



Your Complete Buyer Checklist

Your step-by-step guide to a smooth and successful homebuying journey. We've created this comprehensive checklist to help you navigate every stage with confidence, from your first financing conversation to the day you get your keys.

Pre-Approval & Financing

Getting Your Financial Foundation Right

Before you start touring homes and falling in love with properties, it's essential to understand exactly what you can afford. This isn't just about knowing a number—it's about building a solid financial foundation that will support your homeownership journey for years to come.

Working with a trusted lender early in the process gives you a clear picture of your purchasing power and shows sellers you're a serious buyer. Pre-approval can make the difference between your offer being accepted or passed over, especially in competitive markets where multiple offers are common.

Take time to review all the costs involved in buying a home, not just the purchase price. Your down payment, closing costs, moving expenses, and immediate home needs all require careful planning. Many first-time buyers are surprised by these additional costs, so getting ahead of them now will help you avoid stress later.

Understand Your Budget

Calculate your monthly housing costs including principal, interest, taxes, insurance, and HOA fees

Get Pre-Approved

Connect with a trusted lender who will review your financial situation and issue a pre-approval letter

Plan for All Costs

Budget for down payment, closing costs, inspections, moving expenses, and initial home improvements

Home Search

The home search is where your dreams start taking shape. This is an exciting phase, but it can also feel overwhelming with so many properties to consider and decisions to make. The key is staying organized and focused on what truly matters to your family's lifestyle and future.

Start by creating two lists: your must-haves and your nice-to-haves. Must-haves are non-negotiable features like the number of bedrooms, proximity to work or family, or specific school districts. Nice-to-haves are features you'd love but could live without—like a pool, updated kitchen, or extra garage space. This clarity will help you and your REALTOR® focus on homes that truly fit your needs.



Define Your Priorities

Create clear lists of must-have features versus nice-to-have amenities



Tour Strategically

Visit homes with your REALTOR® and take detailed notes and photos at each property



Research Neighborhoods

Compare school ratings, commute times, local amenities, and community character

Don't rush this process. Tour homes at different times of day if possible, drive through neighborhoods on weekends, and talk to potential neighbors. Your REALTOR® can provide invaluable insights about each area, including market trends, upcoming developments, and hidden gems you might not find online. Remember, you're not just buying a house—you're choosing a community where you'll build memories and put down roots.

Making an Offer

You've found it—the home that feels just right. Now it's time to make your move. Crafting a strong offer requires strategy, market knowledge, and an understanding of what motivates the seller. This is where your REALTOR®'s expertise becomes invaluable.

Your agent will pull comparable sales (comps) to help determine a fair offer price based on what similar homes in the area have sold for recently. In a competitive market, you might need to offer above asking price, while in a buyer's market, there may be room to negotiate. Your offer will also include contingencies—conditions that must be met for the sale to proceed, such as financing approval, satisfactory inspection results, and appraisal coming in at value.

Understanding timelines is crucial. How quickly can you close? Are you flexible on the move-in date? Sometimes offering terms that work well for the seller's situation can make your offer more attractive, even if it's not the highest price. Your agent will help you craft an offer that's competitive while protecting your interests throughout the transaction.



Review Comparables

Analyze recent sales data with your agent



Craft Your Offer

Determine price, contingencies, and terms



Negotiate Smartly

Work through counteroffers to reach agreement

Inspection & Appraisal

Once your offer is accepted, the due diligence phase begins. This is your opportunity to thoroughly evaluate the property's condition and confirm its value. While it might feel like the hard part is over, these steps are critical to protecting your investment and avoiding costly surprises after closing.

Hiring a reputable home inspector is one of the most important decisions you'll make. A thorough inspection covers the home's structure, roof, foundation, electrical systems, plumbing, HVAC, and more. Plan to attend the inspection yourself—walking through with the inspector gives you valuable insights into the home's maintenance needs and helps you understand what to expect as a homeowner. Don't be alarmed if issues come up; very few homes are perfect, and discovering problems now gives you the chance to address them.

01

Schedule Professional Inspections

Hire licensed inspectors for general home inspection and any specialized evaluations needed (roof, foundation, pests, etc.)

03

Negotiate Repairs or Credits

Work with your agent to request repairs, credits, or price adjustments based on findings

02

Review Reports Thoroughly

Carefully read inspection findings and discuss concerns with your agent and inspector

04

Confirm Appraisal Details

Ensure the property appraises at or above your offer price to satisfy lender requirements

The appraisal is ordered by your lender to confirm the home's value supports the loan amount. If the appraisal comes in lower than your offer price, don't panic—your agent can help you navigate options like negotiating with the seller, making up the difference, or in some cases, walking away if your contract includes an appraisal contingency. This phase requires patience and clear communication with all parties involved.

Understanding Contingencies

Financing Contingency

Protects you if your loan doesn't get final approval. Gives you time to secure funding without risking your earnest money.

- Typical timeline: 21-30 days
- Requires good faith effort
- Allows you to exit if denied

Inspection Contingency

Allows you to request repairs or credits based on inspection findings, or cancel if major issues are discovered.

- Usually 10 days in Arizona
- Covers all major systems
- Negotiation opportunity

Appraisal Contingency

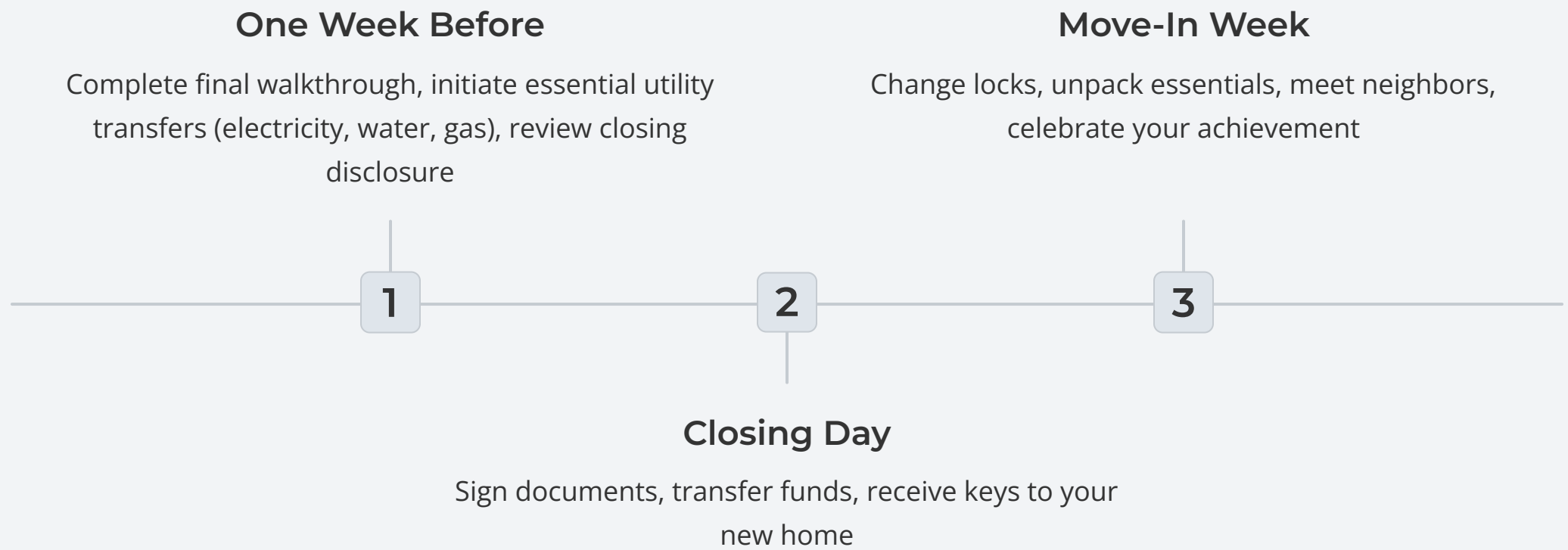
Ensures the home appraises at your offer price or gives you options to renegotiate or withdraw.

- Lender requirement
- Protects your investment
- May include gap coverage

Contingencies are protective clauses in your purchase contract that give you the right to cancel the transaction under specific circumstances without losing your earnest money deposit. While they protect buyers, having too many contingencies or extended timelines can make your offer less attractive to sellers. Your REALTOR® will help you strike the right balance between protecting yourself and making a competitive offer that appeals to the seller.

Closing & Move-In

The finish line is in sight! The closing process involves a flurry of final paperwork, walkthroughs, and preparations. While it can feel overwhelming, staying organized and working closely with your agent, lender, and title company will ensure everything goes smoothly. Most closings happen within 30-45 days of offer acceptance, though timelines can vary based on your contract terms and financing.



A few days before closing, you'll do a final walkthrough of the property to ensure it's in the agreed-upon condition and that any negotiated repairs have been completed. This is also your chance to double-check that appliances and systems are still working properly.

On closing day, you'll sign what feels like an endless stack of documents—your agent and the closing officer will walk you through each one. It's crucial to initiate essential utility transfers (electricity, water, and gas) prior to closing to ensure these services are active upon move-in. Other services like internet or cable can be arranged after closing. After closing, take time to change the locks for security, schedule homeowners insurance, and begin unpacking. Don't feel pressure to do everything at once; moving in is a process. Meet your neighbors, explore your new community, and most importantly, take a moment to celebrate this incredible milestone. You've worked hard to get here, and homeownership is an achievement worth savoring!

Your First Few Months as a Homeowner

Essential Tasks for New Homeowners

The first few months in your new home set the foundation for successful homeownership. While you're settling in and making the space your own, there are some important tasks that shouldn't be overlooked. Creating a maintenance schedule now will save you time, money, and headaches down the road.

Start by locating all the important systems in your home—your electrical panel, water shutoff valve, HVAC filters, and any warranties or manuals left by the previous owner. Test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms, and replace batteries if needed. Change the HVAC filters and set a reminder to do so every three months. These simple steps protect your home and family while preventing minor issues from becoming major problems.

- ❏ **Pro Tip:** Start a home maintenance binder to keep your warranties, appliance manuals, paint colors, and contractor contacts in one place. Staying organized now saves time later—and you can even manage it all digitally at [HomePulseIQ.com](https://www.homepulse.com)

1 Safety First

Change locks, test all alarms, locate shutoff valves and electrical panel

2 Create Your Maintenance Plan

Schedule seasonal tasks like HVAC servicing, gutter cleaning, and filter changes

3 Organize Important Information

Collect warranties, manuals, paint colors, and contractor contacts in one place

4 Build Your Home Emergency Fund

Start setting aside money monthly for unexpected repairs and replacements

Common First-Time Homebuyer Questions



How much should I save for a down payment?

While a 20% down payment helps you avoid PMI (Private Mortgage Insurance), many first-time homebuyer programs allow as little as 3–5% down. FHA loans require just 3.5% down, and VA loans offer 0% down for eligible veterans and active-duty service members. The best option depends on your budget, goals, and current market conditions in Queen Creek and the Greater Phoenix area. Your lender and our team can help you explore the most affordable loan programs available.



What credit score do I need to buy a home?

Most conventional mortgage lenders prefer a minimum credit score of 620, though FHA loans may approve buyers with scores as low as 580—or even 500 with 10% down. Generally, the higher your score, the better your interest rate and loan terms. If your credit isn't quite where you want it, we can connect you with trusted lenders who specialize in helping first-time homebuyers improve their credit and qualify for home financing.



How long does the homebuying process take?

From the moment your offer is accepted, the **average home purchase timeline** runs 30–45 days until closing. This can vary based on financing, inspections, and contract terms. The home search process itself is more personal—some buyers find their dream home in a week, while others take several months. Working with an experienced Queen Creek real estate team like The Rohn Group helps streamline the process and avoid delays.



Should I buy or rent in today's market?

This depends on your lifestyle, budget, and how long you plan to stay in the area. Buying a home builds equity and long-term wealth, while renting offers short-term flexibility. If you expect to stay in Queen Creek or the East Valley for 3–5 years or more, and you can comfortably afford the costs of ownership, buying is typically the smarter financial move—especially with current home values and appreciation trends.

Ready to Start Your Home Journey?

Buying a home is an exciting adventure, and you don't have to navigate it alone. **Michael Holland** is here to guide you through every step of the process with expertise, integrity, and genuine care for your success. Whether you're just starting to explore your options or you're ready to start touring homes this weekend, we're here to help make your homeownership dreams a reality.

Our team brings deep local market knowledge, strong negotiation skills, and a commitment to putting your interests first. We'll help you understand your financing options, find the perfect home in the right neighborhood, craft winning offers, and navigate the closing process with confidence. Your goals become our goals, and we won't rest until you're holding the keys to your new home.

Let's talk through your goals and next steps. Schedule a no-obligation consultation to discuss your timeline, budget, and wish list. We'll answer all your questions and create a personalized plan to get you from where you are today to where you want to be—settled into a home you love.

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