

K

THE KIRKS
REALTY GROUP

A BUYER'S GUIDE

Buying *a Home*

From “we’re *thinking about it*” to the day you unlock the door — what happens at every step, what it costs, and exactly where I come in.



Jennifer Kirk

REALTOR® · THE KIRKS REALTY GROUP
NORTH DALLAS · 214.592.7605

JENNIFER KIRK · REAL BROKER, LLC

WELCOME

Hi, I'm Jennifer.

Buying a home is the largest purchase most people ever make, and it's usually made on nights and weekends, between work and everything else.

My job is to make that manageable. I'll tell you what a house is really worth before you fall for it, what the inspection report actually means, and when to walk away — even when walking away costs me a paycheck. You'll never hear me say “you'd better hurry” about a house that isn't right.

I built **The Kirks Realty Group** around a simple standard: you should always know what happens next. No mystery deadlines, no scrambling, no calling me to find out where things stand.

This guide walks you through the whole thing — getting your financing lined up, what the money actually looks like, how we search, how we write an offer that wins without overpaying, and what happens between contract and closing. Read it all or skip to the part you need. Then let's talk about what you're looking for.

Jennifer



REACH ME

Jennifer Kirk

The Kirks Realty Group

Real Broker, LLC

North Dallas, Texas

214.592.7605

realtybyjennifer@gmail.com

@JenniferKirkRealtor

TREC License # 0589171

WHAT YOU CAN COUNT ON

Honest reads

On value, on condition, and on whether a house is worth stretching for. Sometimes the answer is no.

Fast, always

Listings move in hours in North Dallas. You'll get showings scheduled quickly and offers written the same day.

No pressure

There will be another house. I'd rather you buy the right one in month six than the wrong one in week two.

The listing agent works for the *seller*.

Every home you tour already has a professional on the other side of the table, hired to get the highest price and the best terms for the person selling it. You should have someone doing the same for you.

What I actually do for you

- **Value.** Run the comparables before you write, so your offer reflects what the home is worth — not what it's listed at.
- **Access.** Get you in quickly, including homes that haven't hit the portals yet.
- **Condition.** Spot the expensive problems on the first walkthrough, before you're emotionally invested.
- **Strategy.** Learn what the seller actually wants — timing, terms, certainty — and use it.
- **Protection.** Hold the deadlines, the option period and the contingencies that keep your money recoverable.
- **The team.** Lenders, inspectors, insurers and title people who answer the phone.

How I get paid — in plain English

Before we tour homes together, Texas requires us to sign a written representation agreement. It spells out what I'll do, how long it lasts, and what my compensation is. That amount is **negotiable and set between us** — it is not fixed by law or by any board.

Where the money comes from varies by deal. A seller or listing brokerage may offer to pay some or all of it; if they offer less than what we've agreed, we can ask for it in the contract as a seller concession, or you can cover the difference. We'll go through the numbers before you write your first offer, so nothing about my fee is ever a surprise.

"I'd rather talk you out of the wrong house than talk you into it. The referrals come from the ones I stopped."

Seven steps to *your front door.*

Here's the whole arc. Timelines vary, but this is the shape of it for most buyers.

01 Strategy call

We talk through what you want, where, when, and what you're comfortable spending each month — not just what a lender will approve. You leave knowing the plan and the costs.

02 Get fully pre-approved

Not pre-qualified. A real underwritten pre-approval makes your offer competitive and tells you your true budget before you fall for something above it.

03 Search & tour

I set up a direct MLS feed so you see homes as they list, and we tour in batches. After a few showings your real priorities will look different from your list — that's normal.

04 Write the offer

We review comparables, decide on price and terms together, and I present your offer with the case for it. In a multiple-offer situation we'll have a plan before we're in one.

05 Option period & due diligence

Inspections, quotes, insurance, HOA documents and any renegotiation happen in this window. It's the most important stretch of the contract.

06 Appraisal, title & underwriting

The lender's appraiser values the home, title is cleared, and underwriting verifies everything again. I track every deadline and keep the lender honest about dates.

07 Final walkthrough & closing

We confirm the home's condition, you sign, funds are wired, the deed records — and the keys are yours.

STEP TWO

Money first, houses *second*.

Touring homes before you've talked to a lender is how people fall in love with something they can't buy. One conversation early prevents it.

Pre-qualified vs. pre-approved

A pre-qualification is an estimate based on what you told someone. A pre-approval means a lender has pulled credit and reviewed your income and assets. Sellers in North Dallas know the difference, and so do their agents. Get the real one.

What a lender is looking at

- **Credit.** Score and history — and that nothing new shows up before closing.
- **Income.** Stability and documentation, usually two years' worth.
- **Debt-to-income.** Your monthly obligations against your monthly income.
- **Assets.** Down payment, closing costs and reserves — sourced and seasoned.

LOAN TYPE	OFTEN A FIT WHEN
Conventional	Solid credit and some down payment; mortgage insurance drops off once you reach enough equity.
FHA	Lower credit scores or a smaller down payment; more flexible qualifying, with its own insurance costs.
VA	Eligible service members and veterans; no down payment required and no monthly mortgage insurance.
USDA	Qualifying rural addresses and income limits — some areas outside the metro qualify.

Ask your lender what your payment looks like at three different prices — including taxes, insurance and any HOA. Texas property taxes are high enough to change the answer.

THE NUMBERS

What you'll actually *need in cash.*

Your down payment is only part of it. Here's everything that typically comes out of pocket, and roughly when.

WHAT	WHEN & WHY
Earnest money	Within days of acceptance. Held by the title company and credited to you at closing. It shows the seller you're serious.
Option fee	At the start of the contract. Buys you a negotiated number of days to inspect and to terminate for any reason at all.
Inspections	During the option period. General inspection, plus any specialists — foundation, HVAC, sewer scope, pool.
Appraisal	Ordered by the lender, usually paid up front.
Down payment	At closing. Anywhere from zero on a VA loan to 20% or more, depending on the program.
Closing costs	At closing. Lender fees, title and escrow charges, recording, survey and similar items.
Prepays & escrow	At closing. The first year of homeowner's insurance plus the reserve the lender collects for taxes and insurance.
After closing	Moving, utility deposits, locks and keys, window coverings, and the repairs you decided to take on.

Until you close, change nothing

Don't open or close credit accounts. Don't finance a car, a couch or a ring. Don't change jobs if you can help it, don't make large unexplained deposits, and don't let anyone pull your credit. Underwriting re-checks all of it days before closing — and a new payment can undo your approval.

STEP THREE

Finding the *right one.*

Fill this in before we start touring. It saves weekends — and it's the fastest way for me to learn what you actually mean when you say you want “something nice.”

Non-negotiable

- ☐ Price ceiling: _____
- ☐ Monthly payment ceiling: _____
- ☐ Bedrooms / baths: _____
- ☐ Minimum square footage: _____
- ☐ Schools or district: _____
- ☐ Maximum commute: _____
- ☐ Move-in date: _____
- ☐ Garage / parking: _____

Deal breakers

- ☐ Busy road or backing to commercial
- ☐ HOA rules or dues above _____
- ☐ Major foundation or roof work needed
- ☐ Flood zone or drainage concerns
- ☐ Other: _____

Would love, could live without

- ☐ Updated kitchen
- ☐ Primary bedroom down
- ☐ Open floor plan
- ☐ Big yard / mature trees
- ☐ Pool
- ☐ Office or flex room
- ☐ Newer construction
- ☐ Single story
- ☐ Walkable to something
- ☐ Other: _____

Touring, honestly

Three to six homes at a time is the limit before they blur. Photograph anything that concerns you. And look past paint, carpet and staging — those are cheap. Layout, light, lot and location are what you can't change.

Writing an offer that *wins*.

Price gets the attention, but sellers accept whichever offer looks most likely to actually close. We have more levers than most buyers realize — and several of them cost you nothing.

The levers we can pull

- **Price** — anchored to the comparables, not the list price.
- **Earnest money** — a larger deposit signals commitment.
- **Option period** — shorter reads as stronger; too short is a risk.
- **Closing date** — matching the seller's timeline is often worth real money.
- **Leaseback** — letting the seller stay a few days can beat a higher offer.
- **Appraisal terms** — how much of a gap, if any, you'd cover.
- **Concessions** — asking for less can be the whole difference.

In a multiple-offer situation

We decide your true ceiling *before* we're competing — the number where you'd rather lose the house than pay more. Then we structure everything else around it. Emotion is what makes buyers overpay, and it always shows up at 9 p.m. on a Sunday with a deadline attached.

If the appraisal comes in low

Your lender will only lend against the appraised value. Then we have choices: ask the seller to lower the price, split the difference, cover the gap in cash, dispute the appraisal with better comparables — or, depending on your terms, walk. This is exactly why we talk about appraisal language before you sign.

Offer accepted — then what?

Deliver earnest money and the option fee on time. Missing those deadlines can cost you the contract or the right to terminate. I'll tell you exactly when and where.

Under contract to *closed*.

Once you're under contract, the calendar runs the deal. Here's what's on it.

MILESTONE	WHAT HAPPENS
Option period	Your window to inspect, get repair quotes, and terminate for any reason. Renegotiate here, or not at all.
Inspections	A general inspector, plus specialists where it's warranted. Expect a long report; most of it is minor.
Insurance	Shop homeowner's coverage early. Roof age and claims history on the property can affect what you'll pay.
Appraisal	The lender confirms the home is worth what you agreed to pay.
Title, survey & HOA	Title search, existing or new survey, and the HOA documents. Read the HOA packet — it governs what you can do with your own house.
Underwriting	Final verification of income, assets and credit. Respond to lender requests the same day.
Final walkthrough	Confirm the condition, agreed repairs, and that everything conveying is still there.

A word on wire fraud

Criminals target buyers at closing, because that's when the money moves. **Never** accept wiring instructions by email, and never act on a change to instructions you've already received. Call the title company at a number you looked up yourself — not one printed in the email — and verify every digit before sending money.

STEP SEVEN

Closing day, and *after*.

Bring with you

- Government-issued photo ID for every buyer on the loan
- Your wired funds already sent — verified by phone
- Proof of homeowner's insurance, if the lender hasn't confirmed it
- Patience: expect about an hour of signing

Before you sign

Review your Closing Disclosure as soon as it arrives — you're entitled to it in advance. Compare it to your loan estimate and ask about anything that moved. We'll go through it together before you're sitting at the table.

Keys

In Texas you generally get keys once the transaction funds and records, which can be later the same day rather than the moment you sign. I'll tell you what to expect so your movers aren't waiting in the driveway.

Your first month

- Re-key or replace every exterior lock
- Transfer utilities and set up trash service
- Locate the water shutoff and the breaker panel
- Change HVAC filters; note the sizes
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- File your closing documents somewhere safe
- Apply for your homestead exemption

The homestead exemption

If the home is your primary residence, Texas lets you file for a homestead exemption with your county appraisal district, which reduces your taxable value and caps how fast it can rise. It's free to file — never pay a company that offers to do it for you. I'll send you the link for your county.

Questions buyers *always ask.*

How much do I need for a down payment?

Less than most people think. Conventional loans start around 3% for qualified buyers, FHA around 3.5%, and VA can be zero. Twenty percent avoids mortgage insurance but is not a requirement to buy.

Is now a good time to buy?

The honest answer is that it depends on you, not on the market — how long you'll stay, how stable your income is, and what the payment does to the rest of your life. If you're moving again in two years, renting often wins. Past five, buying usually does.

Should I wait for rates to drop?

Nobody reliably times this. If rates fall you may be able to refinance; if they fall for everyone, prices and competition usually rise too. Buy when the payment works for you.

What if the inspection finds problems?

It will — every home has a list. We sort it into safety, structural, expensive and cosmetic, get quotes on what matters, and then decide whether to ask for repairs, ask for a credit, or terminate during the option period.

How long does it all take?

Searching takes as long as it takes. Once you're under contract, expect roughly 30–45 days to close with financing.

Can I use the listing agent instead?

You can, but understand what you're giving up: that agent has a duty to the seller. You'd be negotiating against a professional with no one advising you.

Do I need a survey, or is the seller's okay?

Often an existing survey works if nothing has changed and the title company and lender will accept it. If there have been additions, fences or a pool, plan on a new one.

What do you need from me to start?

A conversation about what you want, a lender pre-approval, and your honest comfortable monthly payment. That's enough for us to start touring.

NEXT STEP

Let's find *your home.*

The first conversation takes about half an hour. We talk through what you're looking for, what the money looks like, and what the next ninety days could realistically hold. If you're a year out, that's a fine place to start — the best-prepared buyers are the ones who began early.



01

BOOK THE
BUYER CALL

02

GET FULLY
PRE-APPROVED

03

START
TOURING

Jennifer Kirk

REALTOR® · THE KIRKS REALTY GROUP AT REAL BROKER, LLC

CALL OR TEXT

214.592.7605

EMAIL

realtybyjennifer@gmail.com

ONLINE

[@JenniferKirkRealtor](#)

*Bring me your questions before you bring me a house.
That's the part I'm actually good at.*

This guide is general information about the home-buying process and is not legal, tax or financial advice. Loan programs, costs and customs vary; compensation is negotiable and not set by law. Jennifer Kirk, Texas Real Estate License # 0589171, The Kirks Realty Group at Real Broker, LLC. Licensed by the Texas Real Estate Commission; the TREC *Information About Brokerage Services* and *Consumer Protection Notice* are available at trec.texas.gov. Equal Housing Opportunity.