



Home Shopping Tips

Buy a new or existing home?

In general, new houses require less repair and maintenance. They may also offer certain warranties and more energy-efficient features that can mean lower utility bills. Many first-time homebuyers purchase existing houses because they can get more for their money. The buyer of an existing house may benefit from improvements the former owner has made, such as landscaping or utility upgrades. If you are handy with tools, you may be able to get a good deal on a house that needs some remodeling or updating. Always consider the costs associated with repairs before making an offer on any home.

Location

For many people, the location of the home is the most important consideration. While looking at homes for sale, keep your specific needs in mind. Do you need to be in a particular school district, or close to a job, bus line, or daycare facility? If you are willing to travel some distance to work, you may be able to find a home for less money. Make sure the savings outweigh your commuting costs.

Size and special features

Sit down with your family and make a “wish list” of features you need and want in your new home. How many bedrooms and baths do you need? Try to estimate your requirements for at least the next five years. Do you need wheelchair accessibility? Is a garage something you definitely want? What about a basement? You may be able to find the house that fulfills every item on your wish list, but it’s usually a good idea to rank the items on your list and be flexible with regard to some of the major features you require and that fall within your budget.

Take time to look

Take the necessary time and care to choose the home that best suits your needs, repair abilities, and budget. Studies have shown that the average house hunter looks at 16 to 25 homes before finding or choosing the one to buy.

How and where to look

Strongly consider working with a real estate professional. Also, talk to your family, friends and coworkers about homes they may know are for sale. Study local real estate publications. Look at real estate ads in the local newspapers and on the Web. Visit a home for sale during an “open house,” which is when the seller’s real estate agent holds it open to the public during certain hours.

Home inspection

When you plan to make a purchase this large, you should give serious consideration to hiring a professional home inspector. Your real estate agent or lender can recommend an inspector, but make sure the person will give you an unbiased opinion. You don’t want to take the advice of someone who works for the seller’s real estate agent, or someone who hopes to get your business if the home needs repairs. Ask if the inspector is certified by the National Institute of Builders and a member of the American Society of Home Inspectors. A professional with these credentials will provide an objective opinion about the condition of the home.

Home shopping tips (continued)

Avoiding Discrimination

Federal law prohibits housing discrimination based on your race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, or disability. If you have been trying to buy or rent a home or apartment, and you believe your rights have been violated, you can file a fair housing complaint. You can file a complaint by contacting the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development via email, phone, or mail. They will ask you to provide:

- Your name and address.
- The name and address of the person your complaint is about.
- The address of the house or apartment you were trying to rent or buy.
- The date when the incident occurred.
- A short description of what happened.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Web site: www.hud.gov

Toll-free phone: 1-800-669-9777

Mailing address: Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Room 5204
451 Seventh St. SW
Washington, DC 20410-2000

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