

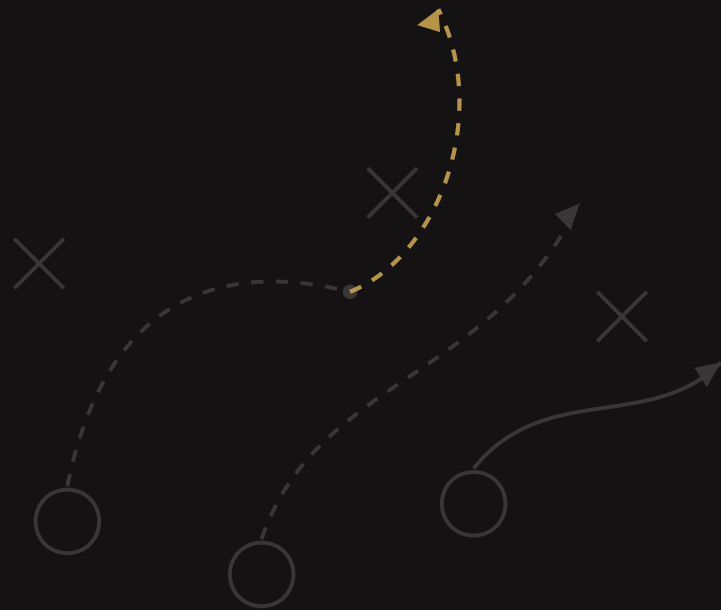
WILL MANSOUR

LPT REALTY, BROKERAGE

FREE GUIDE

First-Time Buyer's Guide to Ontario

Down payments, rebates, closing costs and offers, explained in plain English.



A GAME PLAN FOR EVERY MOVE

Toronto · Peel · York · Durham · Halton

gta-home-sales.com

ABOUT WILL

A game plan for every move.

Before real estate, I was a professional athlete. Sport taught me that results come from preparation, discipline and a clear game plan, and I bring that same approach to every move.

I've been working with buyers and sellers since 2004. You can count on honest advice, a plan you understand and calm, steady negotiation when it counts, so you always know where you stand and what comes next.

I'm a REALTOR® and Sales Representative with LPT Realty, Brokerage, helping buyers and sellers across the Greater Toronto Area, from Toronto and Mississauga to Oakville, Burlington, Vaughan and Markham.

I love working with first-time buyers. This guide covers everything I walk my own first-time clients through, so you can start your search informed and confident.

"Winning the day and taking your time back."

My motto, and my promise: I handle the details so you can focus on your next chapter.

01

Preparation

Every move starts with a plan built on local data and your goals.

02

Discipline

Clear strategy on price, terms and timing, with no guesswork.

03

Communication

You'll always know where things stand and what comes next.

WILL MANSOUR

Sales Representative · LPT Realty, Brokerage · Working with buyers and sellers since 2004

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Important: This guide is for general information only. It is not legal, tax, mortgage or financial advice. Programs, rates, tax rules and eligibility criteria change frequently, so verify all current figures with CRA, the Government of Ontario, the City of Toronto, CMHC, your lender, lawyer or accountant before making decisions. Figures in this guide were checked in 2026.

WELCOME

Your First Home Starts with a Game Plan

Buying your first home is exciting, and it can feel overwhelming. The good news is that every confident homeowner started exactly where you are now. The difference between a stressful purchase and a smooth one is almost always preparation.

This guide walks you through the process in order: getting your finances ready, understanding the programs available to first-time buyers in Ontario, budgeting for closing costs, and making a winning offer.

VERIFY CURRENT FIGURES

An important note: the rules, limits and rates below were checked in 2026, but governments and lenders change them regularly. **Always verify current figures** with your mortgage professional, lawyer, accountant, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the Government of Ontario, the City of Toronto (if buying there) and me before you make decisions.

COACH'S TIP

In sport, rookies who succeed aren't the ones who know everything on day one. They're the ones who listen, prepare and lean on a good coach. You don't need to be an expert to buy well. You just need a plan and the right people in your corner.

01

STEP 1

Get Your Finances in Shape

Check your credit. Your credit score affects whether you're approved and the rate you're offered. Get your free credit report from Equifax and TransUnion and fix any errors. Pay bills on time, and avoid new debt (like a car loan) while you're preparing to buy.

Know your budget, not just your approval. A lender may approve you for more than you're comfortable spending. Think about the monthly total: mortgage payment, property tax, utilities, insurance and condo fees if applicable.

Understand the stress test. Federally regulated lenders must qualify you at a rate higher than the one you'll actually pay. Currently that is generally the greater of your contract rate plus 2%, or 5.25%. This protects you if rates rise, but it also lowers the maximum you can borrow. *Verify the current qualifying rate with your lender.*

Get pre-approved. A mortgage pre-approval tells you how much you can borrow and usually holds a rate for a set period. It makes your offer stronger and your search more focused. Remember that a pre-approval is not a final approval. The lender will still review the specific property.

CHECKLIST**Pre-approval paperwork**

- ☐ Government-issued photo ID
- ☐ Recent pay stubs and a letter of employment
- ☐ Notices of Assessment for the last two years (especially if you're self-employed)
- ☐ Proof of your down payment and where it came from (including any gift letter)
- ☐ Statements for any loans, lines of credit and credit cards

02

STEP 2

Know the Minimum Down Payment Rules

In Canada, the minimum down payment depends on the purchase price (verify current rules before you buy):

Purchase price	Minimum down payment
Up to \$500,000	5% of the purchase price
\$500,000 to under \$1.5 million	5% of the first \$500,000 + 10% of the portion above \$500,000
\$1.5 million or more	20% of the purchase price

TIP**Example (illustrative only)**

On an \$800,000 home, the minimum down payment is 5% of \$500,000 (\$25,000) plus 10% of \$300,000 (\$30,000), for a total of **\$55,000**.

Mortgage default insurance (CMHC or private insurers). If your down payment is less than 20%, your mortgage must be insured. The premium is a percentage of your mortgage amount, based on how much you put down. CMHC's published premiums are currently 4.00% of the loan with 5% to 9.99% down, 3.10% with 10% to 14.99% down, and 2.80% with 15% to 19.99% down. A 0.20% surcharge applies if you choose a 30-year amortization. The premium is usually added to your mortgage. **In Ontario, provincial sales tax (8%) applies to the premium and must be paid in cash at closing.** It can't be added to the mortgage. *Verify current premiums with CMHC or your lender.*

Amortization. Insured mortgages are generally limited to 25 years, but **first-time buyers** (and buyers of newly built homes) can currently choose up to **30 years**, which lowers the monthly payment but increases the total interest paid. Insured mortgages are available only on homes priced under \$1.5 million.

03

STEP 3

Use Every First-Time Buyer Program You Qualify For

This is where first-time buyers can save thousands. Eligibility rules apply to each one, so check the official sources.

First Home Savings Account (FHSA)

- Contribute up to **\$8,000 per year**, to a **lifetime maximum of \$40,000**.
- Contributions are **tax-deductible** (like an RRSP), and qualifying withdrawals to buy your first home are **tax-free** (like a TFSA), with no repayment required.
- Unused room of up to \$8,000 can carry forward to the next year.
- Each person in a couple can have their own FHSA, which doubles the potential savings.

COACH'S TIP

Open your FHSA as early as possible, even if you can only put a little in. Contribution room only starts once the account is open. Think of it like training: the earlier you start, the more ready you are on game day.

RRSP Home Buyers' Plan (HBP)

- Withdraw up to **\$60,000** from your RRSP (per person) to buy or build a qualifying home.
- You must repay it to your RRSP over **15 years**. For first withdrawals made from 2022 through 2028, repayments currently start in the fifth year after the withdrawal (for example, a 2026 withdrawal means repayments begin in 2031).
- You can use **both the FHSA and the HBP** for the same home purchase.

Ontario land transfer tax refund for first-time buyers

- Eligible first-time buyers can receive a refund of up to **\$4,000** of Ontario land transfer tax. In practice, that means no provincial land transfer tax on roughly the first \$368,000 of the price.
- Your lawyer usually claims it at closing when your deed is registered.

City of Toronto municipal land transfer tax (MLTT) rebate

- If you buy **within the City of Toronto**, you pay a second, municipal land transfer tax on top of Ontario's.
- Eligible first-time buyers can get a rebate of up to **\$4,475** on the Toronto MLTT.
- Buyers in Mississauga, Vaughan, Markham, Oakville and other GTA municipalities outside Toronto **don't pay MLTT at all**.

First-Time Home Buyers' Tax Credit (Home Buyers' Amount)

- A federal, non-refundable tax credit based on a **\$10,000** amount, which works out to up to **\$1,500** in tax savings. You claim it on your tax return for the year you buy.

GST/HST relief on newly built homes

These programs apply only to **brand-new or substantially renovated homes** (including pre-construction) that you'll live in as your primary residence:

- **Federal First-Time Home Buyers' GST/HST rebate:** up to **\$50,000**, the full 5% federal portion of the HST, on qualifying new homes valued up to \$1 million. The rebate is reduced between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, and there's none at \$1.5 million or more. For homes bought from a builder, the agreement must be signed on or after March 20, 2025, and before 2031.
- **Ontario's first-time home buyer rebate:** the full 8% provincial portion of the HST, up to **\$80,000**, on qualifying new homes valued up to \$1 million, mirroring the federal rebate. It generally applies to agreements signed between March 20, 2025, and December 31, 2030.
- **Ontario's expanded HST relief (temporary):** if you sign an agreement with a builder between **April 1, 2026, and March 31, 2027**, you may qualify for up to **\$130,000** in combined relief, whether or not you're a first-time buyer. That's the full 13% HST on new homes valued up to \$1 million, with the \$130,000 maximum continuing up to \$1.5 million and reduced relief above that. It's delivered through the Ontario Enhanced New Housing Rebate (administered by the CRA) plus the Ontario New Home Affordability Payment, a provincial top-up equal to up to the 5% federal portion, reduced by any federal rebate you receive. Construction and completion deadlines also apply.

- **The rebates don't stack beyond the tax you pay.** Total relief on the 8% provincial portion is capped at \$80,000, and you can't recover more HST than you actually paid. Builders often credit these rebates on closing, so ask your lawyer to confirm exactly what's being applied.
- **Note:** these new-home rebates don't apply to resale homes. HST generally doesn't apply to the price of a resale home.

TIP**Example (from the Government of Ontario)**

Ontario estimates that an eligible buyer of a **\$700,000** new home under the expanded relief could qualify for full HST relief of about **\$91,000**. *Illustrative only. Your actual amount depends on the price, the dates and your eligibility.*

VERIFY CURRENT FIGURES

New-home rebates have strict dates, price limits and eligibility rules, and the expanded relief is temporary. Confirm the current status with your lawyer, your builder, the CRA or ontario.ca before you sign.

TIP**Who counts as a "first-time buyer"?**

The definitions differ between programs. For example, some look at whether you've ever owned a home anywhere in the world, while the FHSA and HBP look at whether you lived in a home you or your spouse owned during a specific recent period. Check each program's definition.

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STEP 4

Budget for Closing Costs

Your down payment isn't the only cash you need. As a general rule of thumb, set aside an extra amount for closing costs. Ask your lawyer and lender for an estimate based on your specific purchase. Typical costs include:

CHECKLIST**Closing-cost budget**

- ☐ **Land transfer tax:** Ontario's tax, plus Toronto's MLTT if applicable, less any first-time buyer refunds
- ☐ **Legal fees and disbursements,** including title search and registration
- ☐ **Title insurance**
- ☐ **Home inspection**
- ☐ **Appraisal fee** (sometimes covered by the lender)
- ☐ **PST on mortgage default insurance** (if your mortgage is insured)
- ☐ **Property tax and utility adjustments,** reimbursing the seller for anything they've prepaid
- ☐ **Moving costs, utility hookups, and home insurance** (required by your lender before closing)
- ☐ For condos: the **status certificate** review, and possibly first-month condo fees

TIP**Illustrative land transfer tax example**

On an \$800,000 home with one or two single-family residences, Ontario land transfer tax is about **\$12,475** at current rates. An eligible first-time buyer's refund of up to \$4,000 brings that to about **\$8,475**. If the home is in Toronto, the MLTT adds roughly another \$12,475 before the up-to-\$4,475 first-time buyer rebate. *Use the Ontario and City of Toronto calculators to confirm current figures.*

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STEP 5

Find the Right Home

Know your must-haves vs nice-to-haves. Commute, schools, transit (GO and TTC access matter across the GTA), parking, outdoor space and number of bedrooms. Rank them before you start touring.

Freehold vs condo: A freehold home (detached, semi or freehold townhouse) means you own the land and handle all maintenance. A condo means monthly fees and shared rules, in exchange for shared maintenance and amenities.

Resale vs new build: New homes come with Tarion warranty coverage in Ontario and may qualify for HST rebates, but closings can be delayed and there may be extra closing costs. Resale homes let you see exactly what you're buying and usually close sooner.

Work with a REALTOR® who represents you. Under Ontario's TRESA rules, you'll receive the RECO Information Guide and agree in writing on the services I'll provide. As your representative, my job is to protect your interests, not the seller's.

CHECKLIST**Rank your wish list**

- ☐ Commute time to work (by car and by GO train)
- ☐ Schools and daycare nearby
- ☐ Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- ☐ Parking and storage
- ☐ Outdoor space: yard, balcony or nearby parks
- ☐ Walkability to groceries, cafés and transit
- ☐ Room to grow over the next five years

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STEP 6

Make a Strong Offer

When you find the one, we'll prepare an **Agreement of Purchase and Sale**. Key parts include:

- **Price:** based on recent comparable sales, not just the list price
- **Deposit:** usually provided shortly after acceptance (often within 24 hours) and held in trust
- **Conditions:** most commonly **financing** and **home inspection**, and for condos, **status certificate review**
- **Closing date:** when you get the keys
- **Inclusions/exclusions:** appliances, light fixtures, window coverings

In competitive situations (multiple offers), buyers sometimes waive conditions to stand out. Waiving a financing or inspection condition carries real risk. If you can't close, you could lose your deposit and be liable for more. We'll talk through options such as a pre-offer inspection or a firm lender approval, so you can compete without gambling.

Cooling-off periods: for resale homes in Ontario, there's **no cooling-off period** once your offer is accepted and firm. New-build condo purchases generally have a **10-day cooling-off period**.

COACH'S TIP

Decide your walk-away price before offer night, not during it. Write it down and share it with me. When the pressure is on, that number keeps you competing with your head, not just your heart. Winning isn't getting every house. It's getting the right house at a price you'll still feel good about in five years.

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STEP 7

Closing Day

- 1 **Remove conditions** by the deadline (in writing).
- 2 **Your lawyer** completes the title search, registers the purchase, applies your land transfer tax refunds and handles the funds.
- 3 **Arrange home insurance** and send proof to your lender.
- 4 **Final visit:** most agreements allow a pre-closing visit to check the home.
- 5 **Get your keys** once the deal closes. Congratulations, homeowner!

CHECKLIST**First-week-as-a-homeowner checklist**

- ☐ Change the locks and any garage or alarm codes
- ☐ Find the main water shut-off and the electrical panel
- ☐ Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- ☐ Set up utilities, internet and mail delivery in your name
- ☐ Update your address with CRA, ServiceOntario, your bank and your employer
- ☐ Keep your closing documents somewhere safe

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Ready for your game plan?

You don't have to figure this out alone. In a quick, no-obligation call, I'll help you build a plan that fits your budget, your timeline and your wish list.

Here's how I'll help:

- 01 Understand **what you can comfortably afford**
- 02 Connect with **trusted mortgage professionals and lawyers**
- 03 Create a **search plan** that fits your timeline and neighbourhood wish list

Book your 15-minute call →

Start your home search →

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Will Mansour, Sales Representative | LPT Realty, Brokerage | 5100-333 Bay St., Toronto, ON | Not intended to solicit buyers or sellers currently under contract with a brokerage.

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