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REAL ESTATE REIMAGINED

Home Buyer's Guide

A Complete Guide To The Home Buying Process





"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned."

~ Maya Angelou

STARTING THE JOURNEY...

of obtaining

HOME OWNERSHIP

At BigLife Realty Group, we've made it our goal to become masters of the home-buying process and we are here for you. Helping people like you buy their homes over the last 9 years has allowed us to master the skills of the process. Our professionalism, consistency, and dedication is what drives us to help serve you!

This guide is information gathered over our experience in real estate that will help answer your questions, fill in the blanks, and make the buying process easier for you.

Once you have gone through this guide and you still feel like you have questions or need clarification, let us know. Helping people is our passion as we are community market leaders. Let us help provide you an amazing service as we help you through one of the biggest journeys you are likely to undertake.

Hoping to help in any way possible,

BEST,

BigLife Realty Group



WHY WORK WITH

a real estate professional

Real estate agents are considered useful to 98% of home buyers.

It's hard to argue with all of the quality traits experienced real estate agents bring to the table for their clients: savvy negotiating skills, a rich understanding of the local housing landscape, contract proficiency, and in-depth advice for home buyers on how to approach the entire process. Here's exactly what you can (and should) expect when hiring a real estate agent.

Market Expertise

Everything from where home values are rising the most to the best ice cream shops and concert venues: That's the kind of intricate knowledge real estate agents have about the markets in which they work. Sure, anyone can Google housing statistics and local community information, but agents are constantly in the know and building their networks so they can provide buyers with every last detail they need to know about their market.

Negotiation Skills

With a veteran real estate broker comes veteran sales techniques, fortified by innovative technology and up-to-date strategies. Put your trust in an experienced buyer's agent who has proven to get great prices and the best terms possible for their past clients. The best place to find out about the local agents? Head online to examine real estate agent websites and their social media presence. This is where you'll find reviews and testimonials that can guide your decision-making.

Contract Knowledge

Legalese is not something the average home buyer knows a great deal about – but then again, they don't have to, so long as they employ a real estate broker. While they are not attorneys, brokers and agents are well-versed in the language of home purchase agreements and other legal documents, meaning you don't have to study up on real estate law and, in turn, avoid headaches during the home buying process. Of course, you always have the right to have an attorney review any documents you don't understand.

2. top 10 reasons to **BUY A HOUSE**

1. Quality of Life - Home ownership is part of a better quality of life for most buyers. The quality of our living situation directly impacts how we feel.

2. Avoid the Tax Man | Tax Deductions - Buying a home helps you avoid the tax man with tax deductions for both mortgage interest and property taxes. Property taxes and qualified interest are deductible on an individual's federal income tax return.

3. Spend Money to Make Money - With the right real estate consultant, home ownership and the potential for appreciation means that ultimately you have the opportunity to get a return on your investment.

4. Deferred Gain and Capital Gain Treatment - A homeowner can exclude up to \$500,000 of capital gain tax if married and filing jointly or up to \$250,000 if single or filing separately when you sell your home. The home must have been the taxpayer's principal resident for the previous two years.

5. Principal Accumulation - As a homeowner, a portion of each amortized mortgage payment typically goes to principal, which in the long run is an investment.

6. It's The American Dream - Owning a home is THE American Dream. We work with many first time home-buyers; and it truly is a dream come true for them.

7. Independence - For many homeowners, one of the greatest freedoms is acquired through home ownership. They can get rid of their landlord and are no longer surrounded by neighbors in an apartment with thin walls. The freedom to do whatever they wish with their homes is a big incentive for many new homeowners.

8. Leverage - At the current interest rates, you can put your money to work somewhere else. These days you can still purchase a home with interest rates under 4%.

9. Why rent when you can own? The real cost of renting at \$1000 per month with 6% rental increase per year means you will pay \$159,870 over 10 years. Just imagine the dent you could put in a home mortgage with that amount of money!

10. Because you get to work with us, of course!

3. IT'S YOUR TIME

to buy a home

Buying a home can sometimes be stressful. Have confidence knowing that we are here to help the process run effortlessly and smoothly - always putting you and your family first. Connecting buyers with their home is something we are passionate about and enjoy doing. Therefore, we are happy to help guide you through the entirety of the process.

Our goal as the communities market leader is to provide those in our community with an immaculate service experience. With our years of combined work, digital marketing strategies, online platform, and hearts that care more about serving you than selling you, we ensure you have our full integrity in this process.

"Bringing you home"

WHAT ARE YOUR goals & objectives

What is the reason you are buying? Are you a first-time home buyer? Is it because you have to sell your home? Are you looking to upgrade? Are you looking to downgrade? Do you need to relocate for a job? Are you moving to be closer to family? Are you moving to be in a nicer area or closer to better schools? This is all very important in order to reason with us on why you are moving and what you are looking for. When we know what you are looking for we can better accommodate you and your needs! 'Why' is it that you are wanting to buy right now?



4. Let's figure it out &

WRITE IT OUT

For us to better understand what you are looking for, we want to cover the basics and ensure that you do as well by explaining the reasons behind your move. Fill out the boxes below and elaborate for better communication in this process!

I want to buy a home because...

Owning a home would make me feel...

5. GETTING DOWN TO IT

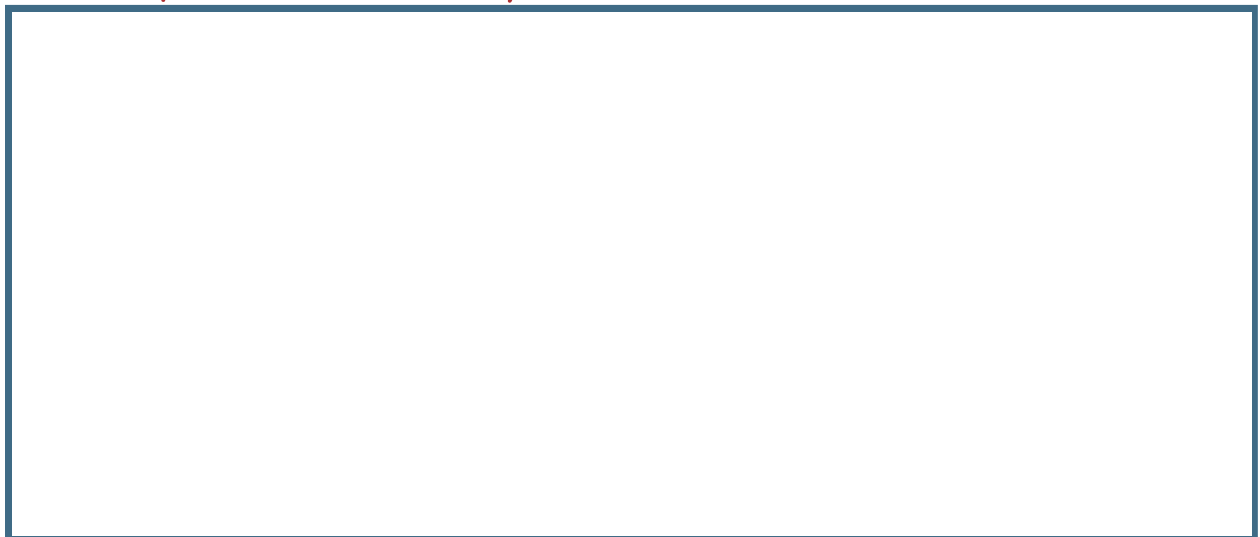
Yes, knowing your "why" is extremely important, but so is having a vision in mind. Being specific and communicating to your agent what features, characteristics and amenities of a home are important to you, ensures everyone is in alignment and on the same page when searching for your best home.

Do you need a home with a swimming pool? Are you a chef and love a gourmet kitchen? Let us know so we can find this dream home and make it a reality!

The features of the home most important to me are...



It's important for my home to be...



6. WHAT TO EXPECT

getting from point a to point z

- 1 Initial Consultation**

We will discuss your goals and how we can help you achieve them. We love meeting in person, and we also have virtual options.
- 2 Mortgage Pre-Approval**

This will give you an essential tool you need to make an offer once you find the right home.
- 3 Instant Home e-Alerts**

We give you priority access to homes that match exactly what you're looking for as soon as they become available.
- 4 Showings**

Working around your schedule, we will make appointments at the homes you have chosen to see.
- 5 Drafting an Offer**

We will discuss the terms of your offer and compile them into a contract.
- 6 The Negotiation**

We will fight for every penny as though it was our money.
- 7 Managing the Details**

We manage all the details necessary to get you to the finish line.
- 8 Closing**

You will receive keys and become the owner of your new home, yay!
- 9 After Closing**

We pride ourselves on maintaining life-long relationships with our clients and continuing to bring value to you.

7. the housing market is not **LIKE 2008**

Our housing market is nothing like it was over 10+ years ago. There are many similarities in today's housing market to the Great Recession. Let's compare the markets in order to better educate ourselves on what we should expect.

The Great Recession: One of the worst downturns in US history fueled by low interest rates, easy credit, insufficient regulation and toxic subprime mortgages that caused many people to lose their jobs, homes, investments, etc. Today, we face a very different challenge: an external health crisis that caused a pause in the economy and a major shutdown in many parts of the country.

While there are many similarities with the markets, there are also many differences.

1. Home Price Appreciation

When we look at appreciation, there's a big difference between the 6 years prior to the housing crash and the most recent 6-year period. Leading up to the crash, we had much higher appreciation in this country than we had coming into this year. In fact, the highest level of appreciation most recently is below the lowest level we saw leading up to the crash. Prices were rising going into this economic slowdown, but not at the rate they were climbing back when we had runaway appreciation.



the housing market is not **LIKE 2008**

2. Mortgage Credit Availability

The Mortgage Credit Availability Index is a monthly measure by the Mortgage Bankers Association that gauges the level of difficulty to secure a loan. The higher the index, the easier it is to get a loan; the lower the index, the harder. Today we're nowhere near the levels seen before the housing crash when it was very easy to get approved for a mortgage. After the crash, however, lending standards tightened and have remained that way ever since.

3. Number of Homes for Sale

One of the causes of the housing crash in 2008 was an oversupply of homes for sale. Today, we see a much different picture. We don't have enough homes on the market for the number of people who want to buy them. Across the country, we have less than 6 months of inventory - an undersupply of homes available for buyers.

4. Use of Home Equity

The chart on the following page shows the difference in how people are accessing the equity in their homes today as compared to the period leading up to the housing crash. Back then, consumers were harvesting equity from their homes (through cash-out refinances) and using it to finance high-end lifestyles. Today, consumers are treating the equity in their homes much more responsibly.

5. Home Equity Earned

Today, 58.7% of homes across the country have at least 60% equity. In 2008, homeowners walked away when they owed more than what their homes were worth. With the equity homeowners have now, they're much less likely to default on their mortgage obligation resulting in a foreclosure on their home.

If you're considering buying a home this year, there's no need to fear the market. We're not in a housing crisis, and this is nothing like 2008.



Total Home Equity Cashed Out

Years	Dollars
2005	\$263B
2006	\$321B
2007	\$240B
Total	\$824B

Years	Dollars
2017	\$71B
2018	\$87B
2019	\$89B
Total	\$247B

luckily we have

THE INTERNET

Today's everyday reality is pretty different than it looked at the beginning of the year. We're getting used to doing a lot of things virtually, from how we work remotely to how we engage with our friends and neighbors. One of the big changes we're adapting to is how the common real estate transaction is being revised. Technology is making it possible for many to continue the quest for homeownership, an essential need for all, especially through the evolving health crisis.

While all regulations vary by state and locality, here's a look at some of the new elements of the process (at least in the near-term), due to the country's revised guidelines and protocols, and what you may need to know about each one if you're thinking of buying or selling a home. Every market is different, so staying in touch about how these protocols continue to change is more important today than ever before.

1. Virtual Consultations: Instead of heading into an office, you can meet with real estate and lending professionals through video chat. We can still work together to get the process started remotely.

2. Home Searches & Virtual Showings: According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the Internet is one of the three most popular information sources buyers use when searching for homes.

Real estate professionals have access to listing information and can help you request a virtual showing when you're ready to start looking. This means you can walk through digital tours of homes on your wish list while keeping you and your family healthy and safe.

3. Document Signing: Although this is another area that varies by state, today more portions of the transaction are being done digitally. In many areas, agents and loan officers can set up accounts where you can upload the required documentation and sign electronically right from your home computer.

4. Sending Money: Whether you need to pay for an appraisal or submit closing costs, there are options available. Depending on the transaction and local regulations, you may be able to pay some fees by credit card, and most banks will also allow you to wire funds from your account. Sometimes you can send a check by mail, and in some states, a mobile escrow agent can pick up a check from your home.

5. Closing Process: Again, depending on your area, a mobile notary may be able to bring the required documents to your home before the closing. If your state requires an attorney to be present, check with your legal counsel to see what options are available. Also, depending on the title company, REALTOR Magazine indicates some are allowing drive-thru closings, which is like doing a transaction at a bank window.

Although these virtual processes are starting to become more widely accepted, it does not mean that this is the way things are going to get done permanently. Under the current circumstances, however, technology is making it possible to continue much of the real estate transaction today.



8. important information regarding FINANCING PROCESSES

Before you start looking at homes for sale, get your financial house in order. If you don't know your credit score, now's a good time to check it. If you think it doesn't look right, request your free credit annual report from www.myFICO.com and fix any errors you spot!

Finding a Lender

Not every lender is right for you. We have compiled a list of questions to help in the decision making process. Here are a few:

- Google your prospective lender and check reviews and testimonials.
- Ask what their current turn time is and does that work for you?
- What types of loans programs do they offer and specialize in?
- What are the fees associated with the loan they are offering?

We also have preferred lenders and we can provide that list upon request.

Basic Information You Will Need to Apply

Depending on your situation you may need additional documentation, such as retirement and pension papers, divorce decree, or child support orders. However, this short list will be a great start:

- Past 2 Pay Stubs
- Past 2 Bank Statements (All Pages)
- Past 2 Years Tax Returns
- Past 2 Years W2's and/or 1099's
- Driver's License
- Social Security Card

Payment over Purchase Price

Of course the purchase price of your new home is important, but at the end of the day you will be living with the monthly payment. Work with your lender to determine what you can comfortably afford.

Pre-Approved vs. Pre-Qualified

A Pre-Qualification is an informal you "might qualify for", non-committal determination by the lender or mortgage broker.

A Pre-Approval is a formal determination in writing, on a loan amount up to a specified amount from the lender or mortgage broker. This gives you more negotiating power and leverage.

9. ALL ABOUT ESCROW

Escrow is a financial arrangement where a neutral 3rd party coordinates the paperwork between buyer, seller and lender, manages and delivers funds as appropriate between the parties, provides title insurance and ensures the deed is recorded in the buyer's name - basically the middle man in the transaction. In Texas, the escrow and title process is conducted by a title company and can take anywhere from 20-45 days depending on a number of variables. Below you will find an example timeline of a 30 day escrow. Please know, nothing is ever set in stone in escrow - everything is always subject to change.

01

Open Escrow

Your contract is accepted!! Pop some champagne!

02

Earnest Money Due

Earnest Money is due upon acceptance of your offer and the opening of escrow. This is your 'good faith' deposit.

03

Seller Disclosures Due

The seller is contractually obligated to disclose all material facts (eg., any leaks, insurance claims, major renovations/repairs, etc) and the paperwork is due 3 days after opening escrow.

10

Physical Inspection Period Ends

You have 10 days (by default unless otherwise negotiated) to conduct any and all inspections and decide if you would like to negotiate repairs and move forward. During this time you can back out and still have rights to your deposit.

27

Loan Contingency Period Ends

Your lender has 3 days prior to close to collect documentation and decide if you are fully approved or not. If they claim you are not, you can still backout as long as it's prior to 3 days before closing, and you'll still have rights to your deposit.

28

Final Walkthrough

Just a few days before escrow closes, you'll walk through the property to ensure all requested repairs are done, and to make sure the property is in the same condition as it was when you submitted the offer.

30

Closing

The papers are signed and the deed is recorded. You will receive keys and become the owner of your new home!

10. how much is it actually costing WHEN BUYING?

Earnest Money Deposit

DUE IMMEDIATELY AFTER CONTRACT ACCEPTANCE

Typically the EMD amount is determined based on the purchase price in our market. It's common for 1-2% of the purchase price. It can be delivered by wire (your bank may charge a fee for this), cashier's check or personal check. This will become part of your downpayment and is not an additional fee.

Down Payment

DUE AT CLOSE OF ESCROW

The amount you will need for a downpayment is determined by the type of loan you qualify for. FHA is a minimum of 3.5% whereas conventional loans can range anywhere from 3 - 20%. Ask your preferred lender for options available.

Home Inspection

DUE AT TIME OF INSPECTION

We always recommend hiring a home inspector, as you never truly know the real condition of the home from just the outside. The cost ranges based on inspector and details such as size of home and if there's a pool. We typically see \$400 - 700, payable by cash, check or credit card. This is an additional fee.

Appraisal

DUE AT TIME APPRAISAL IS ORDERED

Like home inspections, appraisals also range on the appraisers and size of the home. They are hired by the lender to ensure that the property is worth what they are lending to the borrower, they range from \$400 - \$1000.

Closing Costs

DUE AT CLOSE OF ESCROW

Closing costs are the fees included for escrow, title and lender services. They range from 2 - 5% of purchase price. We go into detail on the next page as to what those fees entail.

IMPORTANT!!!

You will pay for a home inspection report and an appraisal report (if financing) which is nonrefundable (approximately \$1,000) if these services are completed, even if you do not end up buying the home.

11. what are CLOSING COSTS?

Closing costs are the lender third-party fees paid at the close of a real estate transaction and due at the close of escrow (hint the name). The buyer's closing costs usually total 2% - 5% of the final sale price which may include but are not limited to:

Escrow Fees

Paid to the Title/escrow firm for their services.

Lender Fees

This can include everything from underwriting to loan discount points, which can be purchased to lower your interest rate.

Homeowners Insurance

Required by most lenders, you will typically pay your premium for one year.

Private Mortgage Insurance

Typically required if your down payment is less than 20%.

Title Insurance

A one-time fee, required to protect you in case the seller doesn't have full deed to the property. Typically paid for by seller, but is negotiable.

Property Taxes

You will typically pay six months of county property taxes up front.

Recording Fees

Paid to the city or county to record your deed in public records.

Home Warranty

If this is not provided by the seller, you may choose to purchase one.

Homeowners Association Dues and Transfer Fees

If your home has a homeowner's association, you will pay 1 - 6 month's dues upfront at closing. There may also be a transfer fee, and responsibility would be determined during contract negotiations.

*Please check with your lender for the full scope of what your actual closing costs will be.

12. AFTER ESCROW

checklist

So you got the keys to your amazing new home... Congratulations! Time to move all the boxes, and start the amazing experience of homeownership. You've got a lot on your plate, so we want to highlight some important tasks that are necessary for a smooth, comfortable transition.

Change Over Utilities

Although this is on the 'After escrow checklist', we recommend that you call the utility companies 1 - 2 weeks before closing to schedule the transfer of service into your name and start service the day of closing.

- GAS
- ELECTRIC
- INTERNET
- WATER
- TRASH

Update Change of Address at Post Office

This can either be done at the local post office, or by visiting the link: <https://moversguide.usps.com/mgo/disclaimer>. Please note there is a \$1.05 processing fee with the online option.

Update Change of Address With Your Bank


This can be done at your local bank, online, or by making a quick phone call.

Guess what?

With your consent, we will send an intro postcard to your new neighbors! We'll leave it to you to have the housewarming party :)

Register Your Home Warranty

Among the piles of paperwork, you'll receive your home warranty which you can register online. If you cannot find it, simply call us and we will send you in the right direction.

A photograph of a modern house with a stone fireplace and a landscaped garden. The house has a grey roof and white trim. The garden features a pond, blue paving stones, and various plants. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

"Owning a home is a keystone of wealth...both financial affluence and emotional security"

~Suze Orman

For more information
about buying or selling
your home, contact us
today!



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