



Top Tips for First Time Home Buyers

From Janet Wickell, Your Guide to Home Buying / Selling.

Advice to Help When You're Buying a Home

First time home buyers might feel better to know that they're not the only ones who feel confused about the process of buying a home. Nearly all home buyers feel the same way, even if they've bought a house in the past, because it's easy to forget the home buying steps you took to get there once the event is behind you.

Get Educated

Before you begin, get educated about the home buying customs *where you live*. Relatives or friends who live in another state might have some good general advice for you, but chances are the process is very different in their area, so avoid the mistake of relying solely on their advice to make important decisions.

So How Do You Get Educated?

Talk to a real estate agent about the typical home buying scenario. This is *not* a meeting that should lead to an agreement for the agent to represent you. It's simply a general discussion about the real estate customs in your area. An agent who won't take fifteen minutes to help you understand what to expect when you're buying a home isn't much of an agent, so if the first few calls don't produce someone who will help, keep looking.

If you don't want to talk with a real estate agent, how about a bank loan officer or mortgage broker? They look at home buying from a different perspective, but can usually give you a basic overview of the process.

Questions to Ask

1. If you decide to work with an agent, will the agent help you compose your offer to purchase a home? If not, who does help?
 - If the agent uses fill-in-the-blank forms, ask for a blank sample copy to take home and study.
2. What types of disclosures are sellers in your area required to give to buyers? Can the agent give you a sample copy of typical disclosures?
3. What types of home inspections are standard in your area? Are there other inspections that the agent recommends?
 - How much do the inspections usually cost? Are they regarded as a buyer expense?
 - When are inspections done?
4. Is a survey required for most transactions? If so, who typically pays for it, the buyer or the seller?
5. Who does the title search to verify that the deed is problem free, attorneys or a title company? What's the average cost for that service?
6. Who acts as settlement agent, the person who puts together final paperwork for you to sign? (attorney, title company personnel, real estate broker, other)?
7. Other than loan costs, what's the average total cost for other closing fees?
 - Taxes, settlement agent fees, etc.
8. How long does it usually take to close on a home once an offer is accepted?

That's a good start. After you have the answers to those questions, you'll have a better feeling for the basic customs in your area.

Always Keep a Cool Head

Even simple problems can be a burden when you have so many details to take care of, so don't over-react if you hit a few snags on the way to closing. Keep a cool head and work with the people helping you through the transaction to resolve any issues that pop up.

Now Dig In

At this point, your remaining steps are no different than the steps nearly every home buyer must take. It's time to start digging into the details you need to get through the home buying process.

A good place to start:

[You're Just 11 Steps Away from Buying a Home](#)

The tools in that document help you branch off into the specific topics you'll encounter during your home buying journey.

Take a few deep breaths and relax. The entire process can be a fun adventure if you let yourself have some fun with it!

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