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FREE GUIDE FOR VANCOUVER & FRASER VALLEY BUYERS

Homebuyer Risk Checklist™

Avoid costly buying mistakes before you write an offer.

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START HERE

How to use this.

Most buyers spend months looking at photos. They spend almost no time looking at risk. That is backwards. Photos tell you what a home looks like. The paperwork tells you what it will cost you.

This checklist is the short version of what I check before a client writes an offer. Work through it on any home you are serious about.

Three rules

1. **Read before you fall in love.** It is much easier to walk away early.
2. **Ask for the papers first.** If they are slow to arrive, that is information too.
3. **One unchecked box is not a no.** Two or three together usually is.

> This is general information to help you ask better questions. It is not advice about one specific home, and it is not a home inspection.

STEP 1

Before you look at homes.

Get these settled first. They decide what you can actually buy.

- [ ] **I know my real budget, not just what I was approved for**
  The bank tells you the most you can borrow. That is not the same as what is comfortable to pay.

- [ ] **I know my down payment amount, and where it is coming from**
  Gifted money and money from outside Canada need paperwork. Start that early.

- [ ] **I have a written mortgage pre-approval with a rate hold**

- [ ] **I know my closing costs**
  Property transfer tax, legal fees, and adjustments. These are on top of the down payment.

- [ ] **I know if I qualify as a first-time buyer**
  It can lower or remove the property transfer tax. The rules depend on price.

- [ ] **I know if GST applies**
  New and substantially renovated homes can carry GST. Resale homes usually do not.

- [ ] **I have money left after closing**
  Moving, repairs, and the first few months. Do not spend to the last dollar.

> Tax rules and thresholds change. I will confirm the current numbers for your situation.

STEP 2

The strata pages most buyers skip.

A strata is a building where you own your unit and share everything else. Shared things cost shared money. These are the pages that tell you how much.

- [ ] **Two years of meeting minutes, read end to end**
  This is where problems show up first, months before anyone calls them a problem.

- [ ] **I looked for the same complaint appearing again and again**
  One leak is a repair. The same leak for two years is a building issue.

- [ ] **The money the building has saved (the contingency fund)**
  A thin fund means owners get billed when something big breaks.

- [ ] **Any special levy that has been passed, or talked about**
  A levy is a one-time bill to every owner. It can be very large.

- [ ] **The building insurance, and the deductible**

- [ ] **Rules about pets, rentals, and age**

- [ ] **Any lawsuit the strata is part of**

- [ ] **The Form B and what it says about parking and storage**
  People assume a parking spot comes with the unit. Sometimes it does not.

STEP 3

Warning signs in a depreciation report.

A depreciation report is a long look at what the building will need, and when. Most buyers never open it. It is one of the most useful things you can read.

- [ ] **The report exists, and it is recent**

- [ ] **I read the list of big repairs coming in the next 5 to 10 years**
  Roof, windows, pipes, elevators, and building envelope are the expensive ones.

- [ ] **I compared that list to the money the building has saved**
  Big list, small savings, is the pattern that costs owners the most.

- [ ] **I know whether fees are planned to go up**

- [ ] **I checked if past recommended work was actually done**
  A report that was written and then ignored is a warning on its own.

The simple test

Ask one question: **if the building needs this work, where is the money coming from?** If the answer is "from the owners," that means you.

STEP 4

Costs that show up after you own it.

These are the ones people forget. They do not appear at the showing. They appear on a bill.

- [ ] **Monthly strata fees, and what they do and do not cover**
- [ ] **Property taxes for this home, not an average**
- [ ] **Utilities that are billed to me, not the building**
- [ ] **Home insurance, including the strata deductible risk**
- [ ] **Repairs the seller is leaving behind**
  Old hot water tank, old windows, old appliances. Age is a cost.
- [ ] **Rental restrictions if I ever need to rent it out**
- [ ] **Parking and storage costs, if they are not included**
- [ ] **Move-in fees, and any fee to get documents**

> Add these up before you write. A home can be affordable to buy and expensive to own.

STEP 5

Before you remove subjects.

Subjects are the conditions that let you walk away. Once you remove them, you are committed. This is the last safe moment to ask hard questions.

- [ ] **My financing is fully approved on this exact home**
  Approved for you is not the same as approved for this property. Lenders can decline a building.

- [ ] **My lender has seen the strata documents**

- [ ] **The inspection is done, and I understand what it found**

- [ ] **I priced anything the inspection flagged**

- [ ] **I have read the title, and I know about any charges on it**

- [ ] **I know what is included, in writing**
  Appliances, blinds, and parking. If it is not written down, it is not included.

- [ ] **The dates work. Possession, moving, and money all line up.**

- [ ] **I am removing subjects because I am satisfied, not because I feel rushed**

> Pressure to remove subjects fast is common. It is not a reason to skip a step.

STEP 6

What makes a home harder to sell later.

You are not just buying. One day you will be the seller. These things shrink the pool of people who can buy from you.

- [ ] **Anything that limits who can get a mortgage on it**
  Some buildings, sizes, and ownership types are harder to finance. Fewer buyers means a lower price.
- [ ] **Very small units, or unusual layouts**
- [ ] **A building with a known, unresolved problem**
- [ ] **Age restrictions, or tight rental rules**
- [ ] **Ground floor, or facing noise, with no offsetting benefit**
- [ ] **A price that only makes sense in a rising market**
- [ ] **Work done without permits**

Ask yourself

Who buys this from me in five years? If you cannot picture that person quickly, take a harder look.

THE SHORT VERSION

Your pre-offer checklist.

Print this page. Take it with you.

MONEY

- [ ] Real budget set
- [ ] Down payment ready
- [ ] Pre-approval in writing
- [ ] Closing costs known
- [ ] Money left after closing

PAPERS

- [ ] Two years of minutes read
- [ ] Contingency fund checked
- [ ] Levies checked
- [ ] Depreciation report read

TRUE COST

- [ ] Strata fees
- [ ] Property taxes
- [ ] Insurance
- [ ] Repairs coming

BEFORE SUBJECTS COME OFF

- [ ] Financing approved on this home
- [ ] Inspection understood
- [ ] Title read
- [ ] Inclusions in writing
- [ ] I do not feel rushed

How to read your empty boxes

One empty box is normal. It usually just means one more question to ask.

Two or three empty boxes on the same home is the pattern to watch. That is the point where buyers tend to get caught, because no single item looked big enough to stop for.

If that is where you are, bring the home to me before you write. That is exactly what the Homebuyer Risk Review™ is for.

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NEXT STEP

If a few boxes stayed empty, that is worth a conversation.

Most buyers do not get caught by one big thing. They get caught by three small things nobody added up. That is what the Homebuyer Risk Review™ is for.

Homebuyer Risk Review™

A short call. No property needed. I walk you through the risks that cost buyers the most money, and what to check on the homes you are looking at. It is free, and there is no pressure to use me.

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