

# Keys to homeownership

## A BUYERS GUIDE



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# HELLO!

Buying a home should feel exciting not overwhelming.

This guide was created to give you clarity, confidence, and a clear plan so you can move forward feeling informed every step of the way.

Inside, you'll find straightforward explanations, helpful tips, and practical guidance designed to help you understand the home buying process from start to finish. My goal is to make sure you feel prepared, empowered, and supported no guesswork required.

With years of experience in real estate, I specialize in helping buyers find the right home at the right time, while navigating the details that can often feel confusing or stressful. From answering questions and breaking down next steps to offering honest advice and local insight, I'm here to guide you through the entire journey.

Whether you're just starting to explore your options or ready to take the next step, know that you don't have to do this alone. I would be honored to walk alongside you and help you make confident decisions as you move toward homeownership.

When you're ready, let's talk and turn your goals into an address.



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# About Me



*"To give real service, I add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity."*

With years of experience in Columbia, SC, I combine deep local market knowledge with a passion for serving my community. From military relocations to new construction, I specialize in guiding clients through the market with honesty, transparency, and a lot of heart.

I am not just here to show houses; I am here to manage the process. My 3-step system (Assess, Market/Hunt, and Finalize) is designed to ensure no detail is missed. Whether you are a first-time buyer or a seasoned investor, I provide the "hands-on" support that modern real estate requires.

My philosophy is simple: I treat your move with the same care and attention to detail as I would my own. Thank you for trusting me to guide you home.

*Helping you find the  
place that feels like home.*



# HOW BUYER'S AGENT COMPENSATION WORKS

When purchasing a home, it's important to understand how buyer's agent compensation is structured. Compensation is always fully disclosed and agreed upon upfront, so there are no surprises along the way. Depending on the transaction, there are a few common ways this can work:

## Option 1: Seller-Paid Compensation

In many cases, the seller may choose to offer compensation to the buyer's agent. When this happens, your agent's fee is covered by the seller as part of the transaction.

What this means for you:

- No direct out-of-pocket cost for buyer representation
- Full professional guidance, negotiation, and advocacy
- Clear expectations established before you make an offer

## Option 2: Shared Compensation (Seller + Buyer)

Sometimes, the seller may offer partial compensation. In this scenario, the buyer and agent discuss options for covering the remaining portion, which may be negotiated as part of the offer.

What this means for you:

- Flexibility in structuring your offer
- Opportunity to negotiate terms that work best for your situation
- Continued full-service representation throughout the process

## Option 3: Buyer-Paid Compensation

If the seller does not offer compensation, the buyer may cover the agreed-upon fee directly. This is discussed clearly and documented before moving forward, ensuring complete transparency.

What this means for you:

- A clear understanding of costs from the start
- Dedicated representation focused solely on your best interests
- No hidden fees or last minute surprises

Buyer representation is about advocacy, expertise, and protection. No matter which option applies, the goal remains the same: to guide you through the process with clarity, confidence, and informed decision-making every step of the way.

# WHY HAVING A BUYER'S AGENT MATTERS



Buying a home is one of the biggest financial and emotional decisions you'll make and it's not something you should navigate alone.

A buyer's agent isn't just there to open doors or write offers. They're there to protect your interests, guide your decisions, and advocate for you every step of the way.

Here's what that really means.

## **You Have Someone on Your Side**

*The listing agent represents the seller.*

*A buyer's agent represents you.*

*From negotiations to inspections, pricing strategy to contract terms, your agent's job is to ensure your goals, concerns, and long-term plans are always the priority.*

## **Guidance Beyond the Listing**

***Online listings show photos not problems.***

*A buyer's agent helps you:*

- *Understand pricing beyond the list price*
- *Identify red flags before they become regrets*
- *Ask the right questions at the right time*
- *Make confident decisions without pressure*

*This isn't about rushing you it's about clarity.*



## **Support Through Every Step**

*From your first showing to closing day (and beyond), a buyer's agent coordinates timelines, communicates with all parties, and keeps the process moving smoothly so you don't have to manage it alone.*

*Think of it as having a guide, advocate, and problem-solver all in one.*

### **1. Financially Prepared**

Before shopping begins, clarity matters. Understanding your budget, payment comfort zone, and loan options helps you:

- Focus on homes that truly fit your lifestyle
- Move confidently when the right opportunity appears
- Avoid surprises later in the process

Preparation doesn't limit choices it empowers them.

### **2. Strategically Guided**

The right guidance makes all the difference.

With an experienced buyer's agent, you gain:

- Insight into pricing and market conditions
- A clear strategy for offers and negotiations
- Support navigating inspections, timelines, and details

This isn't about pressure it's about perspective.

### **3. Emotionally Confident**

Buying a home is personal.

When you feel informed and supported, you can:

- Make decisions without second-guessing
- Separate emotion from strategy
- Feel confident in the choices you make

A steady process leads to a smoother experience.

## **Every Confident Purchase Starts With a Clear Plan**



# MONTHLY BUDGET

INCOME			
DATE	SOURCE	CATEGORY	AMOUNT

BILLS & FIXED EXPENSES		
DATE	SOURCE	AMOUNT

VARIABLE EXPENSES		
DATE	SOURCE	AMOUNT

SUMMARY	
SOURCE	AMOUNT
INCOME	
BILLS & FIXED EXPENSES	
VARIABLE EXPENSES	
BALANCE	

# THE BUYING PROCESS

BUYING A HOME DOESN'T HAVE TO FEEL COMPLICATED OR STRESSFUL. MY ROLE IS TO HANDLE THE DETAILS, GUIDE THE PROCESS, AND MAKE SURE YOU FEEL INFORMED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

## LET'S CONNECT

1

We'll talk through:

- Your goals and timeline
- What matters most to you in a home
- Any questions or concerns you have

## UNDERSTAND YOUR BUDGET

2

I'll help you:

- Understand your comfortable price range
- Connect with trusted lending partners if needed
- Plan beyond the purchase price

Preparation makes decision-making easier later.

## EXPLORE THE RIGHT HOMES

Once we know what you're looking for, we'll focus on

3

- Thoughtful home recommendations
- Honest feedback and insight
- Guidance on what to notice during showings

## MAKE A CONFIDENT OFFER

When the right home comes along, we'll build a strategy that protects you.

4

- Pricing guidance
- Negotiation support
- Clear explanation of terms and timelines

You'll never feel pushed only prepared.

## NAVIGATE INSPECTIONS & DETAILS

From inspections to paperwork

5

- Clear communication
- Help interpreting reports
- Support through decisions

I handle the logistics, so you don't have to.

## CLOSING & BEYOND

6

Even after closing day, I'm here as a resource.

- Local recommendations
- Questions answered
- Help planning what's next

My support doesn't end when you get the keys.

# GETTING PRE-APPROVED

Getting pre-approved is an important first step not because you're committing to buy, but because it gives you clarity and confidence as you explore your options. Pre-approval helps you understand what's comfortable for your budget, what's realistic in today's market, and how to move forward without uncertainty.

## Why It Matters

Being pre-approved allows you to:

- Shop with a clear price range in mind
- Make informed decisions without pressure
- Move confidently when the right opportunity appears

It's about preparation, not obligation.

## Support Every Step of the Way

If you don't already have a lender, I'll connect you with trusted professionals who are:

- Responsive and easy to communicate with
- Focused on education, not pressure
- Aligned with your goals and timeline

You'll always have the space to ask questions and explore options at your own pace.

## A Smoother Experience

When financing is clearly defined early on, the rest of the buying process feels more calm and organized. My goal is to make sure you feel informed, supported, and ready whenever the timing is right for you

# THE TAKEAWAY

Pre-approval isn't about rushing into a decision. It's about giving yourself the clarity you deserve before making one.





## PREPARING FOR YOUR HOME LOAN

### WHAT LENDERS TYPICALLY CONSIDER

While every situation is unique, lenders generally look at a few key factors when reviewing a loan application:

#### **Credit History**

Your credit helps determine loan options and interest rates. Even small improvements can make a difference, and guidance is available if needed.

#### **Income & Employment**

Lenders look for steady, reliable income. This helps confirm your ability to comfortably manage monthly payments.

#### **Debt-to-Income Ratio**

This compares your monthly debts to your income. It's less about perfection and more about balance.

#### **Assets & Savings**

Savings can help with down payments, closing costs, and reserves — providing additional flexibility.

#### **Helpful Ways to Prepare**

Before applying, it can help to:

- Avoid opening new credit accounts
- Make payments on time and reduce outstanding balances when possible
- Gather recent pay stubs, tax returns, and bank statements
- Ask questions early so there are no surprises



## SMART QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MORTGAGE LENDER

### **1. What loan options are available to me?**

Ask about different loan programs and which ones may best fit your goals, budget, and timeline.

### **2. What interest rate can I expect and what affects it?**

Understanding how rates are determined helps you see how credit, market conditions, and loan type play a role.

### **3. What will my estimated monthly payment include?**

Make sure you understand what's included beyond principal and interest such as taxes, insurance, and HOA fees if applicable.

### **4. What are the upfront costs I should plan for?**

Ask about closing costs, down payments, and any additional fees so you can budget with confidence.

### **5. Are there programs or incentives I may qualify for?**

Some buyers may be eligible for special programs, grants, or credits it never hurts to ask.

### **6. How long does the approval process usually take?**

Understanding the timeline helps you plan and move forward without feeling rushed.

### **7. What documents will you need from me?**

Knowing what to gather ahead of time can make the process smoother and less stressful.

### **8. Can I lock in my interest rate and when?**

Ask how rate locks work and when it might make sense based on your situation.

### **9. How will we communicate throughout the process?**

Clear communication is key. Ask how often you'll receive updates and who your main point of contact will be.



# *The Ten Commandments*

## **When Applying for a Real Estate Loan**

- 1. Thou shalt not change jobs, become self employed or quit your job.**
- 2. Thou shalt not buy a car, truck or van (or you may be living in it)!**
- 3. Thou shalt not use charge cards excessively or let your accounts fall behind.**
- 4. Thou shalt not spend money you have set aside for closing.**
- 5. Thou shalt not omit debts or liabilities from your loan application.**
- 6. Thou shalt not buy furniture.**
- 7. Thou shalt not originate any inquiries into your credit.**
- 8. Thou shalt not make large deposits without first checking with your loan officer.**
- 9. Thou shalt not change bank accounts.**
- 10. Thou shalt not co-sign a loan for anyone.**

# A CUSTOMIZED HOME SEARCH



YOUR HOME SEARCH SHOULDN'T FEEL OVERWHELMING OR ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL.



## **Stay Informed**

You'll receive personalized home alerts based on your criteria so you're seeing the right opportunities as they come available, without having to constantly search.

## **Stay Organized**

Your saved homes, notes, and preferences are all in one place, making it easy to compare options and revisit favorites as your needs evolve.

## **Stay Supported**

Behind the scenes, I'm monitoring listings, pricing changes, and market activity helping you stay informed and confident as you move forward.

## **Less Searching. More Clarity.**

The goal isn't to show you everything. It's to help you focus on what truly fits so when the right home appears, you'll recognize it.

# HELPFUL TIPS FOR A CONFIDENT HOME SEARCH

*Searching for a home can feel exciting and a little overwhelming. With the right approach, you can move through the process with clarity, confidence, and less stress.*

*Here are a few thoughtful tips to help guide your search.*

## **Clarify Your Must-Haves**

*Before touring homes, take time to identify what truly matters to you.*

*Consider:*

- Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- Location and commute
- Outdoor space or specific features

*Having a clear list helps narrow your focus and keeps the search intentional.*

## **Stay Open-Minded**

*While it's important to know what you want, flexibility can open the door to great opportunities.*

*Some homes may surprise you whether through layout, potential, or location. A home doesn't have to check every box to be the right fit.*

## **Set a Comfortable Budget**

*Understanding what feels comfortable not just what's approved is key.*

*A realistic budget helps:*

- Guide your search efficiently
- Prevent disappointment later
- Keep your decision aligned with your lifestyle

*Comfort and confidence matter more than stretching.*

## **Be Prepared When the Time Is Right**

*When a home feels like the right match, being prepared can make the process smoother.*

*This includes:*

- Having financing in place
- Understanding next steps
- Being ready to act thoughtfully — not impulsively

*Preparation allows you to move forward without pressure.*

## **Visit More Than Once**

*If possible, view a home more than one time.*

*A second visit can reveal:*

- Details you may have missed
- How the home feels at a different time of day
- A clearer sense of whether it fits your life

*Sometimes clarity comes with a second look.*



# HOME NEEDS & WANTS

## YOUR HOME BASICS

Home Type:

Bedrooms:

Bathrooms:

Garage / Parking:

Preferred Area :

## NEEDS

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## WANTS

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## DEALBREAKERS



# HOUSE HUNTING, MADE INTENTIONAL

I understand that finding the right home isn't just about the layout, location, or design. It's about how a space makes you feel and how it supports the life you want to live.

## **More Than a House**

A home should reflect your lifestyle, routines, and priorities.

Whether that means:

- Space to gather
- Quiet corners to recharge
- Room to grow or simplify

Your search should feel personal not rushed or overwhelming.

## **Guidance With Purpose**

As you explore options, I'll help you:

- Stay focused on what truly matters
- Ask the right questions during showings
- Evaluate each home beyond first impressions

My role is to guide you through the process with clarity and confidence.

## **A Thoughtful Approach**

House hunting should feel exciting, not stressful.

With a clear plan and supportive guidance, the process becomes less about pressure and more about finding the right fit for your life.

THE GOAL  
NOT JUST A HOME YOU  
LOVE TODAY BUT ONE  
THAT CONTINUES TO  
SUPPORT YOU FOR  
YEARS TO COME.

# HOME WALKTHROUGH CHECKLIST

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Built: \_\_\_\_\_

Price: \_\_\_\_\_

HOA (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Bedrooms: \_\_\_\_\_ Bathrooms: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Taxes: \_\_\_\_\_

Square Footage: \_\_\_\_\_

Commute Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Exterior

- Curb appeal
- Roof condition
- Siding / exterior walls
- Windows
- Landscaping / yard
- Driveway / parking

## Interior

- Overall layout and flow
- Natural light
- Flooring
- Walls & ceilings
- Doors & trim
- Storage space

## Interior

- Cabinets & countertops
- Appliances
- Water pressure
- Ventilation
- Layout and functionality

## Mechanical & Structural

- Heating & cooling system
- Electrical panel / outlets
- Plumbing
- Water heater
- Foundation / basement (if applicable)

## Neighborhood & Location

- Street noise
- Nearby amenities
- Parking availability
- Overall feel of the area

## Notes & Impressions

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# YOU'VE FOUND "THE ONE." WHAT'S NEXT?

*Finding a home you love is exciting and it's normal to feel a mix of emotions once you reach this stage. The next steps are about moving forward thoughtfully, with a plan that protects you and aligns with your goals. This is where strategy matters.*

## **Writing a Confident Offer**

*A strong offer isn't just about price. It's about understanding the market, the home, and the seller's position and then creating a strategy that works in your favor.*

*Here's how we approach it together:*

### **1. Understand the Market**

*Before making an offer, we'll review:*

- *Current market conditions*
- *Recent comparable sales*
- *Demand in the area*

*This helps ensure your offer is informed, realistic, and competitive.*

### **2. Review the Home Carefully**

*We'll look beyond first impressions to consider:*

- *Condition of the home*
- *Potential maintenance or future costs*
- *How the home fits your short- and long-term plans*

*The goal is clarity not rushing.*

## **Once the Offer Is Submitted**

*There are a few possible outcomes:*

- *The offer is accepted*
- *A counteroffer is presented*
- *Another opportunity may be a better fit*

*No matter the outcome, you'll have guidance and support at every step.*

### **3. Build a Smart Strategy**

*Every home and situation is different.*

*Your offer strategy may include:*

- *Price positioning*
- *Contingencies that protect you*
- *Flexible terms when appropriate*

*We'll tailor the approach to your comfort level and priorities.*

### **4. Communicate Clearly**

*Strong communication matters. I'll handle conversations with the listing side to:*

- *Present your offer professionally*
- *Highlight your strengths as a buyer*
- *Keep negotiations focused and respectful*

### **5. Be Ready to Adjust**

*Sometimes negotiations involve counteroffers or additional conversations. I'll walk you through each option so you can make decisions confidently without pressure.*

# FROM CONTRACT TO CLOSING

Once your offer is accepted, the process shifts from searching to preparing. This stage is about coordination, communication, and making sure every detail is handled so you can move forward with confidence.

Here's what typically happens between contract and closing.

## **1. Open Escrow**

After the contract is signed, an escrow account is opened to securely hold documents and funds. This ensures everything is handled properly and according to the agreement.

## **2. Schedule Inspections**

Home inspections help identify the condition of the property.

During this step:

- Inspections are coordinated
- Reports are reviewed together
- Any concerns or questions are discussed

This is about understanding the home not finding perfection.

## **3. Review & Negotiate Repairs (If Needed)**

If inspections reveal issues, we'll review options and determine next steps.

This may include:

- Requesting repairs
- Negotiating credits
- Deciding how to move forward

You'll always have guidance when making these decisions.

## **4. Finalize Your Loan**

Your lender will complete the underwriting process, verify documents, and prepare final loan approval.

Staying responsive during this step helps keep everything on track.

## **5. Appraisal**

An appraisal is ordered by the lender to confirm the home's value.

If questions arise, I'll help guide the conversation and explain available options.

# FROM CONTRACT TO CLOSING

## **6. Prepare for Closing**

*As closing approaches, we'll:*

- *Review timelines*
- *Confirm final details*
- *Ensure all paperwork is ready*

*You'll know exactly what to expect ahead of time.*

## **7. Final Walkthrough**

*Before closing, you'll have the opportunity to walk through the home one last time to ensure everything is in the expected condition.*

*This is your chance to confirm the home is ready.*

## **8. Closing Day**

*On closing day:*

- *Documents are signed*
- *Funds are transferred*
- *Ownership is finalized*

*And just like that the home is yours.*



# HOME INSPECTIONS

A home inspection is an important step in the buying process. It's designed to give you a better understanding of the home's condition not to judge the home or create unnecessary concern.

Inspections help you make informed decisions with confidence.

## **What Is a Home Inspection?**

A home inspection is a professional evaluation of a property's major systems and structure. The inspector provides an overview of the home's condition at the time of the inspection.

This typically includes:

- Roof and exterior
- Electrical systems
- Plumbing
- Heating and cooling
- Foundation and structure
- Interior components

## **What Inspections Are (and Aren't)**

### **Inspections are meant to:**

- Identify potential concerns
- Highlight maintenance items
- Provide insight into how the home functions

### **Inspections are not meant to:**

- Find every minor issue
- Guarantee future performance
- Decide whether a home is "good" or "bad"

Every home even new ones will have findings.

## **What Happens After the Inspection**

Once the report is received, we'll review it together.

From there, we may:

- Request repairs or credits
- Seek additional evaluations
- Decide how to move forward

You'll have guidance throughout this process so you can make decisions that feel right for you.



## **Your Role During the Inspection**

If possible, attending the inspection can be helpful. It's a great opportunity to:

- Ask questions
- Learn about the home's systems
- Gain clarity directly from the inspector

# The MOVING CHECKLIST.

## PREP IN *Advance.*

- Allocate a budget for your move
- Organize, declutter & clean
- Schedule movers / rental truck
- Make inventory of household items
- Transfer medical records & refill prescriptions
- Get school records & register at new schools
- Arrange time off work / childcare for moving day
- Make a plan for moving vehicles, pets & plants
- Dispose of hazardous & flammable items
- Measure furniture for placement at new home
- Defrost freezer, clean refrigerator & oven

## PACK AN OVERNIGHT BAG

- Pajamas & clean clothes
- Toiletries
- Any medications needed
- Towels
- Toilet paper
- Pet food & supplies
- Cell phone charger
- Important documents
- Cash & valuables

## LABEL AN "OPEN FIRST" BOX

- Cleaning supplies
- Light bulbs
- Basic tools
- Paper plates, cups & utensils
- Coffee & snacks
- Hand soap
- Remote controls
- Kids toys

## NOTIFY OF UPCOMING MOVE

### Essentials:

- Post office
- Employer

### Utility & Home Services:

- Gas
- Electric
- Water
- Telephone, internet & cable
- Garbage removal
- Lawn service

### Finances:

- Banks & credit unions
- Loan companies

### Insurance:

- Homeowner / renters insurance
- Health & dental insurance
- Life insurance
- Car insurance

### Government Agencies:

- Tax agencies
- Social Security Administration

### Service Providers:

- Doctors
- Dentists
- Veterinarians
- Attorneys
- Accountants
- Subscriptions & memberships

## Moving DAY.

- Plan to be home when movers arrive
- Protect floors & carpets
- Contain pets in a safe place during move
- Make sure all boxes are labeled accurately
- Do a final cleaning & dispose of trash
- Take a final walk-through of your home
- Leave owner manuals & household receipts
- Leave labeled keys & garage door openers
- Lock doors, windows & turn off all switches

## Contacts:

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# A note from Me

Thank you for choosing me as your trusted real estate advisor. I'm excited to partner with you on your journey to homeownership!

This guide has provided you with a comprehensive overview of the home buying process, from understanding the new real estate landscape to navigating negotiations and closing the deal.

Remember, I'm here to support you every step of the way. Whether you have questions about financing, finding the perfect neighborhood, or making a competitive offer, I'm just a phone call or email away.

*chat soon*



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