

An Open House Glossary

By Richard Stanley

Other than the automobile, nothing in L.A. interests more people than the seeming universal fascination with real estate—especially the curiosity about other people’s houses. A Realtor’s field of dreams is to hold an open house. Put up some direction signs and flags on a Sunday afternoon, “and they will come”—rain or shine. In the world of real estate, this phenomenon is axiomatic.

Every field of endeavor has its own argot—especially real estate. Realtor-speak is a blend of tech-talk, slang, hype, abbreviation, euphemism, enthusiasm, blind faith, legalese and, yes, truth. So what does it mean when all the houses are “charming”, all the pools are “sparkling” and all the sellers are “motivated”? I humbly offer a few personal interpretations of some favorite examples of Realtor-speak, albeit with tongue a bit in the cheek.

- **What they say --- Translation**
- **Home** – what your agent calls your property when you buy
- **House** – what your agent calls your property when you sell
- **Bring your decorator** – bring your contractor
- **Bring your contractor** – bring your banker
- **It’s a fixer** – it REALLY needs work
- **It’s a light fixer** – order six full-sized dumpsters—to start
- **Fresh paint and carpet** – it was just a fixer yesterday; now it’s a fixer with fresh paint and carpet
- **New beige carpet** – it’s a foreclosed property; the owner is a lender
- **Contemporary style** – built or remodeled in bad taste AND/OR the agent couldn’t figure out what style the house really is
- **Contempo** – a hip or fab “Contemporary” house
- **Sun-drenched garden** – all the trees were cut down
- **Cozy** – tiny
- **Chic and spacious** – the owner blew out all the interior walls; good luck when the Big One hits
- **Stunning** – peculiar
- **Lots of potential** – it’s a fixer and the seller’s looking for dreamers
- **Exceptional value** – the house is big and ugly
- **For sale or lease** – the seller knows the sale price is too high
- **Bonus paid to buyer’s agent** – the seller knows the sale price is too high

- **Totally/completely remodeled/rebuilt** – a paradox, since only a house that was torn down and is new-from-the-ground-up could qualify for this description, i.e., unlikely
- **Owner will carry** – the seller knows it won't appraise at the sale price
- **Restored by award-winning set designers** – there's a show biz strike on
- **Spec house** – the house you should have bought three months ago for half the price—now owned by “spec”ulators
- **Flippers** – the people who bought the house three months ago to spec
- **Freshly remodeled** – it's a spec house
- **Fluffed** – a very quickly done spec house
- **Brand new, palatial masterpiece** – a spec house on steroids, a.k.a., a McMansion
- **Guest house** – bootleg or “Beachwood” rental
- **Remodeling was done without permit and not to code** – the owner found some guys in front of Home Depot to help, and they didn't speak the same language
- **Remodeling was done without a permit but to code** - the owner found some guys in front of Home Depot to help, and they probably spoke the same language
- **Remodeling was done to code and with permit** – the owner is smart
- **Cook's kitchen** – this one's so big, you'll need to be on roller skates to make dinner
- **Close to transportation** – there's a noisy, busy street or freeway close by
- **Sexy** – you'll definitely need to remodel
- **Some flat garden area** – it's a cliffhanger
- **First time on the market in 50 years** – assume you'll need to update the infrastructure
- **Unbelievable** – probably true: not believable
- **To-die-for top floor condo** – is the seller looking for a jumper?
- **Drop-dead view** – is the view so good, or so bad?
- **Top-of-the-world views** – don't ever run out of milk when you need it—it'll be a schlep to the market
- **Secluded enclave** – your dinner guests will always get lost and be a half-hour late
- **Adjacent lot also available** – better buy it, too, before a developer does
- **House is deeply set back from street** – there's an easement over the front yard
- **Seller selects services** – the seller's agent is controlling
- **Prestigious area** – mid-priced area

- **Perfect condition** – come on, whose house is ever “perfect”?
- **Magical** – confusing
- **Move-in condition** – well, maybe
- **Write any offer** – the agent’s listing on the house is expiring

...and my favorite:

- **Rudolph Valentino lived here** – not if it was built after 1926, when he died!