

REDFINTM

Your New Way Home

Home Buying Handbook

Questions? Ask us at seattleguide@redfin.com

Welcome!

Whether you're starting to think about buying a home or you're knee-deep in the process, we've put this practical handbook together to get you pointed in the right direction.

Of course, if you ever have any questions, we're always happy to help. Send our Seattle team an email at seattleguide@redfin.com (or connect by phone at 877-973-3346).

This Handbook Covers:



Why Redfin?

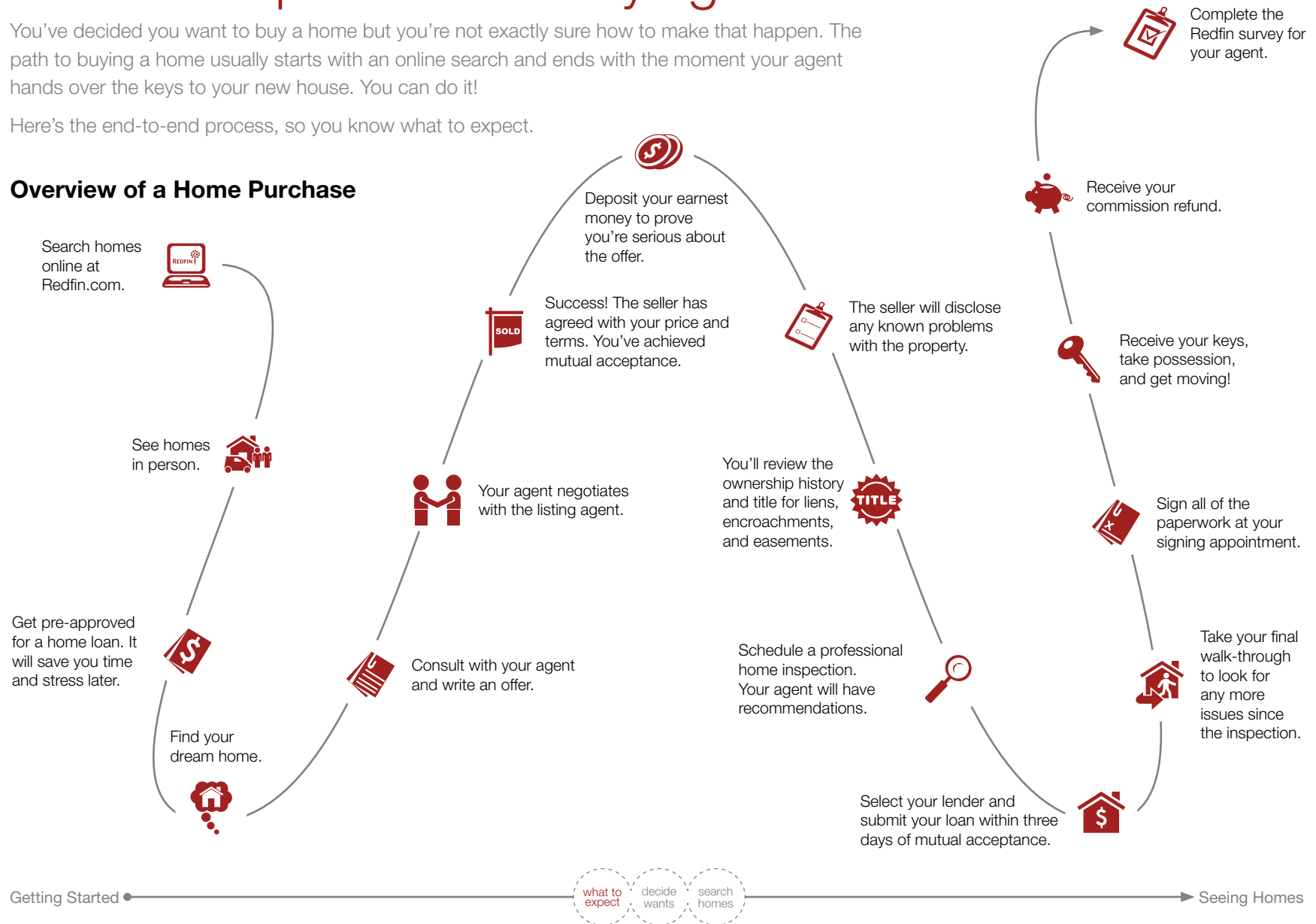
As you read through the basics of buying a home, we'll let you know about Redfin services and the advantages of working with Redfin to buy a home.

What to Expect When Buying a Home

You've decided you want to buy a home but you're not exactly sure how to make that happen. The path to buying a home usually starts with an online search and ends with the moment your agent hands over the keys to your new house. You can do it!

Here's the end-to-end process, so you know what to expect.

Overview of a Home Purchase



Decide What You Want

Taking the time to think through what you want ahead of time will help you narrow your search from thousands of available properties to a more manageable bunch that you can research, tour, and ultimately choose the one that has the most potential to be your dream home.

Things to Consider Before You Search

Every home buyer has individual needs and preferences when it comes to where you want to live, what you want to live in, and how much you can afford.

Decide what is important to you:

- How much home do you need?
Square footage? # of bedrooms/baths?
- Which neighborhoods do you want to live in?
- How important are schools?
- How much home can you afford?

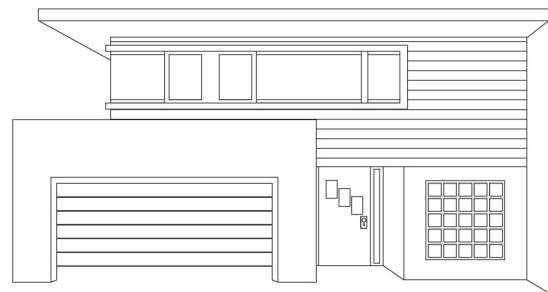
...or narrow the possibilities further by thinking about what characteristics matter to you:

- What type of home?
Condo, townhouse or house?
- Is there a particular style you'd prefer?
Traditional, Modern, Craftsman, or Tudor?
- Do you want new construction, a fixer-upper, or something in-between?
- Is Built Green certification a deciding factor?
- Would you consider a short sale or foreclosure?

If you don't have specifics in mind just yet, don't get discouraged. Part of searching for a home is discovering the range of homes currently available and deciding which one fits you. Use [this worksheet](#) to zero in on what kind of home will work for you.



Cape Cod



Modern



Craftsman

Getting Started ●



▶ Seeing Homes

Search for Homes

You have an idea what type of home you are looking for, which neighborhood it should be in, and even a price range for how much your dream home should cost. You're starting to get a good feel for what you want and now it's time to get serious. We, of course, have a few tips to help you find your perfect home.

If you have been thinking about buying a home, chances are that you have already started your home search on some level. It used to be that you'd drive the street to find 'For Sale' signs, look through local papers or magazines, or visit a local brokerage to inquire about listings.

More and more, home buyers are turning to online methods to do their search – it's convenient and typically offers the most up-to-date information (outside of talking directly to the listing agent).



What to Look For in a Search Site

Make sure you're using a real estate search website that gives you access to all the homes for sale. Even more essential is that it be powered by the Multiple Listings Service (MLS). The MLS is a local or regional service that compiles real estate available for sale, complete with detailed information from agents in the area.

The benefits you'll get by searching on an MLS-powered website include:

- **Search all the homes for sale:** MLS-powered websites typically have 30% more listings.
- **You see what the agent sees:** MLS-powered search sites have more details on every home.
- **Real-time market data:** If the website is updated regularly, you'll have information as it's entered by the agent representing each home.



Most Up-to-Date + More Tools = Easier Searching

With updates every 15 minutes, Redfin has the most accurate information of any real estate search site. Only Redfin shows all the homes for sale including every listing on the MLS, plus foreclosures and for-sale-by-owner homes.

It all adds up to more than 4x the information than you can find on any other brokerage site. Plus, you can save your searches, mark favorites (or x-out homes you don't like), and receive emails about new listings, price changes, and recent sales nearby.

Learn more about:
[Using Redfin to find the right home](#)





Search Homes on Redfin

Redfin's powerful online tools can help you find the right home in the right neighborhood. Redfin displays MLS listings, plus for-sale-by-owner homes, bank foreclosures, and sales records in the cities where we offer service. Our listings are updated every 15-30 minutes, so you'll always see the latest and most accurate information.

To search for homes:

Step 1

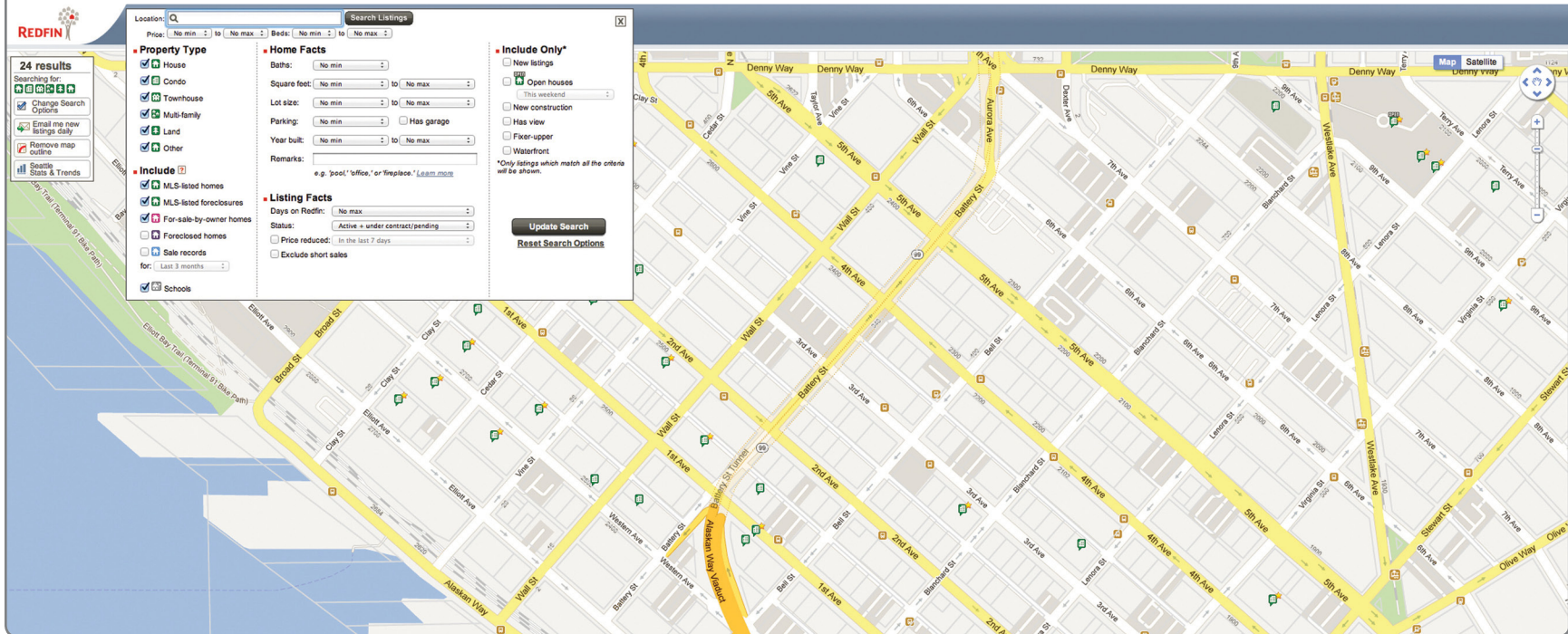
Go to www.redfin.com, and type a city, neighborhood, zip code, or even an address into the Location box.

Step 2

To narrow your search results, include options such as Price, Beds, Property Type, and more.

Step 3

Select a home on the map or in the list of results to view more information about the listing.



Getting Started



Seeing Homes

Understanding Distressed Properties

When searching, you may see listings that are either foreclosures or short sales. Here's the low-down on what that means for you, and how to buy them.

What's the Difference?

Foreclosures and short sales are not the same thing:

- A foreclosure (aka "REO" or Real Estate Owned) is a home that has been foreclosed upon and repossessed by a bank because the owner stopped paying their mortgage.
- A short sale is when a seller owes more money on a home than they can make on the sale of the home. The home is sold for a loss, and the seller only partially repays their debts on the home.

You might be interested in buying either a foreclosure or short sale because you can often buy the home for less than its appraised value. You should know that while purchasing a foreclosure on the MLS can be fairly straightforward, purchasing a short sale is typically a long process with a few ups and downs.

How Do I Buy a Foreclosure or Short Sale?

If you are thinking about buying a foreclosure or short sale, we recommend you:

- Work with an agent who has experience dealing with them.
- Get pre-approved; your financing must be solid if the deal moves forward.
- With foreclosures, stay competitive with your offer, be prepared for tight inspection & financing deadlines, and expect to buy the property as-is (banks are often unwilling to make repairs).
- When it comes to short sales, be patient & flexible because they can take a while, and may fall through without warning.



Zero In on Distressed Properties

Look on Redfin, and you can narrow your search to short sales or foreclosures:

- [Search for MLS-listed foreclosures](#)
- [Search for short sales](#)



Learn How to Buy

- To learn more about what it takes to buy these listing types, you can attend one of [Redfin's free classes on foreclosures or short sales](#) -- just check the schedule for an upcoming class in your area.



See Homes in Person

You've spent time looking at homes online, and now you're ready to start looking at the real thing. Depending on your needs, you can choose to do neighborhood tours & house drive-bys, attend open houses, or tour homes with an agent.

The Drive-By

The drive-by is a tour of a neighborhood where you might want to live. If you have your eye on a home (or multiple homes) in an unfamiliar area, a drive-by can be a great way to get a feel for things, and without going through the hassle of talking to an agent or working around an open house schedule.

Learn more about:
[Neighborhood tours & drive-bys](#)

Open Houses

An open house gives you the chance to check out a home in-person, without the assistance of your own agent. Open houses are hosted by listing agents. Many home-shoppers make a day of it by driving around a neighborhood and stopping at every open house sign. It's also a good idea to use the Redfin map online to create a route for your home tours.

Learn more about:
[Attending open houses](#)

Tour Homes with an Agent

When you're ready to spend some in-depth, uninterrupted time in a home without competing with other buyers for views of the bathroom, you can schedule a home tour. Touring a home generally requires you to work with a buyer's agent, who may also require you to obtain loan pre-approval.

When you tour several homes in one day, it can be easy to get mixed-up about what you saw, what you liked, and what looked like trouble. To keep track, take our [Home Tour Checklist](#) with you on every tour, or download our [iPad, iPhone, or Android app](#) to take notes.

Learn more about:
[Touring homes with an agent](#)

- Be careful about signing anything at an open house, even a sign-in sheet. This may contractually obligate you to work with the listing agent, especially if you are viewing new construction. Don't sign anything without making it clear that you already have or intend to find your own agent.
- If you are not careful, a listing agent may try to claim procuring clause on you – it's the real estate's version of calling dibs. Procuring clause entitles the agent to collect commission on the sale.



No Obligation Tours, As Many As You Need

Tour as many homes as you need, with no pressure and no obligation. Need to see more? Redfin Agents are ready to take you on as many tours as you need. It's quick and easy to schedule a home tour online. An agent will get back to you to confirm.

Learn more about:
[Touring homes with Redfin](#)



Find a Real Estate Agent

You don't have to have a real estate agent to start looking for homes. So while you are starting to search online for homes for sale, you should also be on the lookout for an agent.

Working with an Agent

When you're buying a home, your agent should work on your behalf to get you the right home, at the right price, in a timely manner.

Most traditional agents have to find their own clients, and then only make money when a client buys or sells a home with them. The amount of money they make is based on the price of the home – the higher the price, the more money the agent makes. Some traditional agents work at a discount, meaning they take less commission but the size of their paycheck is still solely dependent on the price of the home.

Redfin Agents work in a completely different way. They receive a salary and are paid bonuses based on customer satisfaction – so they can focus on serving you (not the size of the commission).

When you work with any agent, you should expect them to:

- Help you refine your search for the perfect home.
- Take you to view homes in-person.
- Negotiate hard on your behalf.



What's Different About a Redfin Agent?

Redfin Agents are your true advocate: a Redfin Agent makes a salary, and then gets paid a bonus based on client satisfaction, not on the size of the commission. With a Redfin Agent, you get the time and space to go at your own pace, and the drive and savvy to get you the right result.

Having an agent who puts you first means:

- No sales, just honest feedback and as many home tours as you need - that's the Redfin No-Pressure Promise.
- A higher standard of performance, verified through see-for-yourself customer reviews.
- Faster, easier service using our online tools.
- An agent who spends his or her time serving you, not searching for new clients.

Find a local [Redfin Agent](#).

See For Yourself

Find out what it's like when you work with a Redfin Agent. Every Redfin agent is reviewed by their clients, and [every](#) review is published on our website – the good, the bad, the ugly.



Seattle Redfin Agents: Trevor, Robin and James.

Find & Research an Agent

Common ways to find an agent include:

- **Working with a friend or family member:** Just because you know them doesn't mean they would make a great agent for you. Hold a friend or relative to the same high standards you would for any other agent.
- **Referrals from friends or family:** A recommendation from someone you know is a great way to get connected with an agent but you should still evaluate their suitability like you would any other agent.
- **Find an agent online:** Many agents and brokerages have websites.
- **Meet an agent at open houses:** Anytime you sign in to an open house you are on that agent's follow-up list. If you want to work with an agent that you met this way, then do your homework.

Once you have found one or two that you'd like to work with then **research each agent online** through sites such as Yelp, Google, LinkedIn, and the State Licensing Board.

Interviews, Trial Runs & Agency Agreements

When you officially commit to work with an agent you often have to sign a Buyer's Agency Agreement – a document that says “this is the agent who made my home purchase possible.”

If you change your mind or want to work with another agent later, it can be difficult to break this contract. Before signing the agreement, you might want to:

- Ask the agent these **15 essential questions** to make sure they're right for you.
- Request that the agent work with you for a short time without the agreement to ensure they are a good fit. Be clear on how long this trial period will last.

As the Buyer's Agency Agreement starts to become a reality, make sure you do the following:

- Find out how long you will be bound by the agreement, and see if you can shorten this window.
- Inquire if there is an “escape clause” that lets you end the agreement if you are unhappy with their service.
- Get everything signed and in writing.



The Redfin No-Pressure Promise

When you work with a **Redfin Agent**, we don't make you sign a Buyer's Agency Agreement until you're ready to make an offer on a home, and even then there's no obligation or contract. Take all the time you want, look at all the homes you want, and contact us when you are ready.



Save Thousands with Redfin

How do we do it? When you start your home search on Redfin and use our online tools throughout the process, it makes buying a home easier and faster for everyone. The time saved translates to agents serving you better and, on average, \$7,500+ back in your pocket when you buy with Redfin.

And, Redfin Agents don't have to spend their time searching for new clients - they can focus 100% on serving you. Better service, thousands in savings. That's what we call honest value.

Finance Your Home

When it comes to financing, your first step is to determine how much you can afford – either through loan pre-approval or by tallying your finances. Then you can move on to research and decide which lender & loan type you want to go with (unless you're an all-cash buyer, that is).

How Much Can You Afford?

It takes an examination of your finances, average monthly spending, and income to determine how much you can afford to pay each month towards a mortgage.

To decide what you can afford each month, add your **estimated monthly mortgage payment**, including Principal, Interest, Taxes, and Insurance (PITI) to your other monthly debts, including all utility, loan, credit card, and other regular expenses. The total should be less than 36% of your monthly income. This is called your debt-to-income ratio.

Learn more about:
[The total cost of your home](#)



Get Pre-Approved

Pre-approval is a letter from a bank or lender estimating how much they'll lend you. It's a smart idea to get pre-approved for a mortgage early in your home search because it helps you move quickly when you find the right home.

With pre-approval, you can also:

- Target your search to homes you know you can afford.
- Prove you're serious when making an offer.
- Make smarter decisions when it comes time to shop for a loan.
- Move quickly when you find a home you like.

Typically, you'll be asked to submit a W-2 in addition to recent paystubs, tax returns, and bank statements. You can get pre-approved without committing to a lender. Some lenders charge a fee for this service, but many do not.

That said, you may need to consider the timing of your pre-approval in certain situations:

- If you're not ready to start looking seriously for a home to buy, you should wait to get pre-approved. Most pre-approvals are good for only a limited window; between 30 and 90 days, depending on your lender.
- Also, due to the lengthy process involved with closing on short sales and foreclosed properties, you should discuss the timing of your pre-approval with your real estate agent or lender if you're interested in these types of property.

Learn more about:
[The loan pre-approval process](#)

Line Up Your Finances

Pre-approval is an excellent first step to take while you are looking for a home; however, you should also make sure you are well-positioned to make an offer on a home.

To get your financial ducks in a row, start by organizing your assets:

- Make a list of your cash accounts, 401K, stocks, and other investments, and gift funds (maximum allowed varies).
- Identify and set aside your down payment.
- Move funds around early.

And then review your debt:

- Pull credit report, look for errors.
- Pay down credit balances to 1/3 of credit limit.
- Don't open new lines of credit.
- Don't buy any big ticket items.

With your finances in order, you can then move on to choose a lender and a mortgage.

Choose a Lender

You don't have to wait until you find a home to choose a lender. Similar to pre-approval, there are benefits to having your lender identified early.

To choose a lender:

Step 1

Compile a list of 3-4 lenders that you'd like to work with. Reference any of the following resources:

- Referrals from friends, family, and co-workers.
- Banks or credit unions where you have existing accounts.
- A large, national bank with advertised rates.
- Your real estate agent.

- Online review sites such as Yelp.

Step 2

Set aside an afternoon to call each lender on your list and interview them using this [interview script](#). Mortgage rates can fluctuate daily so it is important to talk to all candidates within a short window.

Step 3

Pick the lender who offers you the best deal and that you can trust to file documents accurately & on time; plus, consider whether they make it a priority to ensure your deal moves forward successfully.



Client-Reviewed, Redfin Partner Lenders

See for yourself which lender is right for you. Just like our agents, our **Partner Lenders** are reviewed by customers after every deal, and every review is posted on our site. We never get a referral fee from our lenders.

Choose a Mortgage

There are many different types of mortgages. Luckily, there are several categories that can make mortgage products easier to understand:

· **Conforming vs. Jumbo Loans:**

Conventional loans meet standards set forth by Fannie Mae, making them a safer investment for lenders. The size of the loan is a big factor; loans amounts that are higher than conforming loan limits are called Jumbo Loans.

· **Conventional vs. Government-Backed Loans:** Conventional loans are not backed by any government agency. Some loans, like FHA or VA loans, are backed by the government; if a borrower defaults, a government agency absorbs the cost.

· **Fixed vs. Adjustable Rate Mortgage:**

Fixed-rate mortgages have the same interest rate throughout their repayment period. Adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs) have interest rates that can change during the life of the loan.

Your lender should provide you with information about the mortgage products they offer and current rates, in addition to helping you understand your options.

Learn more about:
[Mortgages & mortgage types](#)

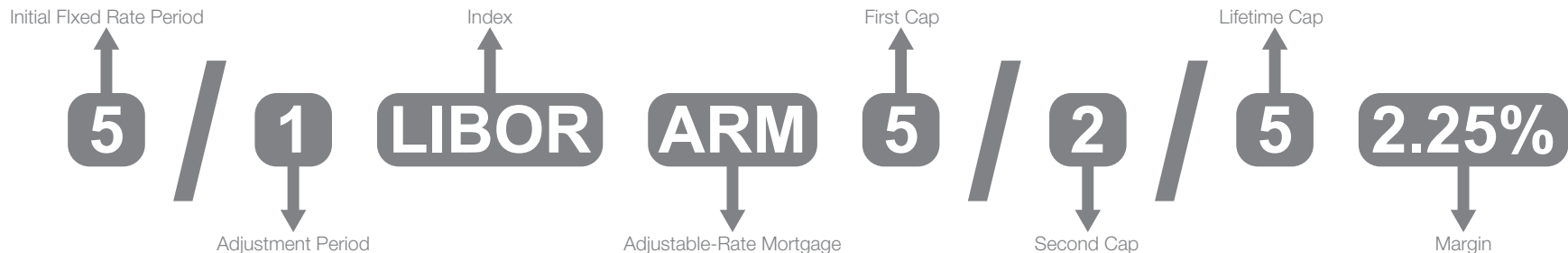


Free Classes for Better Decision-Making

When you know more, you make better decisions. Attend a free, in-person Redfin class about financing & mortgages. Get the low-down on loans, and ask questions specific to your situation.

As part of our No-Pressure Promise, we'll give you the honest truth about financing a home purchase, without the sales pressure.

To see classes offered in your area, check our [schedule of upcoming events](#).



Buying a Home



Additional Resources

Make an Offer

Once you find a home that you want to make an offer on, your agent will lead you through the offer process. There can be ups and downs, but most home offers follow a similar pattern. An experienced agent will talk you through every step.

A Typical Offer Negotiation:

1. Initial Offer

Your agent will perform a comparative market analysis to help determine what the home is worth. Usually, the offer paperwork will be drawn up by your agent. Most sellers will not accept an offer unless you can show that you have pre-approval for a loan.

2. Seller Response

Your initial offer will usually include a deadline by which the seller must respond. This deadline may vary from a few hours to 1-2 days, depending on how aggressive your offer is. The seller may respond by agreeing to your offer, making a counter-offer, or rejecting your offer outright.

3. Negotiations

If the seller counters your original offer, it's usually because they want more money or a faster timeline for closing the deal or fewer contingencies. Your agent or attorney will negotiate on your behalf to get you the best deal possible. You may come to a quick agreement, or you may go back and forth in negotiations. During this stage, either party may walk away from the deal at any time.

4. Mutual Acceptance

Once you and the seller agree on price and terms, you'll both sign the purchase contract. In most locations, you also submit a check for your earnest-money deposit. You and the seller are now contractually obligated to complete the deal, unless a contingency of the sale is not satisfied.

---- Or----

Rejection

Home offers do get rejected, and many buyers go through multiple rejections before finally landing the right home. It can be disappointing; however, the experience offers an opportunity to learn, refocus on what's important, and refine your offer approach.

Learn more about:
[The offer & negotiation process](#)



Get the Right Result with a Redfin Agent

When you're ready to make an offer, make sure your agent has the drive and savvy to get the right result for you - not just any result.

Only Redfin Agents are paid based on customer satisfaction, not commission. Plus, you can easily see which Redfin agent has the experience to best meet your individual circumstances.

You can zero in on the right Redfin agent with the:

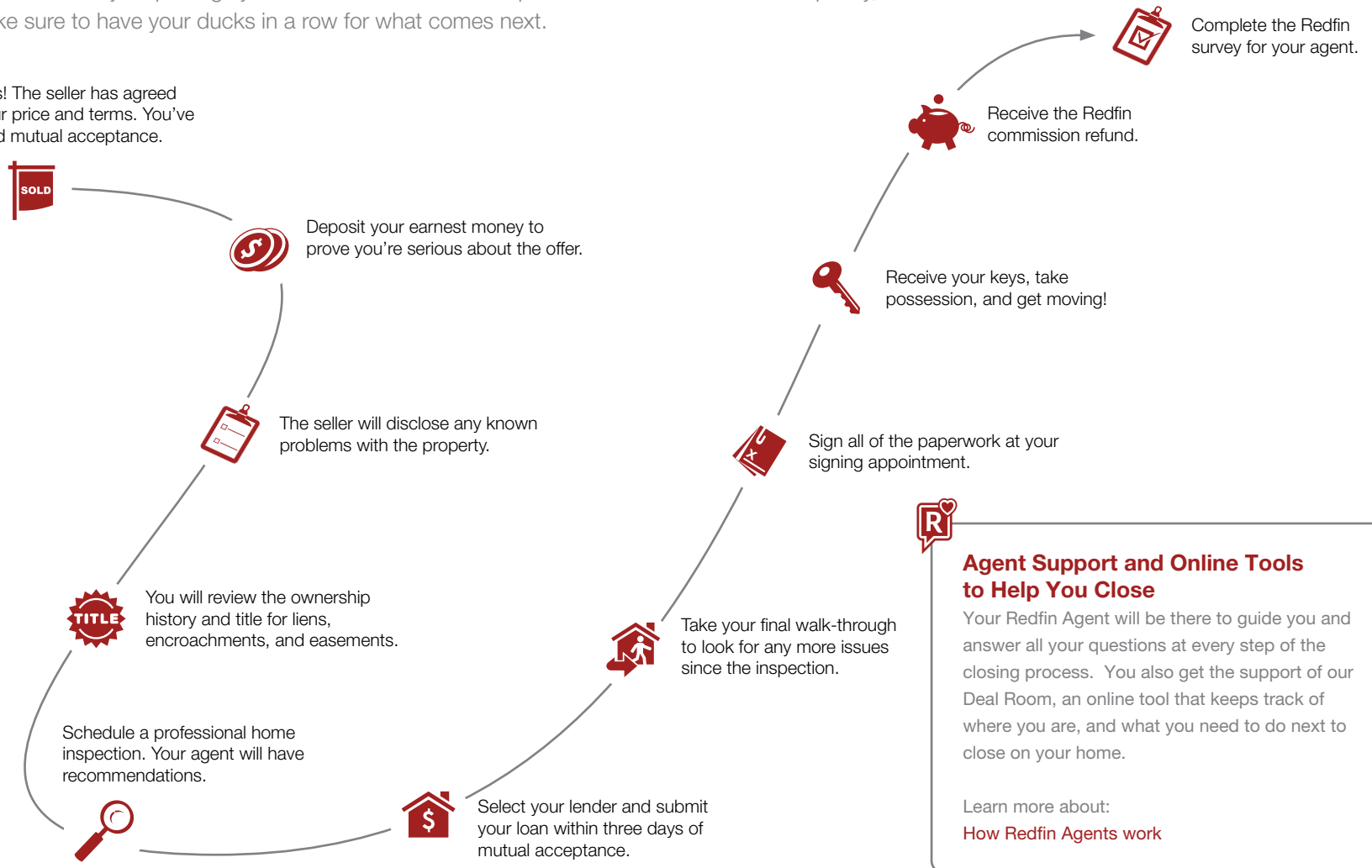
- Most experience winning a bidding war.
- Extensive knowledge about the kinds of homes you want.
- The greatest number of short sales completed.
- Or, the most experience over the past year.

We'll give you all the information you need to **pick an agent**. Or we can recommend an agent to you.

Close the Deal

You've found the house you want and submitted an offer that was accepted by the seller. From this point forward every step brings you closer to home ownership. Some deadlines can come quickly, so make sure to have your ducks in a row for what comes next.

Success! The seller has agreed with your price and terms. You've achieved mutual acceptance.



Agent Support and Online Tools to Help You Close

Your Redfin Agent will be there to guide you and answer all your questions at every step of the closing process. You also get the support of our Deal Room, an online tool that keeps track of where you are, and what you need to do next to close on your home.

Learn more about:
[How Redfin Agents work](#)



About Redfin

What if real estate were reinvented today?

Our goal is to help you make better decisions, pressure-free, and get an honest value. So you get the right home – not just any home.

Redfin Puts You First

- Redfin agents are paid based on customer satisfaction, not commissions.
- The Redfin no-pressure promise means no obligation tours, scheduled online, as many as you like. No sales calls, just agents driven to get you the right home, at the right price.

Redfin Tells You Everything

- Online, we give you the most listings and the most data, updated every 15 minutes. Explore all the homes for sale and access the same information that agents use.
- In person, we'll tell you everything about a home or an offer – we'll even tell you when to walk away.
- Only Redfin lets you see for yourself. We survey every client and publish every review for the whole world to see.

Redfin Gives You Honest Value

- Our clients save an average of \$7,500 in fees.
- Don't sacrifice service for savings. Unlike other agents, a Redfin agent spends his or her time serving you, not searching for new clients.
- Our online service makes it easy. Search for homes, save your favorites, set up email updates, request tours, sign documents, and track deals online.

Get Started with a Redfin Agent Today



To Answer Your Questions And Talk With an Agent

Call us at: [877-973-3346](tel:877-973-3346)

Email: seattleguide@redfin.com

The Redfin no-pressure promise means you can ask questions, tour as many homes as you want, and take as long as you need with no obligation.

We look forward to hearing from you!

▶ Additional Resources

Additional Resources

Use the following worksheets and tips to help you with your home search.

Page 18 ● —————> **Agent Speak**

Page 19 ● —————> **Home Listing Types**

Page 20 ● —————> **15 Tips for Home Tours & Questions to Ask the Listing Agent**

Page 21 ● —————> **Home Tour Checklist**

Page 22 ● —————> **Home Inspection Tips**

Page 23 ● —————> **15 Questions to Ask an Agent**



Ready to Learn More or Take the Next Step?

You've read this handbook from cover to cover - but you still have questions. We can help.

Online:

- Get even more from our extensive [Home Buying Guide](#).
- Ask a question of our experts and follow other buyers in a [Redfin Forum](#).

In-person:

- Attend a [free class](#) in your area. No sales calls, just more information for better decisions.
- Contact a [Redfin Agent](#) directly. Read our agent profiles, and see for yourself.

—————> Additional Resources

Agent Speak

Confused by real estate jargon? You don't have to be. Following are terms you are likely to see during your home search:

Appraisal

The estimation of a home's market value by a licensed appraiser based on comparable recent sales of homes in the neighborhood.

Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM)

A loan with a fixed interest rate for a specified amount of time and a floating rate for the remainder of the period.

Case-Shiller Index

A monthly report that measures the change in prices of a group of homes in 20 major metropolitan areas in the US. The index was set to be at 100 on January 1, 2000 and tracks price changes measured as points. It includes homes that have sold before and excludes new construction or homes that have been remodeled.

Comparative Market Analysis (CMA)

An evaluation of comparable recently sold homes in a neighborhood to determine a fair price range for a certain home on the market.

Dual Agency

Dual agency occurs when the listing agent selling a home also serves as the buyer's agent.

Earnest Money

The money buyers pay within one to three business days after agreeing with the seller on a price for the home to show that they're serious about the offer. The money is usually 1 - 3% of the purchase price (though sometimes it's a fixed amount) and is deposited into an escrow account via a cashier's check or money order.

Escrow

A neutral third party or attorney that handles the exchange of money and documents once mutual acceptance is reached on an offer.

Fixed Rate Mortgage

A loan with a set interest rate throughout the life of a loan regardless of whether rates go up or down. The most common mortgage is known as a "30-year fixed" which means that the loan is paid over a 30-year period and the interest rate is fixed at the time of purchase.

Foreclosure

Foreclosure is a process that transfers the right of home ownership from the homeowner to the bank or lender. A home goes into foreclosure when the owner defaults on his mortgage loan payments.

Good Faith Estimate

An estimate of a loan's total costs that lenders are required to provide to borrowers within three business days of the borrower submitting a loan application. The estimate includes the interest rate, principal, mortgage insurance and mortgage fees for the loan. Remember, this is just an ESTIMATE.

HUD-1 Settlement Statement

The official settlement document for the purchase and sale of real estate from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The form is completed by the escrow agent/attorney.

Inspection

A thorough investigation of a home by a licensed inspector to discover any issues or repairs that need to be made before buying the home. Inspections usually cost around \$500 - \$800, depending on the market.

Listing Agent

An individual that helps homeowners sell their home. Not to be confused with the selling agent that represents buyers, the listing agent is in charge of helping the owners sell their home at the highest price possible.

Mortgage Insurance

This insurance protects the mortgage lender against loss if a borrower defaults on his loan. There is both private and public mortgage insurance. Private mortgage insurance is required for borrowers of conventional loans with a down payment of less than 20%.

Mutual Acceptance

The point when both the buyer and seller agree on the price and terms of a deal.

Pre-Approval

A letter from a bank or a lender estimating how much they'll lend a borrower. Getting pre-approved for a loan helps establish a price range and determines how much the borrower can afford.

Principle, Interest, Taxes, Insurance (PITI)

These four items make up a total monthly housing payment. Principal is the amount borrowed from a lender not including interest or additional fees.

Purchase & Sale Agreement

The official document received after mutual acceptance on an offer stating the final sale price and all terms of the agreement.

REO

Short for "real estate owned," REOs are foreclosed homes owned by banks and lenders.






Short Sale

A home that is listed for sale at a price lower than the amount owed on the mortgage. Homeowners hope to sell their home as a short sale to avoid penalties associated with going into foreclosure.



Home Listing Types



 TRADITIONAL	 RELOCATION	 BANK OWNED	 SHORT SALE	 BANKRUPTCY
<p>Response time: typically quick, seller is personally involved in the sale, close in 30-45 days</p>	<p>Response time: takes longer, seller may or may not be involved, relocation companies work only during business hours, close in 30-45 days</p>	<p>Response time: long response times, banks only available during business hours, bank representative may handle many cases, close in 30-45 days</p>	<p>Response time: seller typically responds quickly, lien holder bank(s) review may take 1-6 months, close 14-30 days after approval</p>	<p>Response time: trustee may respond relatively quickly, court and/or lien holder bank(s) review for approval may take 1-6 months, close 14-30 days after approval</p>
<p>Repairs: seller often willing and/or able to make repairs and/or negotiate concessions</p>	<p>Repairs: seller sometimes willing and/or able to make repairs or negotiate concessions</p>	<p>Repairs: sales are as-is, buyer may walk away based on inspection but repairs or concessions are uncommon</p>	<p>Repairs: sales are generally as-is, buyers may walk away based on inspection but repairs and/or concessions are not very common</p>	<p>Repairs: sales are as-is, buyers may walk away based on inspection but repairs or concessions are rare</p>
<p>Additional fees: none</p>	<p>Additional fees: none</p>	<p>Additional fees: may be extra cost to “dewinterize” property for inspection, additional closing costs possible</p>	<p>Additional fees: negotiator fees common, buyer may be requested to pick up ast minute costs to approve sale</p>	<p>Additional fees: trustee fee of several percent of the purchase price to be paid at closing and may not be financed, other possible fees at closing</p>
<p>Additional forms: none</p>	<p>Additional forms: relocation company addendum may be required, may change terms of standard agreement</p>	<p>Additional forms: bank addendum will be required, may change terms of standard agreement</p>	<p>Additional forms: may be required initially, additional documents may be required at approval stage</p>	<p>Additional forms: will be required, will change terms of standard agreement</p>
<p>Success rate: very good</p>	<p>Success rate: very good</p>	<p>Success rate: good</p>	<p>Success rate: variable, often takes attempts by several buyers prior to eventual approval</p>	<p>Success rate: variable, may take attempts by several buyers prior to eventual approval</p>

15 Tips for Home Tours

The evaluation starts when you first set foot in a home. No house is perfect, but you can negotiate a better deal if you know about its problems early. And, before you close, you'll have an inspector pick apart every room.

Redfin talked to a dozen of our agents about what we look for when evaluating a property to buy for ourselves. Here's what we came up with:

- 1 Bring a camera, notebook & tape measure**
You think you'll remember everything but you won't. Compare the home's dimensions to your couch, dining table and guest bed.
- 2 See how much sunlight the place gets**
Visit during the day. Imagine the trees with leaves – they may block your view, or provide some welcoming shade.
- 3 Check the bathrooms for rot & mold**
On the ceiling above the shower, along the baseboards by the tub.
- 4 Look for wavy or discolored siding on the exterior**
The south-facing wall gets the most sun; the north-facing is the most damp.
- 5 Make sure water spouts drain away from the house**
Water gushing from the roof may cause water damage in the foundation.
- 6 Take stock of the storage space**
Moving day is a bad time to realize there's no room for your hockey gear.
- 7 Turn off any music playing in the home**
So you can gauge road noise and airplane traffic.
- 8 Check for hardwood floors**
Lift a corner of the carpet by the heating vent.
- 9 Peek into the attic**
There should be plenty of insulation.
- 10 Bring a marble or two**
If you want to make sure the floors are level.
- 11 When sharing a wall, make sure it's thick**
In condos with several units for sale, ask a friend to flush the toilet or walk the floor of the unit upstairs.
- 12 Ignore the appliances & carpets**
They're easy to replace. Focus on location first, the structure second.
- 13 Check the closets**
If the seller still lives there, he might be in less of a hurry to sell.
- 14 Get the disclosure packet**
Look for lead-based paint, asbestos, wiring that needs to be replaced.
- 15 Compare tax records to the listing details**
If there are discrepancies in the square footage, bedrooms or bathrooms, then look for evidence of a remodel since the last sale. Other sellers just stretch the truth.

Ask the Listing Agent:

- Is there a seller's disclosure statement?
- How old is the roof?
- How old is the furnace?
- How old is the hot water tank?
- What is the electrical amperage coming into the home?
- Has the basement experienced any seepage/flooding?

Condo-Specific Questions:

- Are there any pending special assessments?
- Are there any talks of future projects?
- How much is in the condo's reserves?
- What is the building's owner occupancy rate?
- Are there restrictions on pets?

Home Tour Checklist

Use one form to keep track of each home that you view today. Don't fill out each field completely, but note anything that you really like or dislike. Go with your first impression. If you feel that the home isn't worth looking at further, don't!

Interior	Notes	Condition	Exterior	Notes	Condition	Other Notes
Living Room			Roof/Gutters			
Dining Room			Siding			
Kitchen			Windows			
Counters			Yard/Fences			
Cabinets			Driveway/Sidewalk			
Appliances			Garage/Storage			
Master Bedroom			Road Noise			
Master Bathroom			Items to Note			
Other Bedrooms			Laundry			
Other Bathrooms			Fireplace			
Attic/Basement			Foundation			
Storage Space						



Home Inspection Tips

As soon as the seller has accepted your offer, arrange for an inspector to come out to the home and examine it for problems, defects, and safety issues.

What will the inspector examine?

- The exterior and interior of the home
- Electrical
- Plumbing
- Ventilation
- Structural elements
- Condition of appliances that will stay with the home

How do I find an inspector?

Your Redfin real estate agent will be able to provide you with references to inspectors.

Make sure that the inspector is registered with a reputable home inspector's group, such as the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) or the National Association of Home Inspectors (NAHI).

How long will the inspection take?

An inspection generally takes a few hours, and at the end of the process, the inspector will provide the buyer with a report of all the issues discovered during the inspection.

What is an inspection contingency?

Most purchase and sale agreements include an inspection contingency. This gives the buyer the right to use the results of the inspection to negotiate with the seller to cover the cost of repairs, or to back out of the deal altogether.

Under the terms of most inspection contingencies, the buyer has the right to back out of the purchase and reclaim his earnest money after reading the report.

How much does an inspection cost?

Inspections usually run between \$300 and \$500, depending on local rates and the size of the home.

The inspector may also suggest additional follow-up inspections by specialists.

Examples:

- A sewer specialist scope to verify the condition of the sewer line from the home
- A structural engineer to give a more detailed report on cracks or bulging in the home's foundation.

These follow-up inspections may also run several hundred dollars in cost, if needed.

Can I back out of the deal, even if the inspector doesn't find a major problem?

It depends on the terms of your contract.

Some inspection contingencies allow the buyer to back out of the deal for any reason after viewing the report.

Others require the buyer to cite any "deal-breakers" in the report, and to then give the seller the option of addressing the issue before backing out of the deal.

CAUTION: By using the inspection contingency as a "get out of jail free" card — if you're not serious about your offer — the seller is missing an opportunity to work with other buyers while working with you.

The inspection contingency is an important form of protection for the buyer, but don't abuse it by making halfhearted offers.

Notes:

15 Questions to Ask An Agent

Wherever you find an agent, asking a few questions up front can help make sure you get the right agent for you.

- 1 Is this your full-time gig? How many clients have you served this year?**
An active, full-time agent is more likely to be up-to-date on the market and the law.
- 2 How many sales have you handled in my target neighborhoods?**
You want someone who knows the local market, with a few recent deals in your target neighborhoods.
- 3 When clients have been unhappy with your service, what went wrong?**
Asking why a client has been a bad fit can help you figure out if you're a good fit.
- 4 Has a client ever filed a complaint against you?**
If you're uncomfortable asking, just check with the state licensing board.
- 5 What's your fee?**
The seller pays the buyer's agent using the money you pay for the house, typically 2-3% of the sales price. You don't want an agent who pressures you into a home based on their chances of landing a fatter commission check.
- 6 What services do you offer beyond negotiations and escrow?**
Make a list of what you'll be paying for. Negotiations, paperwork and contingencies are the minimum.
- 7 When am I committed to working with you?**
Many consumers start touring homes without realizing this can obligate them to work with the agent, contract or no contract.
- 8 How many foreclosure (REO) or short-sale transactions have you handled?**
Distressed properties can be great deals, but the paperwork is complicated, and your liability is greater. The best agents have experience closing deals with banks.
- 9 Who else will be working with me?**
An agent is often supported by a team. But the person you hire should do most of the work.
- 10 Am I obligated to work with the lender, inspector, or other service providers you recommend?**
A "yes" here is a big red flag. Though good agents may have solid recommendations, you should never feel pressured to use their recommendation. It's illegal for an agent to force you to use "their" service provider.
- 11 How quickly can you get me into a home?**
Hot homes move fast. Ask how the agent handles tours on short notice.
- 12 Do you represent buyers and sellers on the same house?**
When one agent represents both the buyer and seller, this is known as dual agency, and it is not a good thing for buyers. If the seller's agent is trying to get the most money for his client's home, how can he also be trying to get you the best deal? Our advice is simple: avoid dual agency.
- 13 What sets you apart from other agents?**
Look for expertise, not just enthusiasm. You want an agent with experience in your favorite neighborhoods, a proven track record of happy customers, and deep knowledge of any special requirements you might have in your home search.
- 14 What if I'm unhappy with your service?**
Most agents get paid when you buy a house, giving them an incentive to close the deal, even if you have doubts. Even if you have complaints after you purchase your home, it may be too late to do anything. Ask your agent if she's willing to guarantee your satisfaction, and what recourse you'll have for a bad experience.
- 15 Can I see reviews of your past deals?**
Every agent has clients he served well. But the best agents consistently deliver excellent service.