

PROPERTY NEWS

FEB 2024



ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

FIND THE BEST FIT FOR A GETAWAY WITH LOVED ONES

FEBRUARY GARDENING
HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR
GARDEN THIS FEBRUARY

OSCARS AWARDS
TAKE A LOOK INTO THE
96TH ACADEMY AWARDS

FITNESS IN SPORT
HEALTH AND FITNESS
REWARDS TO PLAYING RUGBY

VALENTINE'S DINING
THE PERFECT RECIPE FOR A
ROMANTIC VALENTINES

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Find the best fit romantic getaway with loved ones

PROPERTY

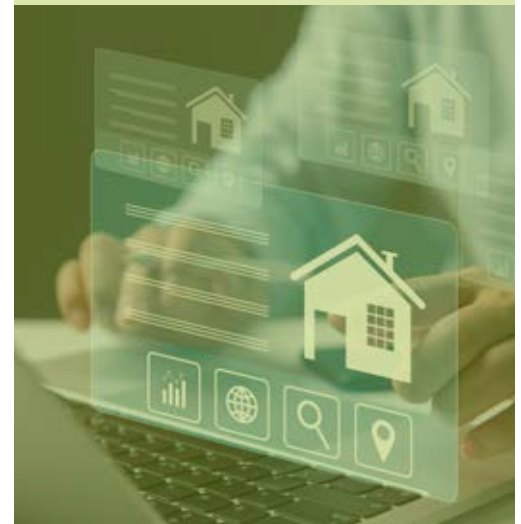
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YN PROPERTY AWARDS 2024

The young professionals property networking event of the year is back, as the YN Property Awards takes place on Monday 5th February in Central London.

Celebrating the industry's achievements across a selection of categories, including 'Financier of the Year' and 'Real Estate Law Firm of the Year', the YN Property Awards dinner will offer good food and invaluable networking opportunities for everyone involved.

Moreover, the funds raised by the YN Property Awards is vital, as they will help Norwood, the oldest Jewish charity in the UK, provide an important lifeline to children and families in crisis, as well as lifelong support to people and their families with learning disabilities and autism.

But these aren't the only benefits to be gleaned from the YN Property Awards. For estate agencies in particular, there are a host of ways estate agencies can gain an industry advantage by attending such prestigious awards shows as this.

If you are an industry professional and want to get involved in the YN Property Awards next year, contact Norwood: Taking on Life Together. You will need to register first, and then be reviewed for attendance.

WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION!

Having successfully passed the month usually considered hard work to conquer, the plateau of February is here, the month of romance and the spring of new life to come.

This month, for those looking to move, we look at the best ways to prepare for both selling and buying. It's also the month of love with Valentines Day on the 14th, so on pages 4&5 we look at romantic getaways both in the UK and abroad, while on pages 14&15 we look at how to treat that special someone without leaving the house.

It's also time to start thinking about preparing your garden for the spring, in-depth tips of which you can find on pages 6&7.

With the hype of the awards season approaching us, we look

at all the Oscars buzz on page 9, complimented by great up-and-coming TV on page 8.

January isn't the only month for fitness, and hopefully you're keeping up with your new year's resolutions... so on pages 10&11 we look at how rugby can prove to be an inspiration for exercise as well as social skills.

Speaking of which, on pages 12&13, we preview this year's Rugby Six Nations, as well as the return of the European football.

So, grab a drink, enjoy watching the stunning sunsets at this time of year, and settle down with this month's magazine.

Daniel Evans
Editor

LAST MONTH SEES HIGHEST RISE IN HOUSE PRICES IN FOUR YEARS



Biggest January house price rise since 2020 feeds yet more optimism into the property industry

Following the fact we have already started seeing what is officially the busiest ever January for mortgage searches, house prices have shot up to rise more in January 2024 than since the beginning of 2020. As a result of the amalgamation of these statistics, more new homes are being listed for sale than there were during the first week of January of the previous year. Ultimately, this means the level of demand from those looking to buy a home is up compared to last year, which is, of course, fantastic news for the industry. Demand from buyers is, in fact, up 14% compared to early 2023, whilst agreed sales are up 16%.

Ultimately, this means the level of demand from those looking to buy a home is up compared to last year, which is, of course, fantastic news for the industry.

TOP THREE POINTS OF POSITIVITY FOR 2024 BUYERS

Average asking prices are expected to decline somewhat by the end of the year

By year's end, experts project that nationwide average new seller asking prices will drop by 1%. It is, however, improbable that prices will decline more sharply throughout the year given the general level of strong demand from purchasers at the appropriate price.

More recently-listed properties than at this time last year

Due in part to a record number of sellers launching on Rightmove on Boxing Day, there are 15% more properties coming up for sale than there were at the beginning of the previous year.

Mortgage rates have been gradually declining

The overall environment surrounding the mortgage market is more stable than it was this time last year. Lenders are competing fiercely to capitalise on the January demand spike that is often observed.

TOP THREE POINTS OF POSITIVITY FOR 2024 SELLERS

The number of agreed sales are increasing

The fact that there are 20% more sales agreed upon than there were at the beginning of the previous year is the most encouraging early indication for 2024. This demonstrates that numerous vendors are offering prices that are enticing enough to draw in customers.

Since last year, buyer demand has increased.

In the first week of 2024, there were 5% more prospective buyers contacting estate agents about properties for sale than there were at the same time previous year, with the North East and London seeing the largest increases in activity.

Finding a buyer this year will depend on offering competitive pricing.

Even with this renewed buyer activity, it is critical for those who are eager to sell to price their properties competitively because the number of properties coming up for sale is exceeding the increase in the number of buyers making inquiries.

ENCHANTING ROMANTIC GETAWAYS FOR 2024



As the calendar turns to 2024, the desire for intimate and memorable experiences with your loved one grows stronger.



If you're searching for the perfect romantic getaway to reignite the spark or celebrate a special occasion, consider these enchanting destinations. From secluded beach resorts to charming European cities, these romantic escapes promise to create lasting memories for you and your partner.

SANTORINI, GREECE

Known for its breathtaking sunsets and whitewashed buildings, Santorini remains an iconic destination for couples seeking a romantic retreat. Enjoy leisurely strolls through narrow cobblestone streets, savor delicious Mediterranean cuisine, and relax in a luxurious cave hotel with stunning views of the Aegean Sea. Santorini's unique charm and vibrant atmosphere make it a timeless choice for lovers.

KYOTO, JAPAN

For a romantic escape infused with cultural richness, Kyoto offers an enchanting blend of ancient traditions and modern luxury. Explore historic temples, stroll through serene bamboo forests, and partake in a traditional tea ceremony. Stay in a ryokan, a traditional Japanese inn, where you can experience unparalleled hospitality and indulge in the beauty of cherry blossoms or colorful fall foliage, depending on the season.

Romantic getaways promise to create cherished moments for couples seeking to reconnect and celebrate their love



BORA BORA, FRENCH POLYNESIA

Escape to the tropical paradise of Bora Bora for an overwater bungalow experience like no other. The crystal-clear turquoise waters, vibrant coral reefs, and lush green landscapes create a romantic backdrop for a private retreat. Snorkel with tropical fish, unwind in a spa overlooking the lagoon, and savor gourmet meals as you bask in the seclusion and luxury of this South Pacific gem.

VENICE, ITALY

Venice, often referred to as the "City of Love," is a timeless destination for couples seeking a romantic escape. Navigate the charming canals in a gondola, wander through historic piazzas, and enjoy delectable Italian cuisine at intimate trattorias. Stay in a historic hotel overlooking the Grand Canal and immerse yourselves in the rich cultural heritage of this captivating city.

MALDIVES

For an idyllic island retreat, the Maldives is a top choice for couples seeking privacy and tranquility. Stay in a secluded overwater villa, surrounded by pristine turquoise waters and coral reefs. Indulge in spa treatments, embark on a private sunset cruise, and savor candlelit dinners on the beach. The Maldives offers the perfect blend of luxury and natural beauty for a truly romantic escape.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, USA

For a romantic getaway closer to home, Charleston exudes Southern charm and hospitality. Stroll through historic streets lined with antebellum architecture, take a carriage ride through the cobblestone streets, and indulge in Lowcountry cuisine at award-

winning restaurants. Stay in a charming bed and breakfast or a luxury hotel, and immerse yourselves in the romance of this picturesque Southern city.

QUEENSTOWN, NEW ZEALAND

For couples seeking adventure amidst stunning landscapes, Queenstown in New Zealand is the ideal destination. Surrounded by mountains and nestled on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown offers a range of outdoor activities, from hiking and skiing to bungee jumping. After a day of exploration, relax in a lakeside resort and enjoy the breathtaking scenery that makes Queenstown a unique and romantic destination.

THE LAKE DISTRICT

Located in northwest England, the Lake District is a timeless romantic destination known for its stunning landscapes, serene lakes, and charming villages. Couples can embark on romantic boat rides on Lake Windermere, explore quaint market towns like Ambleside, and indulge in cozy evenings by the fireplace in a traditional cottage.

CORNWALL

For a coastal romantic retreat, Cornwall in southwest England is an ideal choice. The rugged cliffs, sandy beaches, and charming fishing villages create a dreamy atmosphere. Couples can stroll hand in hand along the scenic coastal paths, visit the iconic St. Michael's Mount, and savor fresh seafood in a seaside bistro.

EDINBURGH

The capital of Scotland offers a perfect blend of history and romance. The city's medieval architecture, including the iconic Edinburgh Castle, sets a romantic backdrop. Couples can wander through the charming cobbled streets of the Royal Mile, enjoy a romantic hike up Arthur's Seat for panoramic views, and cozy up in a historic Scottish pub.

THE COTSWOLDS

Often referred to as the heart of England, the Cotswolds is renowned for its idyllic villages and rolling hills. Couples can explore the charming market towns of Stow-on-the-Wold and Bourton-on-the-Water, take a romantic hot air balloon ride over the picturesque landscapes, and unwind in a luxurious countryside retreat.

NORTHERN IRELAND

This country's Causeway Coastal Route provides a romantic journey along the stunning coastline. Couples can marvel at the natural wonder of the Giant's Causeway, explore medieval castles like Dunluce Castle, and enjoy the breathtaking views along the Antrim Coast.

As 2024 unfolds, these romantic getaways promise to create cherished moments for couples seeking to reconnect and celebrate their love. Whether you prefer the historic charm of European cities, the tropical allure of exotic islands, the cultural richness of Asia, or even the cozy familiarity of your home country, these destinations offer a perfect blend of romance, luxury, and unforgettable experiences. Choose the destination that resonates with your shared interests, and embark on a journey that will leave you with lasting memories of your romantic escapade.

EMBRACING THE PROMISE OF SPRING

GARDENING TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

As February unfolds, gardeners around the world eagerly anticipate the arrival of spring. Despite the lingering winter chill, this month marks a crucial transitional period for gardeners to prepare their landscapes for the bountiful season ahead. February serves as a prelude to the awakening of nature, a time when dormant plants begin to stir, and the promise of new growth becomes palpable. In this article, we will explore various gardening activities that can be undertaken in February to set the stage for a flourishing garden come spring.

PLANNING AND DREAMING

February is the perfect time to channel your inner visionary and plan the garden of your dreams. Begin by reviewing your garden layout, considering what worked well in the previous year and identifying areas for improvement. Take this opportunity to sketch new ideas, explore different plant combinations, and envision the overall aesthetic you want to achieve. Research and make a list of plants that thrive in your climate zone, ensuring a well-informed selection for the upcoming growing season.

PRUNING AND SHAPING

With the last frost still lingering in many regions, February provides an ideal window for pruning and shaping deciduous trees and shrubs. Remove dead or damaged branches to encourage healthy growth and improve the overall appearance of your plants. Take note of any overgrown or unruly branches that could impede sunlight and air circulation, addressing these issues before the growing season kicks into high gear.

SOIL PREPARATION

Good soil is the foundation of a successful garden. Use

February to assess and improve the quality of your soil. Conduct a soil test to determine its pH level and nutrient content, and amend accordingly. Incorporate well-rotted compost or organic matter to enhance soil structure and fertility. As the days lengthen and temperatures rise, your soil will be primed and ready to support the vigorous growth of spring plantings.

STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

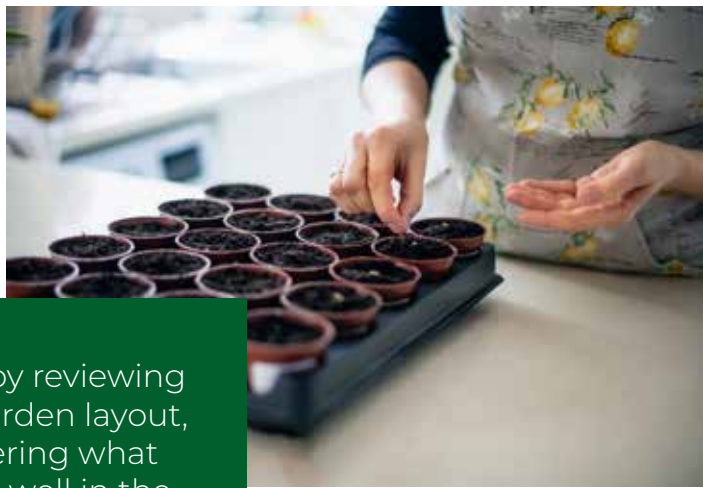
For gardeners eager to get a head start on the growing season, February is the ideal time to start seeds indoors. Begin with vegetables and annual flowers that require a longer growing period before transplanting, such as tomatoes, peppers, and petunias. Provide the seeds with a warm, well-lit environment, using grow lights if necessary. This early start indoors will give your seedlings a robust beginning, ensuring they are ready for the outdoor garden when the threat of frost has passed.

COLD-WEATHER CROPS AND COVER CROPS

While some plants slumber through the winter, others thrive in the cooler temperatures of February. Cold-weather crops like kale, spinach, and lettuce can be sown directly into the garden soil. These hardy vegetables will appreciate the cool conditions and provide an early harvest. Additionally, consider planting cover crops such as clover or winter rye to protect and enrich the soil during the remaining winter weeks.

MULCHING FOR PROTECTION

As winter wanes, it's crucial to protect your garden from late-season frost and temperature fluctuations. Apply a layer of mulch around the base of perennials, shrubs, and trees to insulate the soil and safeguard emerging plants from unpredictable weather. Mulching also helps retain



Begin by reviewing your garden layout, considering what worked well in the previous year and identifying areas for improvement



moisture, suppress weeds, and maintain a more stable soil temperature, creating an optimal environment for plant growth.

TOOL MAINTENANCE

Before the hustle and bustle of spring gardening fully takes hold, take the time to inspect and maintain your gardening tools. Clean, sharpen, and oil your pruners, shears, and hoes to ensure they are in prime condition for the tasks that lie ahead. A little preventative maintenance now will save you time and frustration when the gardening season is in full swing.



ATTRACTING POLLINATORS

February is not just about preparing for the future; it's also an opportunity to appreciate the present. Consider adding early-blooming flowers like crocuses, snowdrops, or winter heath to your garden. These early bloomers not only provide a splash of color but also serve as a vital food source for emerging pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. By fostering a pollinator-friendly environment, you contribute to the health and diversity of your garden ecosystem.

CONTAINER GARDENING

For those with limited space or looking to add a touch of greenery to patios and balconies, February is an excellent time to plan and start container gardens. Select containers of various sizes and shapes, and fill them with a well-balanced potting mix. Choose plants that suit the container size and your local climate, providing both visual appeal and functionality. Container gardening allows for flexibility and creativity, turning even the smallest outdoor spaces into vibrant garden sanctuaries.

WINTER CLEANUP AND ORGANIZATION

Last but not least, use February as an opportunity for a winter garden cleanup. Remove any debris, fallen leaves, and weeds that may have accumulated during the winter months. Organize your gardening supplies, discard expired or damaged items, and take inventory of essential materials you may need for the upcoming season. A tidy and well-organized garden space sets the stage for a smooth transition into the busier months of spring and summer.

As February unfolds, gardeners have the unique opportunity to bridge the gap between winter dormancy and the vibrant resurgence of spring. By engaging in thoughtful planning, tending to soil health, and embracing early planting opportunities, you pave the way for a garden that will flourish in the coming months. With each carefully considered action, you contribute to the anticipation and excitement that accompanies the promise of a new growing season. So, grab your gardening gloves and get ready to sow the seeds of a bountiful and beautiful garden in the months to come.

SPY A REVIVAL

Mr and Mrs Smith reboot is a TV treat this month

That miserable cocktail of dank, dreary, cold weather is only good news for the TV execs aiming for bumper viewing figures. To that end, this month they seem to be pinning their hopes on small-screen adaptations of big-screen exercises that didn't really hit the mark.

Take **Mr and Mrs Smith**, for example. Twenty years ago, it was an espionage caper starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie as a married couple who are surprised to learn they are assassins working for rival agencies with similar targets. Prime Video feel there is much mileage in the story, although there have been a few hiccups along the way.

Originally, Phoebe Waller-Bridge was scheduled to appear alongside Donald Glover, but she left, Maya Erskine took over and the release date was shunted back two years to 2024. Now it makes its debut in early February.

Similarly, **One Day** - which premieres on Netflix on February 8th - was an Anne Hathaway movie 13 years ago which didn't really make the most of David Nicholls' best-selling novel. Now it gets the treatment it probably deserves with Leo Woodall as the vulnerable posh boy Dexter and Ambika Mod as his girlfriend Emma, who inevitably go their separate ways.

There are lots of laughs and a superb soundtrack as we watch the couple's lives unfold via a snapshot of one day every year.

Avatar: The Last Airbender registered a measly 5% with Rotten Tomatoes despite having M. Night Shyamalan in the driving seat, but it didn't stop Netflix commissioning a live action remake of the animated series. Once again, it hasn't been plain sailing with original creators Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko

turning their backs on the project in 2020, with DiMartino later insisting: "Whatever version ends up on screen, it will not be what Bryan and I had envisioned or intended to make." You can make up your own mind when it airs on February 22nd.

Much less troubled - and probably all the better for it - is **The New Look**, a drama about how Christian Dior and Coco Chanel created modern fashion amid the turmoil of the Second World War.

Starring Ben Mendelsohn as Dior and Juliette Binoche as Chanel, **The New Look** is much more than "man and woman make posh dresses" as it introduces a grittier element with Maisie Williams playing Dior's sister Catherine, a fighter in the French Resistance. And as it's on Apple TV+ (February 14th) the mini-series should look spectacularly elegant.

Also look out for the 12th and final season of **Curb Your Enthusiasm** on HBO, while a small-screen version of **TED** - a prequel with the bear living at home with his best friend John - is pencilled in for "an early 2024 release" on Sky Max.



AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...

Who will take the starring role at this year's Academy Awards?

The entries have been submitted, and votes have been cast to whittle the nominations shortlist down to the official nominees. But the perennial question remains: Will fluff and box-office numbers trump the cerebral and worthy contenders at the 96th Academy Awards ceremony on March 10th? Or in short, just how many Oscars can Barbie cram into her little pink car?

In many ways, this year's competition is wide open with quite a few in the frame to pick up multiple honours. Yet it seems inconceivable that Oppenheimer will have to play the supporting role as it did in the summer.

BEST PICTURE

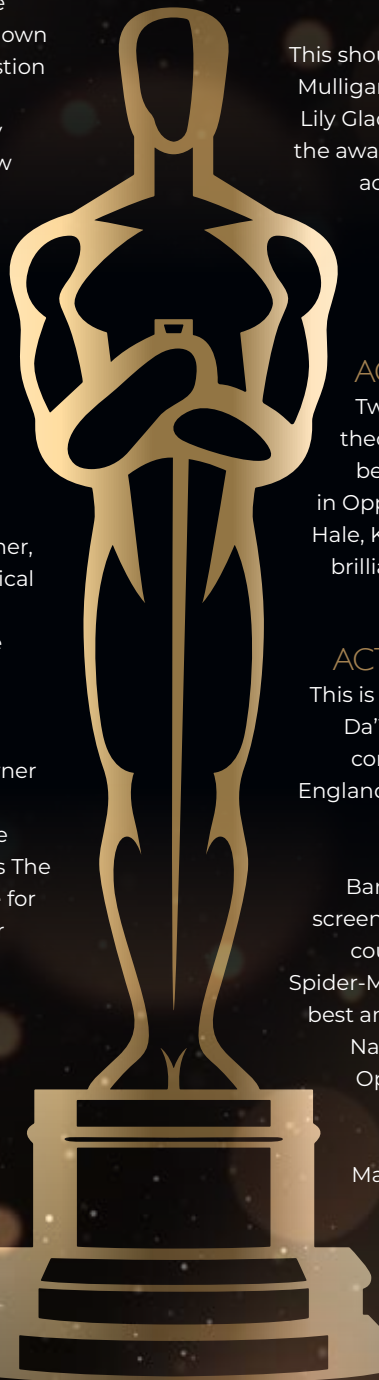
The big one. The one that should add a few zeroes to the already mind-blowing numbers taken at the box office. The wise money says this will go to Oppenheimer, the epic biopic of J Robert Oppenheimer, the theoretical physicist credited with being the father of the atomic bomb. And while Barbie should go close, Killers of the Flower Moon and Maestro will divide the votes.

DIRECTOR

This will be a clash of the heavyweights. In the red corner Christopher Nolan, the visionary genius behind Oppenheimer; in the blue corner, Martin Scorsese, the cinematic god responsible for such sprawling epics as The Departed and The Irishman, and this year responsible for Killers of the Flower Moon. It's tight but it could fall for Nolan.

ACTOR IN A LEADING ROLE

Another tough one to call. Cillian Murphy's performance in the titular role in Oppenheimer screamed award winner... until Bradley Cooper entered the fray with Maestro, another biographical drama exploring the relationship between the great composer Leonard Bernstein and his wife Felicia Montealegre. Cooper, who also directed and joint-wrote the screenplay, could shade it.



ACTRESS IN A LEADING ROLE

This should be a three-way scrap between Carey Mulligan (Maestro), Margot Robbie (Barbie) and Lily Gladstone (Killers of the Flower Moon), with the award going to ... Gladstone, the Indigenous actress who shook last year's Cannes Film Festival with her breakout role as Mollie Burkhart in the crime drama revolving around a string of murders when oil is discovered under Osage Nation land.

ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

Two heavyweights versus a lightweight. In theory, it should be a straight head-to-head between Robert Downey Jr (Lewis Strauss in Oppenheimer) and Robert de Niro (William Hale, Killers of the Flower Moon). However, the brilliant Ryan Gosling got all the best lines in Barbie and might spring a surprise.

ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

This is quite open, with most onlookers feeling Da'Vine Joy Randolph's performance in the comedy-drama The Holdover, set in a New England boarding school, is worthy of an Oscar.

SUPPORTING CAST

Barbie should be a shoo-in for best original screenplay, while Poor Things or Oppenheimer could battle for best adapted screenplay; if Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse doesn't win best animated film there should be an inquiry; Napoleon should claim production design, Oppenheimer can add to its haul with the awards for cinematography, sound and editing, while Billie Eilish's What Was I Made For? ought to win best original song for Barbie.

THE FITNESS AND HEALTH BENEFITS OF PLAYING RUGBY

Experience in playing the game of rugby isn't necessary in order to excel at it, as your local club will give you advice on how to get stuck in and release your inner warrior

Ahead of the Rugby Six Nations 2024, now might be a good time to discuss cardiovascular exercise, coordination, and discipline, since rugby players demonstrate all of these attributes, and more, better than most other athletes do. So, since most of you will still be in New Year resolution fitness mode, why not consider taking up rugby?

Rugby is a physically demanding and exhilarating sport, offering a myriad of health and fitness benefits to its participants. Beyond being a game of strategy and teamwork, it's renowned for its ability to improve cardiovascular health, enhance muscular strength, and foster mental resilience. Rugby players undergo comprehensive training programs that encompass various aspects of physical fitness, skills development, and tactical understanding of the game, all aspects of which you can freely practice in your spare time if you decide to take up the sport.

The very idea of taking up rugby in itself may prove to be inspirational to you. The continuous nature of rugby demands exceptional endurance and stamina from its players, though, so it's not just the inspiration that's needed, it's the preparation and willingness to put these requirements into practice that matters equally as much, if not more so.

Rugby is also a great sport to get children playing, since any child who plays rugby will grow rapidly in confidence and develop skills that they can take into their other sports and even everyday life, as many of the skills learned in rugby are transferable to other disciplines.

CARDIOVASCULAR ENDURANCE

One of the key components of rugby is its emphasis on cardiovascular fitness. The game involves continuous running, sprinting, and changes in direction, which elevate heart rates and improve overall cardiovascular endurance. The combination of short bursts of intense effort followed by brief periods of rest mimics interval training, promoting a healthy heart and efficient circulation. This cardiovascular conditioning not only enhances on-field performance but also contributes to better overall cardiovascular health.

MUSCULAR STRENGTH AND POWER

Rugby demands a high level of physicality, requiring players to engage in tackles, scrums, and rucks. These activities engage various muscle groups, promoting the development of muscular strength and power. Players need robust leg muscles for running, explosive power for tackling, and upper body strength for scrums and lineouts. The dynamic and diverse nature of rugby ensures a well-rounded development of muscular strength throughout the body.

ENDURANCE AND STAMINA

The game's stop-and-start nature, combined with its prolonged duration, challenges players' endurance and stamina. Rugby matches consist of two halves, each lasting 40 minutes (or more in some variations). Players need to sustain their energy levels throughout the game, requiring a combination of aerobic and anaerobic endurance. This endurance training has a positive impact on overall stamina and contributes to increased fitness levels.





The camaraderie and social aspects of rugby make it a holistic experience, promoting not only physical well-being but also mental and emotional health.

FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY

Rugby involves a wide range of movements, including running, sidestepping, and sudden changes in direction. These actions enhance players' flexibility and agility. Regular participation in rugby helps improve joint flexibility, reducing the risk of injuries and promoting overall mobility. The need for quick reflexes and agility on the field also translates to improved coordination and balance off the field.

TEAMWORK AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

Beyond the physical aspects, rugby fosters a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. Success in rugby relies heavily on effective communication, coordination, and trust among team members. The social aspect of the sport promotes mental well-being, as players develop strong bonds with teammates and experience the support of a close-knit community.

MENTAL RESILIENCE

Rugby is not just a physically demanding sport; it also challenges players mentally. The fast-paced nature of the game, coupled with the need for split-second decision-making, cultivates mental resilience. Players learn to adapt to unforeseen circumstances, overcome challenges, and stay focused under pressure. These mental skills developed on the rugby field can positively impact various aspects of life outside of the sport.

In conclusion, the fitness and health benefits of playing rugby are multifaceted, encompassing cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, agility, teamwork, and mental resilience. The dynamic nature of the sport ensures a comprehensive workout that contributes to overall physical fitness. Moreover, the camaraderie and social aspects of rugby make it a holistic experience, promoting not only physical well-being but also mental and emotional health. Whether you're a seasoned player or a newcomer to the sport, the benefits of rugby extend far beyond the boundaries of the playing field, enriching lives and promoting a healthy, active lifestyle.



SIX APPEAL

The Guinness Six Nations Championship returns this month with most of the sides having something to prove.

The home nations will be looking to make amends for what was, by and large, a frustrating Rugby World Cup in France when the Guinness Six Nations Championship resumes this month.

England were, on paper, the best that the Northern Hemisphere could offer, winning the bronze medal play-off after losing by a single point in a nerve-racking 16-15 semi-final defeat by eventual champions South Africa.

But the bitter repercussions of a ponderous, stuttering campaign have had a significant knock-on, with skipper Owen Farrell announcing late last year he would miss the Six Nations "to prioritise his and his family's well-being".

Given the torrent of abuse he endured in France, it is hardly a surprise, and although it gives coach Steve Borthwick an unwanted hole to fill, Farrell's absence represents a massive opportunity to stake a claim for a starting berth for the Six Nations starter in Italy.

It is probably the ideal pipe-opener for England, coming against the championship's perennial whipping boys and prepares them for some pretty stiff tests before the season finale against France in the Stade de France.

The French have the toughest start to their shot at redemption after a heartbreaking home World Cup in which they were expected to go closer than the quarter-finals. They face a similarly chastened Ireland, the former world No1s whose ambitions were also probably grander than the last eight but who return to France for what is expected to be the pivotal game in this season's Six Nations. They did, after all, win the Grand Slam last year.

Wales and Scotland have much to prove. Although Wales also reached the RWC quarter-finals, defeat to an albeit impressive Argentina was not in their script, while it was perhaps a big ask for the Scots to qualify from a group including the Irish and South Africa.

However, the Scots have been on an upward trajectory in recent seasons, and were certainly one of the most pleasing sides to watch in the Six Nations last year. The Welsh, in contrast, only won once last time and will probably be the only side not relishing their tie against Italy, who earned a shock win in Cardiff two years ago to register only their 12th victory in the 23 years in Europe's premier rugby championship.

It is probably the ideal pipe-opener for England, coming against the championship's perennial whipping boys and prepares them for some pretty stiff tests before the season finale against France in the Stade de France

FIXTURES

GROUP 1

 **FRA V IRE** 
Feb 2nd | 8pm

 **ITA V ENG** 
Feb 3rd | 2:15pm

 **WAL V SCO** 
Feb 3rd | 4:45pm

GROUP 2

 **SCO V FRA** 
Feb 10th | 2:15pm

 **ENG V WAL** 
Feb 10th | 4:45pm

 **IRE V ITA** 
Feb 11th | 3pm

GROUP 3

 **IRE V WAL** 
Feb 24th | 2:15pm

 **SCO V ENG** 
Feb 24th | 4:45pm

 **FRA V ITA** 
Feb 25th | 3pm

GROUP 4

 **ITA V SCO** 
March 9th | 2:15pm

 **ENG V IRE** 
March 9th | 4:45pm

 **WAL V FRA** 
March 10th | 3pm

GROUP 5

 **WAL V ITA** 
March 16th | 2:15pm

 **IRE V SCO** 
March 16th | 4:45pm

 **FRA V ENG** 
March 16th | 8pm

RETURN OF THE EUROS

British teams in pursuit of European glory

The race for European football's major honours resumes this month with the threat of a revamped rival three-tier Super League casting a cloud over UEFA's three showpiece events. Ultimately it will be a case of financial incentives v prestige to determine who plays where and in what as football's authorities bicker over the game's soul in an avoidable melodrama which will inevitably split the sport. In the meantime, we get to see Europe's elite scrapping for their place in the sun at the end of the season.

CHAMPIONS' LEAGUE

And then there were two. Five British teams qualified for the group stages but only the holders, Manchester City, and Arsenal progressed into the last 16 after Manchester United, Newcastle, and Celtic suffered ignominious exits.

Having completed their treble-winning year with the World Club Championship before Christmas, City were drawn against FC Copenhagen in the last 16. On paper, it looks comfortable – the Danes are the lowest-ranked team in the competition so it will be a major upset if City do not reach the last eight. However, Copenhagen kept Bayern Munich honest and finished above United and Galatasaray in their group so aren't to be taken lightly.

Arsenal also have a winnable tie against Porto, by no means the force of old thanks to serious Financial Fair Play issues. However, only goal difference put them behind Barcelona in Group H, so while they may prove awkward, the Gunners shouldn't lose any sleep.

The eight matches at this stage have been split with four games on February 13th and 14th with the returns on the 20th/21st. The other four are on March 5th/6th and 12th/13th.

EUROPA LEAGUE

Britain has a strong hand going into the last 16 of the unnecessarily-convoluted minor competitions as Liverpool, West Ham, Brighton and Rangers topped their Europa League groups.

Had any one of them finished second, they would have faced a play-off against the sides who finished third in their Champions' League pools. Those games will be played on February 15th and 22nd with the last 16 draw taking place on the 23rd.

However, it would be a major surprise if this trophy does not wind up in the hands of a British club come May.

EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

It's a similar waiting game for Aston Villa, who will also not know their round of 16 opponents until February 23rd after qualifying as group winners. Again, they linger in the wings for the winners of the play-offs between the Europa League drop-outs and ECL group runners-up, and although there are some big names dropping into the competition – Ajax and Frankfurt for example – a repeat of Villa's pre-Christmas form should take them deep into the competition.



ROMANCE

ON A PLATE

Here's an easy-to-prepare menu for that special dinner on Valentine's Day

BOOZY CHOCOLATE FONDUE

Prep: 5mins. Cook 10mins

INGREDIENTS

75ml chocolate sauce

40ml salted caramel

Splash of brandy, Tia Maria or Bailey's

1 cinnamon stick

Plus strawberries, marshmallows, or shortbread fingers for dipping.

METHOD

1: Light a tealight under a chocolate fondue pot to warm it for a few minutes. When the pot is warm, pour in the chocolate sauce and the salted caramel. Add a splash of brandy (or Tia Maria, or Bailey's).

2: Stir with the cinnamon stick until warm, then use skewers or fondue forks to dip in your choice of strawberries, or marshmallows, or go straight in with the shortbread fingers.



STEAK WITH GOULASH SAUCE AND SWEET POTATO FRIES

Prep: 10mins. Cook: 25mins

INGREDIENTS

3 tsp rapeseed oil, plus extra for the steaks

250g sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into narrow chips

1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves

2 small onions, halved and diced (190g)

1 green pepper, deseeded and diced

2 garlic cloves, sliced

1 tbsp tomato puree

85g cherry tomatoes, halved

1 tsp vegetable bouillon powder

2x125g fillet steak, rubbed with a little rapeseed oil

200g bag baby spinach, wilted in a pan or microwave

METHOD

1: Heat oven to 240C/220C fan/gas 7 and put a wire rack on top of a baking tray. Toss the sweet potatoes and thyme with 2 tsp oil in a bowl, then scatter them over the rack and set aside until ready to cook.

2: Heat 1 tsp oil in a non-stick pan, add the onions, cover the pan and leave to cook for 5 mins. Take off the lid and stir – they should be a little charred now. Stir in the green pepper and garlic, cover the pan and cook for 5 mins more. Put the potatoes in the oven and bake for 15 mins.

3: While the potatoes are cooking, stir the paprika into the onions and peppers, pour in 150ml water and stir in the cherry tomatoes, tomato purée and bouillon. Cover and simmer for 10 mins.

4: Pan-fry the steak in a hot, non-stick pan for 2-3 mins each side depending on their thickness. Rest for 5 mins. Spoon the goulash sauce onto plates and top with the beef. Serve the chips and spinach alongside.

VEGAN BEETROOT & RED ONION TARTE TATIN

Prep: 10min Cook: 1hr 20min

INGREDIENTS

400g beetroot, cut into wedges
1 red onion, cut into wedges
3 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
2 tbsp soft brown sugar
2 star anise
Flour for rolling
500g block puff pastry (vegan Jus-Rol)
1 orange, zested
Peppery green salad to serve

METHOD

1: Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. In a bowl, toss the beetroot and onion in 2 tbsp of the oil, the vinegar and sugar. Add the star anise and season well. Heat the rest of the oil in a large, ovenproof non-stick frying pan, then nestle in the veg so that they cover the surface of the pan. Cover with foil and cook in the oven for 45 mins.

2: On a well-floured surface, roll the pastry to a thickness of 0.5cm and cut out a circle the same size as your frying pan. Carefully take the pan out of the oven, remove the foil and wiggle the beets and onion around in the pan to make a compact layer. Put the pastry on top, tucking it in all around the edges, then return the pan to the oven and bake for 35 mins or until the pastry has puffed up and is a deep golden brown.

3: Slide a palate knife around the edge of the tart, then put a plate on top of the pastry, serving side down. Flip the pan over to turn the tart out onto the plate. Top with the orange zest and a sprinkle of sea salt, then serve with a peppery salad on the side.

MAKE IT GLUTEN-FREE BY USING GF FLOUR AND PASTRY.



VALENTINE'S DAY COCKTAIL

Prep: 5mins

INGREDIENTS

150ml cranberry juice
1tsp grenadine
50ml vodka
Handful of ice
1 lime wedge
4 raspberries
Chilled prosecco or sparkling wine to top up

1: Mix the cranberry juice, grenadine and vodka together in a jug with a handful of ice. Or, do this in a cocktail shaker. Squeeze over the lime wedge and stir with a mixing spoon, or shake briefly if using a cocktail shaker.

2: Strain the cocktail into two champagne glasses. Drop two raspberries into each glass, then top up with prosecco or sparkling wine to serve.



Carmelite House, Swaffham

OIRO £450,000



A rare opportunity to acquire a well presented two/three bedroom detached period property conveniently situated right in the heart of Swaffham. Oozing character throughout with some original features, the property boasts, gas central heating and absolutely delightful gardens. A MUST SEE!

SWAFFHAM - 01760 721389 - info@longsons.co.uk

Swaffham - 01760 721389

Watton - 01953 883474

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE NO OBLIGATION VALUATION

Forest Grove, Swaffham

£210,000



A modern well presented two bedroom end terrace house situated on a popular development in Swaffham. The property boasts three parking spaces, three WCs, en-suite shower room, gardens, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.

SWAFFHAM - 01760 721389 - info@longsons.co.uk

Langridge Circle, Watlington

Offers Over £280,000



Very well presented, modern four bedroom, three storey, mid terrace townhouse situated in the popular well serviced village of Watlington. The property boasts a kitchen/dining room, en suite shower room, garage, garden, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing throughout.

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St Andrews Lane, Necton

Guide Price £240,000 - £250,000



Spacious three bedroom semi detached house situated with open farmland views to the rear in the popular well serviced village of Necton. The property offers; 2 reception rooms, kitchen/breakfast room, gardens, ample parking gas central heating and UPVC double glazing.

SWAFFHAM - 01760 721389 - info@longsons.co.uk

Jays Cottage, Little Dunham

Guide Price £375,000- £400,000



Very well presented, detached four bedroom house situated in a semi rural location in the popular village of Little Dunham. This fantastic property offers flexible accommodation with a downstairs bedroom and en suite and three further bedrooms upstairs, log burning stove, garage, parking and gardens.

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Oak Meadow, Shipdham

OIEO £300,000



Superb, modern, extremely well presented detached three bedroom house situated in the well serviced popular village of Shipdham. This fantastic property was built by Abel Homes and amongst many things offers en-suite shower room, two reception rooms, triple glazing, PV panels, garage and parking.

WATTON - 01953 883474 - watton@longsons.co.uk

Dye Road, Watton

£365,000



Extremely well presented spacious, detached, four bedroom house situated on a popular development in Watton. The property boasts; a spacious kitchen/dining room, ground floor cloakroom, en-suite, garage, parking, gardens, gas central heating UPVC double glazing, and two years NHBC warranty remaining.

WATTON - 01953 883474 - watton@longsons.co.uk

Eastern Road, Watton

OIEO £345,000



This very well presented four bedroom home is located with the popular town of Watton. Featuring a modern fitted kitchen/dining room, utility room, ground floor cloakroom, en-suite to bedroom one, UPVC doubled glazing, gas central heating, off-road parking, garden and garage!

WATTON - 01953 883474 - watton@longsons.co.uk

Harvey Street, Watton

Guide price £350,000 - £375,000



Very well presented spacious, detached four bedroom house with double garage situated in a popular area of the market town of Watton. This superb property offers a fitted kitchen, utility, cloakroom, dining room, lounge, conservatory, en suite shower room, well presented gardens and double garage.

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Swaffham - 01760 721389

Watton - 01953 883474

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE NO OBLIGATION VALUATION

The Stables, Swaffham Road, Watton

£600,000



Very well presented, detached three bedroom house with separate two bedroom chalet situated in the market town of Watton. The property benefits from a conservatory, ground floor cloakroom, utility, generous plot (approx 1.75 acres) with ample off-road parking with a separate two bedroom chalet in the grounds.

WATTON - 01953 883474 - watton@longsons.co.uk

Swaffham | Watton

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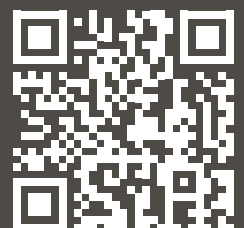
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HOW MUCH
IS MY
PROPERTY
WORTH?



Present your house for sale by de-cluttering...

Maximise your home's potential and create spacious rooms enticing potential buyers – simply by de-cluttering!

“ De-cluttering allows you to... maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important ”

If you are looking to sell your house, or have had your home on the market for a while now, then you probably want to get the maximum sale price in the quickest time. There are a few things you can't control – but the one thing that is in your control, is the look and feel of the interior and exterior.

While it's worth spending time fixing and cleaning your house before potential buyers come and view, it's also important to de-clutter. This creates spacious rooms and also allows you to decrease and organise your personal items before you move yourself. Of course it's understandable that you don't to want spend money, time and energy on a home you are about to leave, however, a lot of people are looking for a house in which they can move straight into. Maintaining your

property might even save you thousands of pounds; it could even reduce added expenses of living in your home whilst waiting for a sale. And it might even help avoid possible reductions in the asking price.

The main reason in which people move house tends to be because they lack space in their current home. They want a home that is spacious and in which they can grow into. If a potential viewer comes to your home and sees that there is lack of space, then this will turn them away.

De-cluttering allows you to remove any unnecessary items in an untidy or overcrowded place. It will help maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important.



So where should you start?

You need to create a great first impression and focus on the rooms themselves. You will notice that the first things you see in each room are personal items. Where possible you want to create the look of a

them into things you want to keep and things you want to get rid of. You may even find that you have collected a cupboard full of paper work. Get yourself organised! Don't just throw it all away, but file it and go through it thoroughly. This will also make it easier when you move.

De-personalising can also be a great way to de-clutter. Too many personal effects can be distracting to buyers. They want to see a house in which they can make their own memories rather than seeing yours. Again, personal items can be stored away. Remember

“ Where possible you want to create the look of a lifestyle that the potential buyer want. This usually has a ‘show home’ feel, rather than a ‘lived in’ feel. Minimising your things is the quickest way to do this: you want to ensure that potential buyers can do simple things, like, open any doors easily, ensuring that there are no obstacles.

lifestyle that the potential buyer want. This usually has a ‘show home’ feel, rather than a ‘lived in’ feel. Minimising your things is the quickest way to do this: you want to ensure that potential buyers can do simple things, like, open any doors easily, ensuring that there are no obstacles.

So, what do we mean by clutter? There are two types: genuine clutter, and items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property.

Genuine Clutter: You need to go through the space and sort out each item, categorising

You also want to focus on little things like DVDs, books and trinkets. These items may have some small value so sell them or donate them to charity. Get rid of any old shoes and coats that are lying about in your porch or hallway. You might want to hide away the coats and shoes you do currently wear. Store them in your wardrobe, while you have viewings.

Items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property: You may want to consider putting some items in storage while you sell your home. Sometimes items are too large or even too small for some spaces and can make the room look odd. If you want to keep these particular items, then store them until you move into your new home.

that this is only a temporary way of living and hopefully it won't be for long! If you find you are keeping more things than you are throwing out, then think about whether or not it's in the right room or do you even need it now?

As previously mentioned, you can attempt to sell some of the things you have acquired over the years. Use sites like eBay, Gumtree and social networking sites to try and sell items. You may want to even hold a house sale for the remaining items that you can't sell. Failing that, why not donate to charity.

The end goal is still the same and it's important to help potential buyers envision your house as theirs. So remember, de-cluttering will make your home more spacious and entice potential buyers!

Top Tips!

.....

If you are throwing away paperwork, shred anything that is confidential

.....

.....

De-clutter before agents come and take photos of your property. This will help attract more potential viewers online and get that first good impression

.....

.....

Don't spend too long on certain items and don't get distracted. Keep yourself motivated and race against the clock!

.....

.....

Make it fun! Play some music or watch TV while you de-clutter

.....





Your step-by-step guide to the conveyancing process

Once a sale has been agreed and is in the hands of your solicitor, it will go through the following stages. Sometimes additional work will be needed – for example, if the property is leasehold or is yet to be registered with the Land Registry. It is also important for buyers to discuss the availability of their deposit with their solicitor early in the transaction, and we strongly recommend that you contact your solicitor regularly so that they can keep you fully up-to-date with the progress and the latest timescales.

Seller's solicitor's steps

- Obtain a copy of the Title Deeds (or office copies if the title is registered)
- Obtain a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) (if applicable)
- The seller(s) will return a completed Property Information Form and a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form to the solicitors
- Copies of the above documents, plus a draft contract – this is known as an 'Information Pack' – will be sent to the buyer's solicitor
- Answer the buyer's solicitor's additional enquiries (for example, specific questions about fixtures and fittings) and obtain copies of any planning consent documents
- Agree the contract and arrange for the sellers to sign it in readiness of the exchange (below)
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

Between exchange and completion

- Obtain redemption figures from the mortgage lender and reply to requisitions on title
- Approve the transfer and arrange for the seller(s) and buyer(s) to sign
- Receive the agent's fee account and seek the seller's consent to settle this out of completion funds

Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

Upon completion

- Receive completion funds and (only when this has been completed) instruct your estate agent to release the keys to buyers. Redeem mortgage and forward the financial statement. Forward any surplus funds (unless these are being used to fund an onward purchase). Ensure all outstanding bills are paid
- Forward transfer documents and deeds to the buyer's solicitors
- Forward evidence of 'discharge of mortgage' to the buyer's solicitors

Buyer's solicitor's steps

- Obtain the Information Pack, including a copy of the EPC (if applicable) from the sellers' solicitor and raise any additional queries
- Initiate any specialist searches (for example: a coal search). Submit local, environmental and water searches and a chancel check. This takes about 10 working days in total, and enquiries are then usually raised from the results
- Approve the contract when all enquiries are satisfactory and complete. (At this stage, a mortgage transfer deed will need to be signed and witnessed)
- Receive a mortgage offer and instructions from the lender and deal with any conditions set out by them. Make sure that life cover and buildings insurance is being arranged
- Request the deposit, report back to the buyer, and arrange for the contract to be signed. Place buildings insurance and life cover in force
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

Between exchange and completion

- Raise 'requisitions on title' and prepare the draft transfer deed
- Report on title to mortgage lender and obtain funds for completion, including Stamp Duty (if appropriate)
- Prepare accounts, obtain signature to mortgage deed and undertake final Land Registry and Land Charges searches

Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

Upon Completion

- Forward to the seller's solicitors the balance of funds - it is only then that they can authorise the release of the keys. Receive from the seller's solicitors, the transfer document deeds
- Stamp the Transfer Deed, register the buyer's ownership with the Land Registry and forward the deeds to the lender or client (where appropriate)

Contract - The agreement that sets out the main terms that have been agreed - for example: price, address, names, etc. Two copies are drawn up, and each party signs one in readiness for the exchange of contracts.

Deposit - The part of the purchase price (usually 10%) which the buyer pays on exchange of contracts.

Exchange of contracts - The swapping of signed contracts by the solicitors (together with the buyer's deposit). After this, the contract is binding.

Energy Performance Certificate - This contains information on energy use, energy performance, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel bills.

Land Registry - The Government department that records who owns what land, and under what conditions.

Local Authority Search - A list of questions that are specific to the property and intended, for example, to discover if there have been any planning applications on the property, if the road to the house is maintained by the council, etc.

Mortgage Redemption Figure - The amount required to repay the outstanding capital/ interest of a mortgage.

Property information form/fixtures, fittings and contents form - Standard forms about the property that the seller answers for their solicitor (for example: what will be left behind, details of guarantees, etc.)

Title Deeds - Legal documents that prove ownership of land/buildings, and the terms on which they are owned.

Transfer of Title - The document that passes the ownership from the seller to the buyer.

Stamp Duty for buy to let investors and second home owners - An additional tax, paid by the buyer purchasing an additional property that is not their main residence. It includes buy to let landlords and those buying second homes and holiday homes. The higher rates will be 3 percentage points above the current rates of duty shown below.

Requisition on title - An enquiry relating to the completion arrangements.

Seller's Pack - This comprises a Property Information Form, a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form, a copy of the title deeds and the draft contract.

Stamp Duty - Currently, the Stamp Duty threshold for residential properties is £250,000. For first-time buyers you can claim a discount and won't pay Stamp Duty up to £425,000 on the purchase price and after that you will pay only 5% between £425,001 to £625,000.

However, how much you pay is also dependent on whether you already own another property or if you're a non-UK resident.



Moving house?

From meter readings to removal companies, there's so much to remember when moving house. Here's our checklist of what to do and when

First of all, congratulations on your new home! The excitement has probably now kicked in but moving home can also be one of the most stressful and emotionally draining things you can do. However, careful organisation and planning can help decrease the stress and anxiety of moving. This comprehensive and essential checklist will help you do just that.

Eight weeks - Research

Ideally, you want to start packing away any non-essential items as early as possible. This includes any items stored away in the loft, garage and shed. If you are not using it, pack it. Looking into your new area is also important, try to do this around eight weeks before you move. You might need to think about transferring your children to different schools and ordering new uniforms too. At this point, ensure you are also documenting all your important information away: that includes contact details, dates, contracts and information regarding your solicitor.

Six weeks - Removal companies or do it yourself?

Now would be the perfect time to decide on a local removal company. Or if you don't have too much to move, you may want to do it yourself. You could even look into different van hire companies. At this point you've probably started packing away some bits, but if there is anything you decide not to take, then look into selling these items or donating them to charity. This will also give you an idea on the volume of items you have to move.

Four weeks - Notify utility companies

This would be a good time for you to notify utility companies and inform them about your move to switch over. This includes gas and electricity, council tax, internet, phone rental and TV. You should also consider changing any car insurance, tax, memberships, phone contracts and inform your bank about the move. Now's the time to also arrange a date to have your new house cleaned before you move



“ It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! ”

in, and start ordering any new furnishings for your new property. Start packing away more items, that being, out of season clothes, books, dvd's and even bulky items, like TV's that aren't used often.

Two weeks - Confirm all details

Confirm your move with your removal company or van hire, estate agents and schools. If possible, try to organise someone to look after your pets and children for the day of your move, as this can also be a stressful time for them too. If your removal company doesn't disassemble any furniture or sort out the un-plumbing for the washing machine, then now would be the ideal time to organise these. Remember to also cancel any local services you receive: this could be window cleaners, gardeners and newspaper deliveries. You should now also think about re-registering to vote and getting your post re-directed after your moving date. Continue packing away more furnishings, kitchen appliances and crockery that you won't be using for the next couple of weeks.

24 hours - Final check and walk round

You now have only 24 hours before you move, so double check that everything is packed away and ready for transit. It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! You may want to create an inventory of your boxes and

furniture to help you keep track of what you have and to help you ensure it doesn't go missing.

Moving day

Today is the day! You need to be ready for when your removal company comes. Ensure that you let them know if there are any fragile boxes that need extra care when handling. If you're moving yourself, then pack up your car or van and work out how many trips it may take. Before you leave, also take note of your final meter readings and send these off to your provider. Don't forget to leave your keys for the new owners!

You have arrived at your new home!

Give your removal company instructions of which boxes go in which rooms and make sure you are happy with everything that has arrived. Ensure you check for any damage before the movers leave. Read your new utility meters and send your readings of to your supplier. Taking photos of them will also ensure you have the correct reading if you need them again in the future. Unpack your essentials such as bed linen and clean towels. Don't worry about the rest, it isn't going anywhere! Order a takeaway, have a cup of tea and enjoy your first night with your family.

Right, so now you're all moved in, it's time to settle down, unpack and enjoy your new place. Remember, planning is essential to ensure your move runs stress free.

Checklist

Eight weeks

- Pack non-essential items
- Research your new area (transfer schools and order new uniform)
- Keep all important documents

Six weeks

- Decide on a local removal company
- Clear out any unwanted items
- Keep packing

Four weeks

- Notify utility companies
- Start preparation for your new house
- Keep packing

Two weeks

- Finalise all details
- Organise pet and child care
- Cancel local services
- Keep packing

24 hours

- Check every room and ensure everything is packed
- Pack a night bag so everything is to hand
- Collect your new keys
- Make sure your phone is fully charged so you can get in touch with the estate agents or removal company

Moving in

- Prepare for the arrival of the removal company and give them directions/your contact details
- Ensure everything is ready to move
- Record meter readings

On arrival

- Give removal company instructions of what goes where
- Check for any damage before they leave
- Read your new utility meters and send them off to your supplier
- Check if the previous owners have left anything behind
- Unpack essentials
- Order a takeaway and sit back and relax!



Want to treat yourself to a proper removal company for your next move or are you prepared to do it yourself

Removal company or brave it yourself?

You're excited about your new home and location but the process of packing, organising and actually moving all of your items is something no-one really ever looks forward to. Not only that but you also have to contact utility companies, maintain a job, keep your children happy and clean your entire house. You do have super powers, right?

Removal companies

Unless you live in a small property or flat, it could be worth hiring a professional removal company to help relieve some of the stress on the day. They have many skills and experience and some of the services they can provide include packing and

unpacking, dismantling and assembling furniture, loading your belongings quickly and securely, including those fragile and specialist items. They can even supply you with packing materials.

Hiring a removal company will also allow you the time to collect the keys to your new home. You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth. Some services are great if you don't have much time to plan and get these done yourself; however these do often come at a premium and may not be suitable for those on a budget. When choosing a removal company

You also won't have to worry about the exhausting physical side of things, that being carrying boxes back and forth



its key to look at those which have good recommendations and reviews, as you need a company you can rely on. You can use comparison sites, such as comparemymove.com and reallymoving.com, to help find you the best deals.

Getting quotes

You should aim to get at least three quotes from removal companies, preferably from firms which will come out to your property rather than those who just estimate the cost over the phone, as you don't want any nasty charges later on. Plus it will give the company an accurate idea of any restricted areas in your home, if they can park a van or lorry, and how many

items you have. You should also ask for the price to be broken down so you can see just how much you are paying for when it comes to certain aspects like insurance, packing, an hourly rate, mileage and any storage costs.

Once you have found a removal company, it can be useful to send them a briefing sheet that includes information about any items which need to be specially packed, any difficult or large items, plus any carpets and curtains which need moving. Finally, it can also be helpful to send them a floor plan of the new property so they can unload efficiently.

Top tips for packing

When packing, ensure you don't overload your boxes with heavy items, as these will be difficult to lift and could cause a back injury.

Fill any empty gaps using old newspaper, clothing, socks or even tea towels. This will help secure any items when they are being moved.

Create an inventory and label all your boxes and write the contents on each box with a marker. That way you will know which room each box is to go in. And if you are super organised, you could even colour code each room!

Pack heavier boxes on the bottom. This might seem like common sense but it will ensure that any of your fragile items won't break.

Pack a survival box. These are the things that you will need first and should include paper towels, bin bags, cutlery, the kettle, some mugs, tea, coffee, milk, sugar and finally, some toilet paper!



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WITH THE **RIGHT** PROPERTY



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