expertly gathered evidence based on comparable properties.

Choosing the right estate agent: Five must-ask questions

When selling your home, your choice of estate agent can be the most significant determining factor to pave the way to a smooth and successful sale.

Here are five questions to ask before you make your pick:

1. What's your experience in my area?

Understanding the local market is crucial for accurate valuation and effective marketing. Choose an estate agent who has experience selling properties in your area.

2. How do you determine property valuations?

Dig deep into their process. Are they merely guessing, or do they use an intelligent approach supported by evidence?

3. What's your marketing strategy?

An estate agent should have a well-thought-out marketing plan to give your home maximum exposure. Ask them how they will make sure your home is marketed so that it achieves its best possible selling price.

4. What are your fees?

No one likes nasty financial surprises. Make sure you understand all possible charges, when they'll be due and the length of any contracts involved.

5. Can you provide references?

A reliable estate agent will have no issues sharing testimonials, reviews or references from previous clients. This can offer valuable insights into their professionalism and effectiveness.

Quick tips

- Ask for three valuations: Call in three agents for a more rounded understanding of your property's worth and to gauge different approaches.
- Trust your gut: Your estate agent should not only be competent but also someone you're comfortable working with.
- Read the fine print: Ensure you understand all terms and conditions before signing any contract. If in doubt, seek legal advice.

By asking these questions, you'll be in a stronger position to choose an estate agent who's the perfect fit for working with you and selling your home.

A quick checklist for selling your home this winter

	Yes	No
Have you considered why selling your home in winter might differ from other times of year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you aware of the pros and cons of selling your home during winter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you considered preparing your home for viewings, focusing on heating, insulation and interior features?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considering aspects like garden maintenance and outdoor lighting, is your property's kerb appeal up to the mark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you spoken with an expert estate agent for an evidence-based property valuation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a plan for preparing for last-minute viewings and simple safety measures in place for slippery pathways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you accounted for delays in the legal process due to holiday periods and bank holidays?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you aware of the current market trends and how they might affect your property's sale price?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you made a list of questions to ask potential estate agents to ensure you pick the right one for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ready to sell your home this winter?
Contact us, your local property experts,
for personalised support and guidance
every step of the way.

