



The **BUYER GUIDE**

WARM
HOME
Experience

real

HELLO & Welcome

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Congratulations on taking this exciting step!

I'm thrilled to be a part of this exciting time as you begin your journey to find the perfect home. As a dedicated and experienced real estate professional serving the Greater Orlando area and the Space Coast, I bring local expertise and a personalized approach to guide you every step of the way.

About Me:

I'm **Christine Smith**, and I've been proudly serving clients through real estate since 2008. With over a decade of experience and hundreds of successful transactions, I bring deep market knowledge and a personalized approach to every buyer, seller, and investor I work with across Central Florida—including Orlando, Kissimmee, Winter Garden, and surrounding areas.

My mission is simple: to guide you with clarity, care, and strategy at every step of your real estate journey. I've mentored and built top-producing real estate teams across the country, but what I love most is helping individuals and families find a place they're proud to call home.

Whether you're relocating, upgrading, downsizing, or investing, I'm here to help you make informed decisions with confidence. From navigating competitive offers to strategic pricing and strong negotiations, I'm committed to delivering results—always with your goals in mind.

With a trusted network of professionals, including stagers, photographers, contractors, and more, I make the process smooth and seamless, whether you're buying or selling.

THE *Process*

Home Buyer Road Map Your step by step guide to buying your home!

1. Establish a Game Plan

Before diving into the home-buying process, sit down with your agent to create a strategy. Discuss your timeline, budget, preferred neighborhoods, and must-have features in a home. Setting clear goals from the start will help streamline your search and ensure everyone is on the same page.

2. Start Your Home Search

Work with your agent to identify properties that match your criteria and budget. Utilize online search tools, attend open houses, and schedule showings to get a sense of what's available in your desired areas. Stay open-minded and flexible, but keep your must-haves list handy to stay focused on what matters most.

Make an Offer

Once you find the right home, your agent will help you prepare a competitive offer based on the property's market value, recent comparable sales, and your budget. The offer will include the price, proposed closing date, and any contingencies (like a home inspection). Be prepared for some negotiation with the seller before reaching an agreement.

Get an Appraisal

Your lender will order an appraisal to ensure the home is worth the agreed-upon price. An independent appraiser evaluates the property's value based on its condition, location, and comparable sales. If the appraisal comes in lower than the purchase price, you may need to renegotiate with the seller or make up the difference.

Finalize Financing

Submit all necessary documents to your lender to finalize your mortgage. This step includes providing updated income statements, bank statements, and other required paperwork. Your lender will complete the underwriting process and issue a "clear to close" when everything is in order.

Perform the Final Walk-Through

Just before closing, conduct a final walk-through of the property to verify it's in the condition agreed upon in your contract. Ensure all requested repairs are completed, and that the home is ready for you to move in. This is your last chance to confirm that everything is in order.

Secure Financing

Begin the mortgage pre-approval process by selecting a reputable lender. This step involves sharing your financial information (such as income, credit score, and debts) to determine how much you can borrow. A pre-approval letter shows sellers you're a serious buyer and gives you a realistic budget to work with.

Tour Homes

Visit potential homes in person to get a feel for their layout, condition, and location. Use a checklist to note key features, pros, and cons, and take photos or videos to remember each property. Touring multiple homes will help you compare options and narrow down your choices.

Conduct a Home Inspection

After the offer is accepted, schedule a home inspection with a certified professional. The inspector will assess the property's condition, identifying any issues or needed repairs. Review the inspection report with your agent to decide if you want to request repairs, negotiate a credit, or move forward as is.

Negotiate Contingencies

Work with your agent to address any contingencies included in the offer, such as repair requests or financing conditions. This is your opportunity to negotiate repairs or credits, based on the inspection or appraisal results, and to confirm all terms of the sale are agreed upon by both parties.

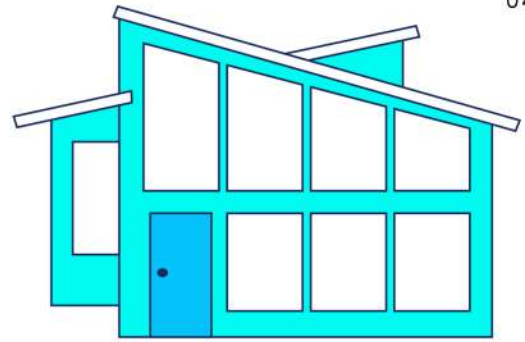
Plan Moving Logistics

Start planning your move by scheduling movers, packing belongings, and coordinating utility transfers. Consider creating a moving checklist to ensure everything is organized and on track for a smooth transition to your new home.

Get the Keys!

At closing, you'll sign the final documents to complete the purchase. Once the paperwork is signed and funds are transferred, the home is officially yours! Celebrate this exciting milestone and start enjoying your new home.

Your SUPPORT SQUAD



Key Roles in the Home-Buying Process

Understanding these roles clarifies who handles each aspect of your home-buying journey. It ensures you know who to turn to for specific needs and how each role contributes to a seamless experience. This knowledge helps you navigate the process with confidence and efficiency.

01. Buyer (you)

Define your needs and budget, communicate with your agent, attend showings, submit necessary financing documents, and actively participate in negotiations and inspections.

03. Lender

Assesses your financial situation, provides mortgage pre-approval, offers loan options, secures financing, and manages the appraisal and loan process.

05. Appraiser

Hired by the lender to assess the property's market value, ensuring it's worth the purchase price and meets the lender's requirements.

07. Escrow Officer

Manages funds and documents during the transaction, ensuring all sale conditions are met before releasing funds and finalizing the deal.

09. Underwriter

Reviews financial documents to assess loan risk, verifies income, credit, and property details to approve the mortgage.

02. Agent

Your guide through the process. They help find properties, schedule showings, provide market insights, prepare and negotiate offers, and manage transaction details.

04. Home Inspector

Evaluates the property's condition, identifies issues or needed repairs, and provides a report to help you make informed decisions and negotiate repairs.

06. Title Company or Attorney

Conducts a title search, ensures no legal issues with the property, handles closing, and prepares necessary documents.

08. Insurance Agent

Helps obtain homeowner's insurance, required by lenders, guiding you through policy options and ensuring proper coverage.

10. Closing Agent

Oversees the final steps of the transaction, ensuring all documents are signed, funds are distributed, and ownership is transferred.

Understanding REAL ESTATE JARGON



Key terms explained for a smooth home buying experience

Navigating the world of real estate involves learning specific terms and concepts. This guide breaks down key jargon to help you make informed decisions and communicate effectively throughout the home-buying process.

01. Appraisal

An evaluation of a property's market value by a licensed appraiser. It's typically required by lenders to confirm the home's value aligns with the loan amount.

03. Contingency

A condition in the contract that must be fulfilled for the sale to proceed, such as passing an inspection or securing financing.

05. Escrow

A neutral party that holds funds and documents until all terms of the transaction are satisfied. It ensures both parties meet their obligations before the deal is finalized.

07. Inspection Period

The timeframe following an offer acceptance during which the buyer can inspect the property. This period allows for negotiation on repairs or credits based on inspection findings.

09. Loan-to-Value Ratio (LTV)

A measure used by lenders to assess loan risk, calculated by dividing the loan amount by the property's appraised value. It helps determine borrowing terms and conditions.

02. Closing Cost

Fees and expenses associated with finalizing a real estate transaction, including taxes, insurance, and lender fees. These costs usually amount to 2-5% of the purchase price.

04. Earnest Money Deposit

A deposit made by the buyer to demonstrate serious intent to purchase. Held in escrow, it is applied toward the down payment or closing costs.

06. Homeowners Association (HOA)

An organization that governs a community, subdivision, or condo. It enforces rules, manages common areas, and collects dues from residents.

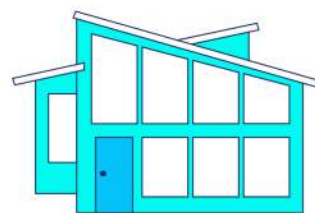
08. Lien

A legal claim against a property due to unpaid debts or obligations. It must be resolved before the property can be sold, as it affects the clear transfer of ownership.

10. Pre-Approval

An initial assessment by a lender to determine how much a buyer can borrow based on their financial status. It provides a clearer picture of the buyer's purchasing power.

New CONSTRUCTION SPECIFIC-TERMS



Essential vocabulary for understanding your new home build

Gain insight into key terms associated with new construction homes. This guide will help you navigate the building process, from warranties and financing to customization and fees. Understanding these terms will ensure you're well-prepared for each stage of building and buying a new home.

01. Builder Warranty

A guarantee provided by the builder covering certain repairs and structural issues for a specific period after the home is completed.

03. Construction Loan

A short-term loan used to finance the building of a new home, which is converted to a traditional mortgage once the home is completed.

05. Lot Premium

An additional cost added to the base price of a new construction home for lots with desirable features, such as water views or larger sizes.

07. Spec Home

A newly constructed home that is built without a specific buyer in mind, usually with popular features and upgrades chosen by the builder.

02. Certificate of Occupancy (CO)

A document issued by the local government certifying that a new home has been constructed in compliance with all building codes and is safe for occupancy.

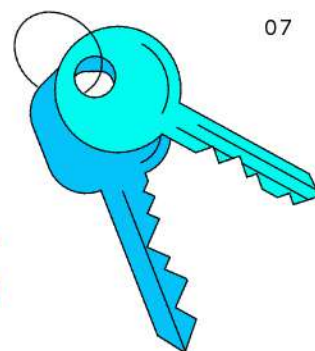
04. Custom Home

A home designed and built to a buyer's specific preferences, often involving a lot of customization and choices in materials, layout, and features.

06. Punch List

A list of items or issues that need to be addressed or fixed by the builder before the final walk-through and closing of a new construction home.

The FLORIDA SPECIFIC-TERMS



07

Key terms for navigating Florida's real estate landscape

Explore essential terms unique to the Florida real estate market. This guide covers property taxes, insurance, flood zones, and special coverage options to help you make informed decisions in the Sunshine State.

01. CDD Fee

A fee paid by homeowners in certain Florida communities to fund the development and maintenance of infrastructure and amenities.

03. Homestead Exemption

A Florida-specific property tax benefit that can reduce the assessed value of a primary residence, lowering the property taxes owed.

05. Wind Mitigation Inspection

An inspection that evaluates a home's wind-resistant features. In Florida, this inspection can lower insurance premiums due to the state's hurricane risk.

07. Sinkhole Coverage

An optional insurance policy in Florida that provides protection in the event of damage caused by a sinkhole, which can occur due to the state's unique geology.

02. Elevation Certificate

A document used in Florida to determine a property's flood insurance rates by showing its elevation relative to the base flood elevation.

04. Flood Zone

An area designated by FEMA that indicates the likelihood of flooding. Certain zones may require flood insurance, which is common in many parts of Florida.

06. Termite Bond

A contract with a pest control company that provides regular inspections and treatment for termites, often required or recommended in Florida due to the climate.

Mortgage PRE-APPROVAL CHECKLIST

Getting pre-approved for a mortgage is a crucial step in the home-buying process. It helps you understand how much you can borrow and demonstrates your seriousness to sellers. To streamline the pre-approval process, gather the following documents

Here's what the *checklist* looks like

Proof of Identity:

- Valid driver's license or passport

Proof of Income:

- Recent pay stubs (last 2-3 months)
- W-2 forms (last 2 years)
- Tax returns (last 2 years)
- Recent bank statements (last 2-3 months)

Proof of Employment:

- Employment verification letter or recent pay stubs

Credit Information:

- Authorization to pull credit report

Assets and Liabilities:

- Bank statements and investment account statements
- Documentation of debts (e.g., credit cards, loans)

Down Payment:

- Proof of funds for down payment (bank statements, gift letters if applicable)

Tips FOR GOOD CREDIT SCORE

A strong credit score is crucial for favorable loan terms and financial stability. Follow these key practices to effectively manage and improve your credit, ensuring you stay on track for your financial goals.

Tips for Maintaining Good Credit

Pay Bills on Time: Ensure timely payment of all bills and loans to maintain a good credit score.

Reduce Debt: Lower credit card balances and avoid taking on new debt before applying.

Check Your Credit Report: Regularly review your credit report for errors and dispute any inaccuracies.

Maintain a Low Credit Utilization Ratio: Keep credit card balances below 30% of your credit limit.

Avoid Large Purchases: Refrain from making major purchases or taking on new credit lines before your mortgage application is complete.

Cost Breakdown

POTENTIAL EXPENSES WHEN PURCHASING A HOME

HOME INSPECTION

- Cost: \$300 - \$500
- Details: Evaluates property condition and identifies issues.

APPRAISAL

- Cost: \$400 - \$700
- Details: Assesses property value for lender requirements.

CLOSING COSTS

- Cost: 2% - 5% of purchase price
- Details: Includes title search, insurance, and escrow fees.

MORTGAGE APPLICATION FEE

- Cost: \$100 - \$300
- Details: Fee for processing your mortgage application.

LOAN ORIGATION FEE

- Cost: 0.5% - 1% of loan amount
- Details: Charged by lender for processing the loan.

HOMEOWNER'S INSURANCE

- Cost: \$500 - \$1,000 annually
- Details: Protects your home and belongings.

PROPERTY TAXES

- Cost: Varies by location
- Details: Taxes assessed based on property value.

TITLE INSURANCE

- Cost: \$500 - \$1,000
- Details: Protects against title issues.

MOVING EXPENSES

- Cost: \$200 - \$2,000
- Details: Costs for movers or rental trucks.

UTILITY SETUP FEES

- Cost: \$50 - \$150 per service
- Details: Costs for lawn mowers and proper

HOME WARRANTY

- Cost: \$300 - \$600 annually
- Details: Covers repairs or replacements for systems and appliances.

FAQ COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT PURCHASING A HOME

01. What is the first step in buying a home?

The first step is to get pre-approved for a mortgage. This helps determine your budget and shows sellers you're a serious buyer.

02. How much should I expect for down payments?

Down payments generally range from 3% to 20% of the purchase price, depending on the type of loan and your financial situation. A higher down payment can reduce your monthly mortgage payments and potentially eliminate the need for private mortgage insurance (PMI).

03. How much should I budget for closing costs?

Closing costs typically range from 2% to 5% of the purchase price. This includes fees for the title search, escrow services and more.

04. What if I don't have enough money for the down payment or closing cost?

If you're short on funds, consider options like down payment assistance programs, grants, or gifts from family members. Some loan programs also offer lower down payment requirements or cover some closing costs.

05. What is earnest money?

Earnest money is a deposit made with your offer to show you're serious about purchasing the home. It is applied toward your down payment.

06. How does the appraisal process work?

An appraiser assesses the home's market value to ensure it meets the lender's requirements. This protects both you and the lender by verifying the home's value.

07. What are contingencies in a real estate contract?

Contingencies are conditions that must be met for the contract to be legally binding, such as satisfactory home inspection results or securing financing.

08. Can I negotiate the purchase price?

Yes, you can negotiate the price. Your agent will help you make a competitive offer based on the home's value and market conditions. They can also guide you through counteroffers and negotiation strategies to secure the best deal.

09. What is a title search?

A title search verifies the property's ownership history and ensures there are no legal issues or claims against the property.

10. How long does the home-buying process take?

The process typically takes 30 to 60 days from the time your offer is accepted to closing, depending on various factors like loan processing and inspections.

11. What should I look for in a neighborhood?

Consider factors such as proximity to work/school, safety, local amenities, public transportation, and the quality of the local school district.

**GUIDING YOU TO
THE RIGHT HOME
FOR THE RIGHT
PRICE AND TERMS
WHENEVER THE
TIME IS RIGHT
FOR YOU.**



SOCIALS



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