

Don't Hire a Door Opener

The Complete Buyer's Agent Playbook

The 100-Point Buyer's Agent Scorecard, Red-Flag Checklist & 30 Questions to Ask Before You Hire an Agent

Buying a home is too important—and too expensive—to choose an agent simply because they answered the phone, sent you a few listings, or offered to show you a house. Opening doors is only one small part of a buyer's agent's job. Use this playbook before choosing your agent—and especially before committing to work with one.

100-Point Scorecard

Rate every agent you interview across 10 critical categories

Red-Flag Checklist

Know the warning signs before you sign anything

30 Interview Questions

Ask the questions most buyers never think to ask



Door Opener or Buyer Advocate?

There is a major difference between someone who can show you homes and someone who can professionally represent you through one of the largest purchases you may ever make. Understanding that difference before you hire an agent is one of the most important steps in the home-buying process.

A Door Opener Typically:

- Sends listings
- Schedules showings
- Opens the property
- Asks, "Do you like it?"
- Passes along the seller's asking price
- Writes whatever offer you tell them to write
- Relays information from the listing agent
- Moves the transaction toward closing

A Buyer Advocate Should Also:

- Understand current market conditions
- Analyze comparable sales
- Discuss pricing before you become emotionally committed
- Look for potential property and transaction risks
- Help develop an offer strategy
- Negotiate multiple components of the transaction
- Help you evaluate inspection findings
- Explain deadlines, contingencies, and options
- Anticipate problems before they become emergencies

A door opener unlocks the house. A great buyer's agent helps unlock the deal.

The 100-Point Buyer's Agent Scorecard

Score every agent you interview from **0-10** in each of the ten categories below. Add the ten categories for a maximum score of **100 points**. This scorecard gives you an objective framework to compare agents side by side—removing gut-feeling guesswork from one of the most important hiring decisions you'll make.

0-2 Serious concern	3-4 Below expectations	5-6 Average
7-8 Strong	9-10 Exceptional	



Work through each category carefully. An agent who scores well across all ten areas is genuinely prepared to represent you—not just accompany you.

Category 1 – Local Market Knowledge

___/10 Points

A strong buyer's agent should understand the market before asking you to make an offer. Market knowledge isn't a nice-to-have—it's the foundation of every other service a buyer's agent provides. Without it, pricing analysis, offer strategy, and negotiation all suffer. When you interview an agent, probe for specific knowledge, not generalities.

Ask Whether the Agent Can Discuss:

- Recent comparable sales
- Current inventory levels
- Average or typical market times
- List-price versus sale-price patterns
- Neighborhood differences
- Competition among buyers
- Properties that may be overpriced
- Local market trends
- Community-specific considerations
- How market conditions should affect your offer

What You Want to Hear

Specific information, examples, statistics, recent transactions, and explanations of how current market conditions affect your buying strategy. An agent with genuine market knowledge will answer these questions fluidly and with detail—because they live and work in this market every day.



Red Flag: "I'll pull some numbers once you find a house." Market knowledge should precede your search, not follow it.

Category 2 – Pricing & Comparable Sales Analysis

___/10 Points

The listing price is the seller's asking price. It is **not** automatically the property's market value. A home can be priced too high, fairly priced, or even below market value. Your buyer's agent should help you distinguish between these scenarios before you make an emotional commitment—not after the appraisal delivers a surprise.

A Strong Agent Should Help Evaluate:

Comparable recent sales

Pending competition when available

Property condition

Location advantages & drawbacks

Lot characteristics

Improvements and renovations

Days on market

Price reductions history

Market demand signals

⊗ **Red Flag:** "The seller is asking \$450,000, so we should probably offer \$450,000."
Accepting asking price without analysis isn't representation—it's order-taking.

Category 3 – Offer Strategy

___/10 Points

A strong offer is not automatically the highest offer. In some markets, a well-structured offer at or below asking price beats a higher offer with poor terms. In competitive markets, a buyer's agent who understands offer architecture can help you win without overpaying. Strategy matters at every price point.

Your agent should help you evaluate the complete structure of an offer—not just the number you write at the top of the contract. Every component of an offer can be a negotiating tool or a liability, depending on how it's used.



Price & Deposit

Offer price, earnest money deposit amount, and how both signal buyer seriousness to the seller



Inspection & Appraisal Terms

Inspection contingency structure, appraisal gap considerations, and how terms affect risk



Closing Date & Timing

Closing timeline, possession date, and how flexibility can make your offer more attractive



Concessions & Contingencies

Seller concessions, financing contingencies, personal property, and other negotiable terms

Ask: *"How would you help me decide what to offer on a home?"* A professional answer should include considerably more than: *"Whatever you're comfortable paying."*

Category 4 – Negotiation Skill

___/10 Points

This is one of the most important categories on the scorecard. Negotiation doesn't begin and end with the purchase price. Your agent may need to negotiate across a wide range of issues—some predictable, some unexpected—at multiple points throughout the transaction. An agent who can only talk about price is leaving significant value on the table.

Your Agent May Need to Negotiate:

- Purchase price
- Repairs and inspection issues
- Seller credits
- Closing costs
- Timelines and possession
- Contingencies
- Appraisal issues
- Included items and personal property
- Contract modifications

The Best Interview Question

"Tell me about the last three transactions where you negotiated on behalf of your buyer. What was the issue, what strategy did you use, and what was the result?"

Look for specific examples with real details—dollar amounts, repair items, timelines, and outcomes. General statements like "I'm a really good negotiator" tell you nothing actionable.



Red Flag: The agent cannot provide recent, specific examples of negotiation on behalf of a buyer.

Category 5 – Property Problem Identification

___/10 Points

Your buyer's agent is not replacing a licensed home inspector or other qualified professional. However, an experienced buyer's agent should recognize when something deserves additional investigation—before you're under contract, before you've paid for inspections, and before you've fallen too deeply in love with a property to think clearly about its problems.

An agent who walks through every showing without noticing red flags is not protecting your interests. Experience teaches agents to spot the signs that warrant a closer look—and to say something when they do.

Structural & Exterior

- Roof condition and visible wear
- Foundation concerns
- Drainage and grading issues
- Water intrusion signs

Systems & Mechanical

- HVAC age and condition
- Electrical concerns
- Plumbing red flags
- Deferred maintenance patterns

Improvements & Additions

- Unpermitted renovations
- Additions that look DIY
- Cosmetic work hiding larger problems
- Other visible warning signs

⊗ **Red Flag:** The agent spends the entire showing standing in the kitchen while you tour the property alone. Your agent should be engaged and observant throughout every showing.

Category 6 – Inspection & Due-Diligence Guidance

___/10 Points

The inspection period can be one of the most important stages of the transaction. It is your primary opportunity to understand what you're actually buying—and to negotiate repairs, credits, or price adjustments based on what inspectors find. An agent who treats the inspection period as a formality is not serving your interests.

Your agent should help you understand the process and coordinate the transaction while appropriate inspectors and specialists provide professional opinions. The key is knowing when to push, when to accept, and when to walk away.

1 Understand Your Options
Clear explanation of inspection types, specialists available, and what each one covers

2 Track Critical Deadlines
Inspection response deadlines and contingency windows must be managed precisely—missed deadlines cost buyers their leverage

3 Evaluate Findings Strategically
Distinguish major issues from minor items, then develop a repair request or credit negotiation strategy based on actual findings

4 Problem-Solve Calmly
Stay objective under pressure and never pressure you to ignore legitimate concerns just to preserve the transaction

⊗ **Red Flag:** "Inspections just complicate deals. Don't worry about it." Any agent who discourages thorough due diligence is not your advocate.

The Relocation Buyer Test

If you're moving from another city, county, or state, your agent's responsibilities become even more important. You are not just buying a house—you are choosing a community, a commute, a school district, a tax environment, and a daily lifestyle. And you may only have a weekend or two to make that decision.

A buyer's agent working with a relocation client must do more than show homes. They must serve as a knowledgeable local resource who helps you understand what you don't yet know—before you sign a contract on a home in a community you may regret.



Community Fit

Which areas match your lifestyle, commute needs, and priorities—not just your price range



Property Tax & HOA

Tax rate differences between communities and HOA or community rule implications



Risk Factors

Flood zone designations, local services, and distances that look short on a map but feel very different in daily life

Your buyer's agent should help you **investigate**—not simply sell you on—the community.

Category 7 – Neighborhood & Property Research

___/10 Points

A buyer's agent with strong research skills helps you gather information that can affect your decision, your financing, your insurance, and your long-term satisfaction with the property. This isn't information the agent manufactures—it's a matter of knowing where to look, what to ask, and which findings deserve your attention before you commit.

Ask Whether Your Agent Helps Buyers Research:

- Flood maps and flood zone designations
- Tax records and assessment history
- HOA or community documents and rules
- Property records and ownership history
- Municipal zoning and use information
- Utility considerations
- Community amenities and services
- Road access and easements
- Location-specific considerations
- Other relevant property information

The Right Answer to the Right Question

Ask: **"What research do you recommend I complete before making an offer?"**

A strong agent will provide a specific list of resources and explain why each one matters. They'll also flag items that could affect your offer terms—such as flood zone status that may require flood insurance, or HOA rules that restrict rentals or renovations.

⊗ **Red Flag:** "If you like the house, everything else will work itself out." Research protects you. An agent who dismisses it is not protecting you.

Category 8 – Relocation Expertise

___/10 Points

For relocation buyers, this category carries additional weight. An agent who regularly works with out-of-area buyers understands that your timeline, your knowledge gaps, and your decision-making process are different from local buyers. They should have a process specifically designed to help you succeed—not just a willingness to work with you.

The difference between an agent who has helped ten relocation clients and one who has helped one hundred is significant. Ask directly whether they work with relocation buyers regularly and what their specific process looks like.

1

Community Knowledge

Can objectively explain pros AND cons of different areas without steering you toward their preferred listings

2

Commute Understanding

Asks about your commute requirements and explains realistic drive times—not just map distances

3

Remote Capability

Can accommodate remote communication, virtual showings, and remote transaction coordination

4

Efficient Trip Planning

Helps organize efficient home-search visits so you maximize every trip to the area

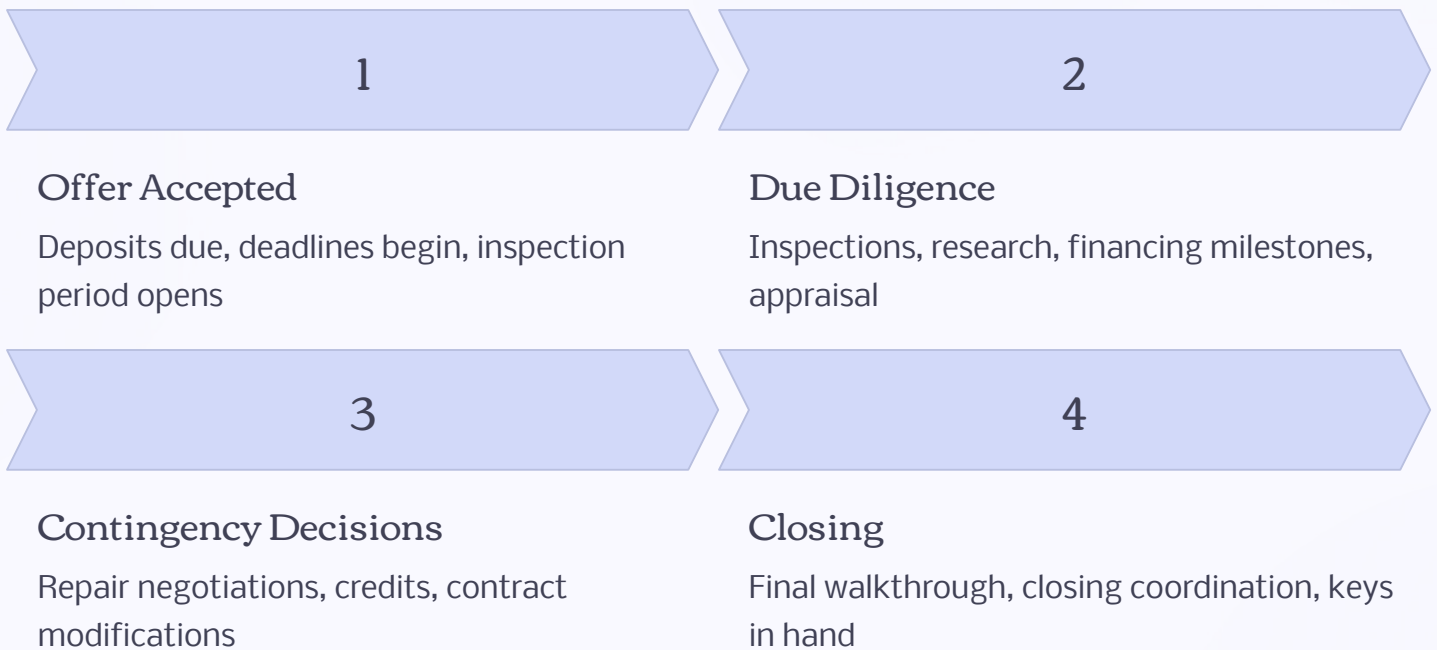


Red Flag: Every community the agent shows you is apparently "perfect." A strong relocation advisor should be willing to explain both pros and cons of every area you consider.

Protection After Your Offer Is Accepted

Getting under contract isn't the finish line. It's when another major part of your agent's work begins. Many buyers are surprised to learn that the period between an accepted offer and the closing table is filled with deadlines, decisions, and potential problems—all of which require active management by an experienced professional.

An agent who disappears after the contract is signed—or who hands everything off to a transaction coordinator you've never met—is not giving you the representation you deserve. The two remaining scorecard categories measure exactly this phase of service.

**1**

Offer Accepted

Deposits due, deadlines begin, inspection period opens

2

Due Diligence

Inspections, research, financing milestones, appraisal

3

Contingency Decisions

Repair negotiations, credits, contract modifications

4

Closing

Final walkthrough, closing coordination, keys in hand

Category 9 – Contract-to-Closing Management

___/10 Points

Between an accepted offer and closing day, there are numerous moving parts that require careful tracking and coordination. Missed deadlines can cost you your earnest money deposit. Unaddressed contingencies can leave you legally exposed. An agent who manages this phase professionally keeps you informed, on schedule, and protected at every step.

Ask How Your Agent Tracks:

- Earnest money deposits
- Inspection deadlines
- Inspection response periods
- Financing milestones
- Appraisal timing and results
- Contingency status
- Contract document management
- Closing coordination
- Final walkthrough scheduling
- Last-minute issues

The Right Question to Ask

"Once my offer is accepted, what exactly will you do between contract and closing?"

The answer should describe a clear, specific process—with your agent actively involved at every stage. Not: *"My transaction coordinator handles that."*

You hired a buyer's agent. That agent should remain your primary point of contact and advocate through the final day of your transaction.

Category 10 – Communication & Buyer Protection

___/10 Points

A great buyer's agent should make you feel informed rather than confused. Real estate transactions move quickly, involve significant sums of money, and frequently produce unexpected complications. Your agent's communication style—how often they update you, how clearly they explain difficult situations, and how reliably they respond—directly affects your ability to make good decisions under pressure.



Responsiveness

Response time, communication expectations, and availability during critical periods of the transaction



Proactive Updates

Does the agent reach out before you have to ask, or do you constantly chase information?



Delivering Bad News

Willingness to communicate problems clearly and calmly, without minimizing legitimate concerns



Commitment to You

Consistent advocacy for your interests—not for the transaction, not for the commission, for you

Ask: **"If something goes wrong during the transaction, how will you communicate it to me?"**



Red Flag: The agent is highly responsive before you sign but suddenly difficult to reach afterward. Availability should not end at the contract signature.

Your Final Buyer's Agent Score

Add your scores from all ten categories to calculate each agent's total. Use this scorecard to compare multiple candidates objectively before making your final hiring decision.

Category	Score	Maximum
Local Market Knowledge	---	10
Pricing Analysis	---	10
Offer Strategy	---	10
Negotiation	---	10
Problem Identification	---	10
Inspection Guidance	---	10
Property & Neighborhood Research	---	10
Relocation Expertise	---	10
Contract-to-Closing Management	---	10
Communication & Protection	---	10
TOTAL	---	100

90-100

Exceptional Buyer Advocate. Demonstrates a comprehensive process and appears capable of guiding, negotiating, researching, and protecting throughout the transaction.

80-89

Strong Candidate. Very good overall. Investigate any lower-scoring categories before deciding.

70-79

Proceed Carefully. Meaningful gaps in service or experience. Compare with other candidates.

60-69

Significant Concerns. Several areas deserve additional investigation before you hire.

Below 60

Keep Interviewing. Buying a home is too important to settle for inadequate representation.

The Buyer's Agent Red-Flag Checklist

One red flag does not automatically mean an agent is wrong for you. Multiple red flags should make you stop and ask more questions—or continue your search. Use this checklist during the interview phase, during your home search, and throughout the transaction. Red flags don't always appear at the beginning.

Before You Hire the Agent

- They talk mostly about themselves instead of asking about you
- They don't ask about your goals, desired communities, or budget
- They don't explain their home-buying process
- They can't describe their negotiation strategy or provide recent examples
- They don't discuss market conditions or comparable sales
- They pressure you to make an immediate commitment or make unrealistic promises
- They can't explain how they'll communicate with you throughout the process

Red Flags While Searching for Homes

The home search phase reveals a great deal about an agent's actual depth of service. An agent who is simply reacting to your requests—rather than proactively guiding you—is operating as a door opener, not an advocate. Watch for these warning signs during showings and listing discussions.

Passive Listing Behavior

- Only sends automated listing alerts
- Rarely suggests properties themselves
- Knows little about the communities you're considering

No Pricing Analysis

- Can't discuss recent comparable sales
- Never questions the listing price
- Encourages you to "just offer asking price" without analysis

Pressure to Write Offers

- Every home is described as a "great deal"
- Seems more interested in whether you'll write an offer than whether the home is right for you
- Doesn't point out potential concerns or recommend important research

Red Flags When Writing an Offer

The offer stage is where a buyer's agent's expertise—or lack of it—becomes most visible. Writing an offer should involve analysis, strategy, and clear communication about your options. An agent who skips this process and simply asks "what do you want to offer?" is not doing their job.

No Comparable-Sales Discussion

The agent proceeds to write an offer without any discussion of whether the listing price reflects actual market value

No Strategy Discussion

The agent simply asks "what do you want to offer?" with no analysis of terms, contingencies, or negotiation scenarios

Exclusive Price Focus

Discussion focuses entirely on price while ignoring inspection terms, financing contingencies, closing date, and other negotiable elements

Fear of Negotiation

The agent immediately accepts everything the listing side requests and cannot explain the reasoning behind their recommendations

Red Flags During Inspections

The inspection period is your strongest opportunity to gather information, negotiate repairs or credits, and confirm that you're making a sound purchase. An agent who minimizes this phase—or who seems more concerned about keeping the deal alive than about the actual findings—is not serving your interests.

Minimizing Findings

Downplays serious inspection findings or discourages appropriate additional investigation by specialists

Transaction Over Buyer

Appears more concerned about saving the transaction than evaluating the actual problem uncovered during inspection

Pressure to Proceed

Pressures you to move forward regardless of legitimate concerns, or doesn't explain your available contractual options

Missed Deadlines

Inspection response deadlines are missed or not clearly tracked, costing you leverage or creating legal exposure

A genuine buyer advocate will help you evaluate findings calmly, explain all available options, and support whatever decision is in your best interest—including walking away if necessary.

Red Flags Between Contract and Closing

Many buyers report that their agent's communication and engagement declined significantly after the contract was signed. This is precisely the phase when your agent's involvement matters most. Deadlines, financing milestones, appraisal issues, title concerns, and final-walkthrough preparation all require attention. An agent who disappears after the signed contract is a serious problem.

Communication Drop-Off

Communication suddenly decreases after contract signing—you're left wondering what's happening next

Deadline Confusion

Deadlines aren't clearly explained or tracked, and problems consistently surprise the agent

Reversed Roles

You have to remind the agent about important tasks—you feel like you're managing the transaction yourself

Unanswered Questions

Questions go unanswered and nobody prepares you for the final walkthrough or closing day procedures

The Biggest Red Flag of All

The agent behaves as though closing the deal is more important than protecting the buyer.

Every other red flag on this list is a symptom of this single underlying problem. An agent who prioritizes their commission over your interests will minimize problems, avoid difficult conversations, and push transactions forward regardless of what's in your best interest.

A buyer advocate should help you purchase the **right property on terms you understand and accept**—not simply push every transaction toward closing. The best agents have walked away from commissions because the deal wasn't right for their client. That is what genuine representation looks like.

Ask yourself after every agent interaction: *Is this agent protecting me, or are they protecting the transaction?* The answer will tell you everything you need to know.

30 Buyer's Agent Interview Questions

You don't need to ask every agent every question. Choose the questions most important to your situation—your market, your experience level, and your specific concerns. The goal is not to interrogate an agent. The goal is to understand how they work and whether their approach matches what you need.

These questions are organized into six categories. The most revealing questions—Questions 29 and 30—are saved for last. The answers you receive will tell you considerably more than years of experience or the number of homes sold.

O1

Experience & Market Knowledge

Questions 1 - 6: Understanding how they know the market and how they'll apply that knowledge for you

O2

Relocation Experience

Questions 7 - 12: Critical for out-of-area buyers who need community expertise, not just listing access

O3

Negotiation

Questions 13 - 18: Revealing whether the agent can negotiate strategically across multiple transaction components

O4

Property Due Diligence

Questions 19 - 23: Testing their approach to protecting you during the inspection and research phase

O5

Transaction Management

Questions 24 - 28: Understanding what post-contract service actually looks like

O6

The Two Questions Most Buyers Never Ask

Questions 29 - 30: The most revealing questions on the entire list

Experience & Market Knowledge

Questions 1-6

These questions establish whether the agent has both the experience and the ongoing market knowledge required to guide your purchase. Experience alone is not sufficient—an agent who hasn't been active recently may be out of touch with current market conditions, pricing patterns, and competitive dynamics.

1

Buyer Volume

How many buyers have you represented recently?

2

Business Mix

How much of your business involves buyers?

3

Area Familiarity

How familiar are you with the communities I'm considering?

4

Market Conditions

What is happening in the local market right now?

5

Pre-Offer Information

What information will you provide before I make an offer?

6

Pricing Methodology

How do you determine whether a home is fairly priced?

Relocation Experience

Questions 7-12

These questions are essential for buyers moving from outside the area. The answers will reveal whether the agent has a genuine process for helping out-of-area buyers—or whether they're simply willing to try. There is a meaningful difference between the two. An agent with a well-developed relocation process will answer these questions with specific examples and practical strategies.

1

Relocation Frequency

How frequently do you work with relocation buyers?

2

Community Comparison

How will you help me compare communities objectively?

3

Area Disadvantages

What are some disadvantages buyers should know about the areas I'm considering?

4

Remote Search

How do you handle home searches when a buyer lives several hours away?

5

Pre-Visit Narrowing

How do you help relocation clients narrow their search before visiting?

6

Local Research

What local research do you recommend buyers complete before purchasing?



Question 9 is particularly revealing. An agent willing to discuss disadvantages is demonstrating honest advocacy. One who only describes positives may be selling rather than advising.

Negotiation

Questions 13-18

These six questions are the most important in the entire interview. Negotiation is where a skilled buyer's agent creates tangible, measurable value for you—in dollars saved, repairs completed, credits received, and terms structured in your favor. An agent who cannot answer these questions with specific examples has not been negotiating effectively on behalf of their buyers.

Q13

Tell me about the last three buyer transactions you negotiated

Q14

What was negotiated besides purchase price?

Q15

How do you determine an offer strategy?

Q16

How do you approach multiple-offer situations?

Q17

How do you negotiate inspection findings?

Q18

Can you give an example of a difficult negotiation you successfully handled?

Listen for specificity. Exact numbers, real scenarios, and clear descriptions of strategy separate genuine negotiators from agents who claim to negotiate without doing it in practice.

Property Due Diligence

Questions 19-23

These questions reveal how seriously an agent takes the investigation phase of a home purchase. Due diligence protects you from buying a home with hidden problems, unresolved legal issues, or community characteristics that don't match your needs. An agent with strong due-diligence habits approaches every property with a questioning mind—not just an enthusiasm for closing.

1 Property Observation

What potential problems are you watching for while we're touring homes?

2 Research Recommendations

What property information do you recommend researching before making an offer?

3 Inspection Evaluation

How do you help buyers evaluate inspection findings and determine appropriate responses?

4 Specialist Recommendations

When would you recommend bringing in an additional specialist beyond the general inspector?

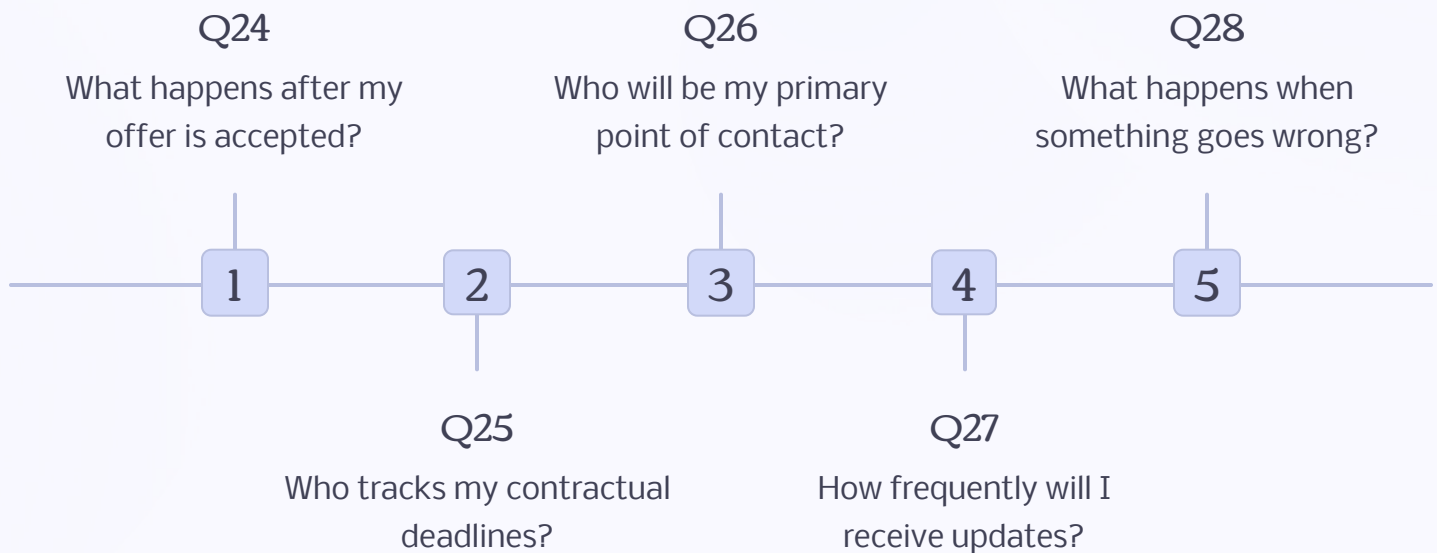
5 HOA & Community

How do you help buyers evaluate HOA or community considerations before committing?

Transaction Management

Questions 24-28

These questions measure what post-contract service actually looks like in practice. Many buyers assume their agent remains fully engaged after an offer is accepted. The reality varies widely. An agent with a defined transaction management process will answer these questions with confidence and specificity. An agent without one will give you vague reassurances.



Question 28 is particularly important. Every transaction has the potential for unexpected complications. You need an agent who has a clear, calm process for managing problems—not one who is caught off guard when they arise.

The Two Questions Most Buyers Never Ask

These are the two most revealing questions on the entire list. Most buyers never ask them—which means the agents who answer them well are rarely tested on the qualities that matter most. Pay close attention to how an agent responds to both of these.

Question 29

"Tell me about a transaction where you advised a buyer NOT to purchase the house. Why?"

This question can reveal whether the agent sees their role as closing transactions or protecting clients. An agent who has never advised a buyer to walk away—or who can't remember a single example—may be prioritizing their commission over your best interests. The best agents have walked away from deals because it was the right thing to do for their buyer.

Question 30

"Why should I hire you instead of another buyer's agent?"

Listen carefully to the answer. You are looking for a **process**—not a sales pitch. An agent who describes their systems, their market knowledge, their negotiation approach, and their commitment to your interests is demonstrating genuine value. An agent who lists production statistics, award designations, or years in the business is telling you about their career—not about how they'll serve you.

The answers to Questions 29 and 30 will tell you more about an agent's character and commitment than anything else you can ask.

The 5-Question Rapid Interview

Don't have time for all 30 questions? If you're interviewing quickly, under time pressure, or simply want a fast way to separate genuine buyer advocates from door openers, these five questions will do it. The answers will tell you considerably more than asking "how many years have you been in real estate?"



Question 1

How do you determine whether a property is fairly priced?



Question 2

Tell me about the last three buyer transactions where you negotiated price, repairs, credits, or terms.



Question 3

What problems are you looking for when we tour a property?



Question 4

What exactly will you do for me after my offer is accepted?



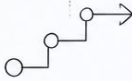
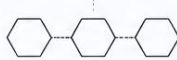
Question 5

Tell me about a time you recommended that a buyer walk away from a transaction.

Five questions. Five answers. You'll know immediately whether you're talking to a door opener or a buyer advocate.

The "Door Opener" Test

After interviewing an agent, answer YES or NO to each of the following questions. This final test gives you a binary snapshot of the agent's overall readiness to serve as a genuine buyer advocate—not just a licensed professional who can get you into houses.

1.  Brings market data	2.  Analyzes property values	3.  Explains offer strategy	4.  Provides real negotiation examples	5.  Looks for potential problems
6.  Respects due diligence	7.  Discusses community considerations	8.  Understands relocation buyers	9.  Has a contract-to-closing process	10.  Communicates proactively

8-10 YES Answers

BUYER ADVOCATE – This agent demonstrates the full range of skills and commitment you need

5-7 YES Answers

ASK MORE QUESTIONS – Strengths are present but gaps exist; investigate further before hiring

0-4 YES Answers

DOOR OPENER – You may be interviewing someone who can show homes but not professionally represent you

Your Buyer's Agent Comparison Worksheet – Agent #1

Use this worksheet to capture your notes and scores during and after each agent interview. Recording your impressions immediately after an interview is critical—details fade quickly, and you want an accurate record to compare candidates side by side.

Field	Your Notes
Agent Name	-----
Company	-----
Total Score	___ / 100

Agent #1 – Top Strengths

Record the areas where Agent #1 impressed you most. Be specific–note the exact answers or examples that demonstrated capability, market knowledge, negotiation skill, or communication quality. Specific strengths are more useful than general impressions when you're comparing multiple candidates.

Strength 1	Strength 2	Strength 3
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----
---	---	---

Agent #1 – Biggest Concern

Record the area of greatest concern for Agent #1. This could be a category where they scored low, a red flag you noticed, an answer that felt vague or evasive, or simply an area where you need more information before making a decision. Naming your concern explicitly helps you evaluate whether it's a dealbreaker or something that can be resolved with a follow-up conversation.

Primary Concern	Follow-Up Needed?	Dealbreaker? Yes / No / Unsure
---	---	--

Agent #1 – Overall Impression

Beyond the score, record your overall impression of Agent #1. Did they seem genuinely interested in your goals? Did they ask more questions than they answered? Did they feel like someone who would protect you—or someone who would push you toward a decision? Your instincts matter here alongside the scorecard.

Did They Listen?

Did the agent ask questions about your goals, timeline, and priorities—or mostly talk about themselves?

Process vs. Sales Pitch

Did they describe a clear process for representing you—or a list of credentials and accomplishments?

Would You Trust This Person?

When something goes wrong in the transaction—and something always does—would you trust this agent to handle it well?

Buyer's Agent Comparison Worksheet – Agent #2

Complete the same structured evaluation for your second agent candidate. Use consistent criteria across all three interviews to ensure a fair comparison. Small differences in score can be meaningful –but so can strong gut impressions that the scorecard doesn't fully capture.

Field	Your Notes
Agent Name	-----
Company	-----
Total Score	___ / 100

Agent #2 – Top Strengths

Record the areas where Agent #2 impressed you most. Look especially for differences from Agent #1—the areas where one candidate clearly outperforms the other are where your decision is most likely to be made. Strong answers about negotiation, market knowledge, and post-contract management carry the most weight.

Strength 1 ----- ----- ---	Strength 2 ----- ----- ---	Strength 3 ----- ----- ---
--	--	--

Agent #2 – Biggest Concern

What gave you pause about Agent #2? Name it specifically. A concern left unaddressed becomes a problem after you've signed a buyer representation agreement. If a concern is significant enough to note here, it's significant enough to raise directly with the agent before making your decision.

Primary Concern ----- ----- -----	Follow-Up Needed? ----- ----- -----	Dealbreaker? Yes / No / Unsure
---	---	--

Agent #2 – Overall Impression

Capture your overall impression of Agent #2 while the interview is still fresh. The same three questions apply: Did they listen? Did they describe a process? And would you trust them when the transaction gets difficult? Your answers to these questions—combined with the scorecard—should guide your final decision.

Did They Listen?

Did the agent ask questions about your goals, timeline, and priorities—or mostly talk about themselves?

Process vs. Sales Pitch

Did they describe a clear process for representing you—or a list of credentials and accomplishments?

Would You Trust This Person?

When something goes wrong in the transaction—and something always does—would you trust this agent to handle it well?

Buyer's Agent Comparison Worksheet – Agent #3

Complete the evaluation for your third candidate. Interviewing at least three agents before making a decision gives you the context to recognize exceptional representation when you see it—and to understand what average looks like by comparison. Do not skip this step even if you were impressed by one of the first two.

Field	Your Notes
Agent Name	-----
Company	-----
Total Score	___ / 100

Agent #3 – Top Strengths

Record the areas where Agent #3 stood out. By the time you're interviewing a third candidate, patterns become clearer. You begin to understand which strengths are common across the field and which ones are genuinely exceptional. The agent who consistently surprises you with depth and specificity is the one who is most likely to do the same when representing you in a difficult transaction.

Strength 1	Strength 2	Strength 3
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----
---	---	---

Agent #3 – Biggest Concern

What concerns you most about Agent #3? Even strong candidates may have areas worth addressing. Document your concern, decide whether it requires a follow-up conversation, and determine whether it would prevent you from hiring this agent. Honest evaluation at this stage protects you from a decision you'll regret after the contract is signed.

Primary Concern ----- ----- -----	Follow-Up Needed? ----- ----- -----	Dealbreaker? Yes / No / Unsure
---	---	--

Agent #3 – Overall Impression

Complete your final impression notes for Agent #3. Once you've finished all three evaluations, review them side by side. Look not just at total scores but at the specific categories where candidates differ most. The scorecard, the red-flag checklist, and your overall impressions together should point clearly toward one candidate.

Did They Listen?

Did the agent ask questions about your goals, timeline, and priorities—or mostly talk about themselves?

Process vs. Sales Pitch

Did they describe a clear process for representing you—or a list of credentials and accomplishments?

Would You Trust This Person?

When something goes wrong in the transaction—and something always does—would you trust this agent to handle it well?

Side-by-Side Score Comparison

Use this table to compare all three agents across the ten scorecard categories. Patterns across categories will often be more revealing than total scores. An agent who scores consistently high across all ten areas is more reliable than one with two exceptional categories and several weak ones.

Category	Agent 1	Agent 2	Agent 3
Local Market Knowledge	---	---	---
Pricing Analysis	---	---	---
Offer Strategy	---	---	---
Negotiation	---	---	---
Problem Identification	---	---	---
Inspection Guidance	---	---	---
Neighborhood Research	---	---	---
Relocation Expertise	---	---	---
Contract-to-Closing	---	---	---
Communication & Protection	---	---	---
TOTAL	---	---	---

Final Decision

After completing all three interviews, reviewing the scorecards, and working through the red-flag checklist, the time has come to make your selection. This decision deserves the same deliberateness you've applied to the evaluation process. Don't rush it—but once you've done the work, trust your analysis.

The agent I am most confident hiring is:

Record the agent's name, company, contact information, and the date you made your decision. Keep this worksheet through the entire transaction as a reference for what you expected and what was promised.

Field	Your Answer
Agent Name	
Company	
Phone / Email	
Date of Decision	
Total Score	___ / 100

Why I Chose This Agent

Document the reasons behind your decision. This record serves two purposes. First, it reinforces the rational basis for a decision that will affect one of the most significant financial transactions of your life. Second, it gives you a reference point if the agent's actual performance doesn't match what was discussed during the interview phase. Expectations documented in writing are expectations that can be revisited.

Primary Reason ----- ----- ---	Key Differentiator from Other Candidates ----- ----- ---	What I Expect During the Home Search ----- ----- ---
What I Expect During Negotiation ----- -----	What I Expect After Offer Acceptance ----- -----	

Setting Expectations With Your Agent

Once you've selected an agent, take a few minutes to confirm the expectations you established during the interview. This conversation is not confrontational—it's professional. A strong buyer's agent will welcome the opportunity to clarify how they'll serve you, what communication looks like, and what you should expect at each stage of the process.

Communication Frequency

How often will you receive proactive updates? By what method—phone, email, text? What is the expected response time?

Market Analysis Timing

When will the agent provide comparable sales analysis—before you tour a property, or only after you've identified one you want to buy?

Offer Strategy Process

What does offer preparation look like? How will the agent walk you through the strategy before you submit?

Post-Contract Involvement

Will the agent personally manage the transaction through closing, or will responsibilities be delegated to others?

- Having this conversation before signing a buyer representation agreement is always better than having it after a problem arises.

What to Watch for After You Hire Your Agent

The interview process reveals a great deal—but not everything. Once you're actively working with an agent, continue to evaluate whether their actual performance matches their interview answers. The red-flag checklist applies not just before hiring but throughout the entire relationship. If you notice warning signs after the relationship begins, address them directly and promptly.

- **Do they bring market data?** Or do you feel like you're making pricing decisions without information?
- **Are they pointing out potential problems?** Or is every property they show you described as perfect?
- **Do they discuss offer strategy?** Or do they simply ask what you want to offer and write that number?
- **Are they managing the transaction?** Or are you tracking deadlines and following up on your own?
- **Are they protecting your interests?** Or does every recommendation seem designed to move the transaction forward regardless of your concerns?

If the answer to any of these questions concerns you, raise it with your agent directly. A true buyer advocate will welcome the feedback and adjust. One who becomes defensive or dismissive is telling you something important about their priorities.

Final Thought

The best buyer's agent isn't necessarily the person who can get you into a house the fastest. It's the professional who helps you make better decisions **before, during, and after you make an offer**. Speed without strategy is how buyers end up overpaying, missing problems, or closing on a home they'll come to regret.

Every element of this playbook—the scorecard, the red-flag checklist, the interview questions, the comparison worksheet—exists to help you find the agent who will genuinely represent you. Not just accompany you.

Know the Market

Understand what's happening before you make an offer—not after the appraisal surprises you

Find the Problems

An experienced eye and thorough due diligence protect you from expensive surprises

Negotiate the Deal

Price, repairs, credits, terms—every component of the transaction is negotiable

Protect Through Closing

Stay engaged, track deadlines, and keep your interests at the center of every decision

Because opening the door is only the beginning.

Need Help Buying or Relocating?

If you're considering buying a home in Northeast Pennsylvania, I'd be happy to help you develop a personalized buying and relocation strategy. Whether you're a first-time buyer navigating the process for the first time or an experienced buyer relocating from another state, the approach should be the same: understand the market, research the communities, evaluate every property honestly, and negotiate with your interests at the center of every decision.

Tom Olsewski

eXp Realty

Serving homebuyers and relocation buyers throughout Northeast Pennsylvania

Request a Buyer Strategy Session – Let's Talk About:

- Where you're moving from
- Where you're considering moving
- Your timing and budget
- Your ideal home
- Your lifestyle priorities
- Your biggest questions about buying in Northeast Pennsylvania
- How to build a competitive strategy for your specific situation

No pressure. Just a clear plan for your next move.