



HOME BUYING TIPS

Buying a new home is exciting, but it can also be overwhelming. Here's a list of tips to help make your home buying experience more pleasant.

Choose the right person

If you're thinking about buying a home, you'll want to carefully choose the real estate professional you work with during the process. You should commit yourself to working with one sales associate who can learn your likes and dislikes in homes to make your home-buying process easier. Choose a professional who specializes in residential real estate and who has specific knowledge of the local real estate and mortgage markets. The person you choose should listen to you and be interested enough in you to find out about your housing needs and preferences. Service first should be the motto of the professional you choose with services going above and beyond what you expect and need. Doing some preliminary planning before you begin your home search will make the entire process more manageable and less overwhelming. As part of your initial game plan, you should:

Check your credit rating

Even if you're sure you have excellent credit, it's wise to double-check at the outset. Straightening out any errors or disputed items now will avoid troublesome holdups down the road when you're waiting for mortgage approval. You may see disputed items, in addition to errors caused by a faulty social security number, a name similar to yours, or a court ordered judgment paid off that hasn't been cleared from the public records. If such items appear, write a letter to the appropriate credit bureau. Credit bureaus are required to help you straighten things out in a reasonable time (usually 30 days).

- **TIP:**Make sure that any outdated derogatory entries are deleted from your credit file. Adverse credit information is not supposed to be reported or included on your credit report after seven years (except bankruptcy information, which can be reported up to 10 years).
- **TIP:**Officially cancel inactive credit cards. If you have an inactive credit card with a \$5,000 limit, even though you owe nothing on it, some mortgage lenders will consider that a potential future debt. Too many inactive credit cards with significant credit limits could keep you from obtaining a mortgage loan. Don't just cut up your extra cards; officially cancel them, and do it now so there will be time for the news to reach the credit bureaus.

- **TIP:** Hold off on making any major credit card or car purchases while you're waiting to apply for a mortgage. Monthly payments you're obligated to pay will be counted against you, and reduce the amount of the mortgage loan you'll be offered. Even if you've been pre-approved for a mortgage, that approval is subject to last-minute evaluation of your financial situation, and a spending spree for appliances, furniture and other goodies intended for your new home may wreck your chances for buying it.

Pre-qualification and pre-approval on a mortgage

A real estate professional can help "pre-qualify" you for a mortgage before you start house-hunting. This process includes analyzing your income, assets and present debt to estimate what you may be able to afford on a house purchase. Mortgage brokers, or a lender's own mortgage counselors can also calculate the same sort of informal estimate for you. Obtaining mortgage "pre-approval" is another thing entirely. It means that you have in hand a lender's written commitment to put together a loan for you (subject only to the particular house you want to buy passing the lender's appraisal). Pre-approval makes you a strong buyer, welcomed by sellers. With most other purchasers, sellers must tie the house up on a contract while waiting to see if the would-be buyer can really obtain financing. The down side is that you may pay application fees to cover the lender's paperwork in verifying your employment, income, assets, debts and credit rating. If you later decide not to use that particular lender, you'd have to start all over again elsewhere - with no rebate. Pre-approval will also speed up the entire mortgage procedure once you've found the house you want. The only remaining question will be whether the house will "appraise" for enough to warrant the loan.

Become an educated buyer

- The web is one of the best ways to search for homes today. With this website, you can receive daily emails with new and updated listings from the towns and price range of your choice.
- Search the entire MLS for all homes, condos, land, multi family, commercial properties, and past solds at your convenience.
- View full listing sheets showing amenities, taxes, lot sizes, beds, baths, rooms, siding, fireplaces, garages, room sizes and much more.
- Get property address and see where the properties are located on Google Maps.
- Check schools and community profiles of your preferred towns.
- Save preferred listings in your own file to view anytime.
- Calculate approximate mortgage payments for specific properties.

Home Inspection

Once you have made an offer on a home, you will need to schedule a home inspection, conducted by an independent authorized inspector. It is extremely important to hire a reputable inspector so that you know exactly what you are buying. Do not hesitate to ask friends, family, and co-workers for advice. If you are satisfied with the results of the inspection, then you can proceed to the Purchase and Sales agreement. If the inspector finds problems with the property, you may want to negotiate with the seller to lower the price, or to pay for certain repairs.

Appraisal

Your lender may require you to get an appraisal of the house you want to buy, to make sure it is worth the money that you are borrowing. You may select your own appraiser, or you may ask your real estate broker to help you with this task.

Homeowner's Insurance

Lenders require that you have homeowners insurance, to protect both your interests and theirs. Like everything else, be sure to shop around for insurance that fits your needs.

Settlement or Closing

Finally, you are ready for the closing. Be sure to read everything before you sign! You should have both your real estate broker and an attorney present at the closing to ensure that all is in order.

Finally make sure before you buy

Making sure you end up with the right home involves figuring out exactly what features you need, want and don't want in a home. Before starting your search, you should make a "wish list" to decide which features are absolutely essential, which are nice "extras" if you happen to find them, and which are completely undesirable. The more specific you can be about what you're looking for from the outset, the more effective your home search will be. Also keep in mind, that in the end, every home purchase is a compromise. Create your own personalized "wish list" and when you're finished filling it out, feel free to share it with me as I would love to be your preferred real estate agent!



HOME SELLING TIPS

Below you will learn some tricks of the trade when it comes to selling your home.

Tidy up

If you're thinking of selling your home, keep in mind that buyers appreciate a clean look in the homes they view. You can increase the value of your home and decrease the time it takes to sell by making a few simple improvements. Aroma is the first thing prospective buyers notice when they step inside a home. To eliminate odors, steam clean your carpet and wash walls and floors with household cleaners and disinfectants. Keep your home smelling fresh by burning candles or potpourri, boiling a pot of cinnamon sticks or putting a dab of vanilla on cold light bulbs before turning them on. Nothing makes a home look newer faster than painting. Painting your walls and removing outdated wallpaper may be the best interior improvements you can make. For broader appeal, paint in neutral colors such as beige, white, off-white, or gray. These colors suggest newness and cleanliness and can brighten a dull or outdated room. If your carpet is badly worn, outdated or stained, consider replacing it. If your carpet is heavily soiled, you may want to have it professionally cleaned. Brighten the interior of your home by cleaning your windows and opening your curtains to let light in. Clean hanging light fixtures and add the highest-wattage bulbs allowed. Below are 20 suggestions to help you sell your home.

Make the Most of that First Impression

A well-manicured lawn, neatly trimmed shrubs and a clutter-free porch welcome prospects. So does a freshly painted - or at least freshly scrubbed - front door. If it's autumn, rake the leaves. If it's winter, shovel the walkways. The fewer obstacles between prospects and the true appeal of your home, the better.

Invest a Few Hours for Future Dividends

Here's your chance to clean up in real estate. Clean up in the living room, the bathroom, the kitchen. If your woodwork is scuffed or the paint is fading, consider some minor redecoration. Fresh wallpaper adds charm and value to your property. Prospects would rather see how great your home really looks than hear how great it could look, "with a little work."

Check Faucets and Bulbs

Dripping water rattles the nerves, discolors sinks and suggests faulty or worn-out plumbing. Burned out bulbs leave prospects in the dark. Don't let little problems detract from what's right with your home.

Don't Shut Out a Sale

If cabinets or closet doors stick in your home, you can be sure they will also stick in a prospect's mind. Don't try to explain away sticky situations when you can easily plane them away. A little effort on your part can smooth the way toward a closing.

Think Safety

Homeowners learn to live with all kinds of self-set booby traps: roller skates on the stairs, festooned extension cords, slippery throw rugs and low hanging overhead lights. Make your residence as non-perilous as possible for uninitiated visitors.

Make Room for Space

Remember, potential buyers are looking for more than just comfortable living space. They're looking for storage space, too. Make sure your attic and basement are clean and free of unnecessary items.

Consider Your Closets

The better organized a closet, the larger it appears. Now's the time to box up those unwanted clothes and donate them to charity.

Make Your Bathrooms Sparkle

Bathrooms sell homes, so let them shine. Check and repair damaged or unsightly caulking in the tubs and showers. For added allure, display your best towels, mats and shower curtains.

Create Dream Bedrooms

Wake up prospects to the cozy comforts of your bedrooms. For a spacious look, get rid of excess furniture. Colorful bedspreads and fresh curtains are a must.

Open up in the Daytime

Let the sun shine in! Pull back your curtains and drapes so prospects can see how bright and cheery your home is.

Lighten up at Night

Turn on the excitement by turning on all your lights - both inside and outside - when showing your home in the evening. Lights add color and warmth, and make prospects feel welcome.

Avoid Crowd Scenes

Potential buyers often feel like intruders when they enter a home filled with people. Rather than giving your house the attention it deserves, they're likely to hurry through. Keep the company present to a minimum.

Watch Your Pets

Dogs and cats are great companions, but not when you're showing your home. Pets have a talent for getting underfoot. So do everybody a favor: Keep Kitty and Spot outside, or at least out of the way.

Think Volume

Rock-and-roll will never die. But it might kill a real estate transaction. When it's time to show your home, it's time to turn down the stereo or TV.

Relax

Be friendly, but don't try to force conversation. Prospects want to view your home with a minimum of distraction.

Don't Apologize

No matter how humble your abode, never apologize for its shortcomings. If a prospect volunteers a derogatory comment about your home's appearance, let an experienced Real Estate Agent handle the situation.

Keep a Low Profile

Nobody knows your home as well as you do. But a Real Estate Agent knows buyers - what they need and what they want. Your Real Estate Agent will have an easier time articulating the virtues of your home if you stay in the background.

Don't Turn Your Home into a Second-Hand Store

When prospects come to view your home, don't distract them with offers to sell those furnishings you no longer need. You may lose the biggest sale of all.

Defer to Experience

When prospects want to talk price, terms, or other real estate matters, let them speak to an expert - your Real Estate Agent.

Help Your Agent

Your Real Estate Agent will have an easier time selling your home if showings are scheduled through his or her office. Offer to keep an eye on the brochure box attached to your sign and make sure it is always filled with flyers. Try to accommodate prospective buyers when they want to see your home.