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By [Graham Norwood](#)

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How to sell your house this summer

In hard times, sellers need to show ingenuity in order to shift their house this summer, says Graham Norwood.



This summer you need more than a hard-working estate agent and a low asking price to sell your home. Try giving away Olympic tickets, a car or even a year's supply of sausages.

Selling a home when buyers are on the beach is hard at any time, but 2011 is extra tough. Some 70 per cent of homes on the market since January remain unsold and each estate agent is handling an average 78 homes for sale. This is far higher than usual in summer, says Rightmove.

So sellers have to go to extreme lengths to make their home stand out. You would think, for example, that a rare eight-bedroom penthouse with two terraces overlooking Lord's cricket ground would sell in a strong central London market. But even here, sellers go the extra mile.

"I hit the jackpot when it came to getting Olympic tickets and secured four AA tickets to the opening ceremony. This is a VIP area with the best views and they are the best you can buy. I'm going to give them to whoever buys my apartment," says Hamish Harding, who runs an aviation company and spends most of his time in Dubai.

"The tickets were originally for my family, so I will have to get some cheaper seats for them. I'm sacrificing the best because the housing market is sticky," adds Harding, whose home is selling for £9.5 million (Knight Frank, 020 7586 2777; www.knightfrank.com).

He is not alone. One vendor, who wants to stay anonymous, is giving away a Rolls-Royce with her Ascot home. Some sellers with multiple properties are even offering people free stays in glitzy holiday homes if they exchange over the summer. A butcher in the Highlands is offering a year's supply of sausages and a seller in the Midlands is throwing in his furniture free of charge.

Even more unusual is the marketing tool dreamed up by Andy Lawrenson, a musician selling his cottage in Yorkshire. He has composed a song about his property and posted it on YouTube (search for Riverside Cottage1.WMV).

"Early sellers in 2011 had a chance of worming their way into the active spring market," says Miles Shippside, director of Rightmove. "Those coming to market now have to price aggressively as many buyers have gone to ground. Sellers in the second half of 2011 need to do something different to increase their chances of catching elusive buyers.

"The highest level of interest is in the first week the property comes on the market. First impressions count. Look dispassionately at the three Ps – presentation, price and promotion. Make sure your home looks its best from day one, that you offer better value than any similar local properties, then make sure your agent markets the socks off it, so it really stands out."

Increasingly, that marketing involves a giveaway too.

Tim Webster, who runs a firm refurbishing hotels, is anxious to sell his 19th-century farmhouse in Norfolk (£735,000 through Strutt and Parker, 01473 220444; www.struttandparker.com) before the end of the summer. So he is offering a day's shoot at Bisley Camp in Surrey.

"It is for the buyer and seven members of their family or friends who'll get a breakfast briefing, and then a full day of shooting experiences, including pistols and clay pigeon. It's worth about £5,000," says Webster.

For those who feel more comfortable with less flamboyant ways of making their home appear special, there are the tried and tested methods.

"You would be amazed how many people do not clear clutter, leave rooms untidy, don't mow the lawn or put the wheelie-bins away neatly," says Anita Sandray, a buying agent in Manchester.

"Pay attention to all these things and a buyer will immediately feel well-disposed towards you," she adds.

Failing that, you could try one more thing: cut the price. Website www.propertysnake.co.uk lists about 210,000 homes that have reduced their asking prices by as much as 58 per cent. It doesn't mention if there is a Rolls-Royce thrown in too, however.