

Cyprus Credit Union Home-Buyers Guide



Whether you are a first-time buyer, a seasoned real estate investor, or something in between, the process of purchasing a new home can be overwhelming and intimidating.

From building your credit, to the different types of mortgage programs, and all the way until you accept the keys to your new home, this eBook, along with your Cyprus mortgage advisor, will be there to help guide you every step of the way.



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HOME SWEET HOME

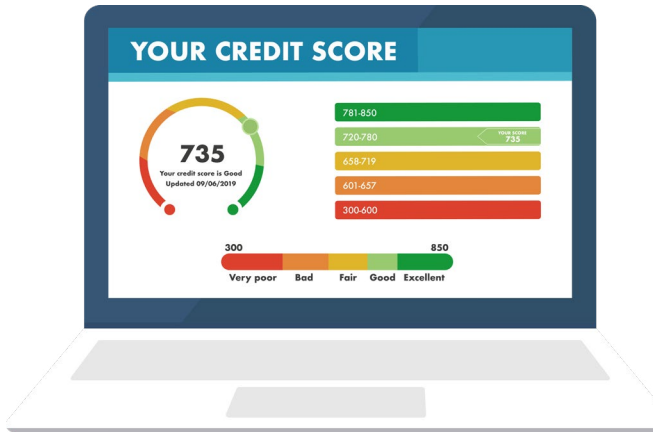


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Credit Score



Credit Check

Credit is your reputation as a borrower, which includes credit cards, student loans, car loans, and previous mortgages. These accounts and records are then compiled into a single document called a credit report. According to the Federal Trade Commission, there is a 20% chance your credit report has an error, some of which can drop your score by 25 points. Before applying for any loans, you should request a free report from Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion to make sure everything in your report is up to date and correct.

What is a Credit Score?

A credit score is a three-digit number that is generated by pulling information from your credit report. It is used as a predictor for how likely you are to become dependent on your credit or fall into delinquency with your payments. This information is then used to help determine whether you will be approved for loans, mortgages, credit cards, and more. 90% of financial institutions in the United States use your credit score in their decision making process. Your score can range anywhere from 300 to 850, with higher scores being better.

How Can I Rebuild My Credit Score?

If you have a poor credit score, the chances of receiving a loan are unlikely. Additionally, anytime you apply for a credit card or loan and are denied, it will lower your score by a few points. Generally, anything above a 580 is acceptable for a mortgage. If your score isn't quite where you would like it to be, you can take some steps to improve it before you begin applying.

What DOES affect your credit score?

- Payment History (35% of total score): Your account's payment information including any late payments and public records of bankruptcy.
- Credit Utilization (30% of total score): How much credit you are using compared to how much you have available.
- Length of Credit History (15% of total score): How long you've had open accounts and time since account activity.
- Types of Credit Used (10% of total score): The types of credit that you use (credit cards, loans, etc.)
- New Credit (10% of total score): How often you are opening new lines of credit, this also includes inquiries into new credit.

What DOESN'T affect your credit score?

- Age
- Race
- Address
- Marital Status
- Income and Employment



Budget

Creating a Budget

When first beginning a formal budget, record your expenses for a month to get a sample size of your spending habits. Keep track of everything you spend, big or small, and record it, either on paper or on your mobile device. Obviously, the little things you may spend your money on will differ from month to month, but this is a great foundation with your larger expenses. It's important to be as accurate and honest as possible; it won't help anything if you fudge the numbers on a personal budget.

After completing this, calculate your net monthly income. Include bonuses, commissions, or other incentives and subtract any social security, taxes, 401(k), or any flexible spending fees you may have. Now compare your final monthly income with your monthly expenses. The goal is for your income to be greater than your expenses at the end of the month.

Now, take the expenses list and fill out a budget sheet, writing down what you will allocate for each expense. At the end of the month, fill out what you actually spent and compare.

Although the goal of a budget is to keep track of what you're spending and see where you could possibly cut back a little, that doesn't mean you have to cut the fun out of your life. In fact, a budget with no room for entertainment, like going out to eat, seeing a movie, or having a hobby, is more likely to fail. Like everything in life, balance is key.

There are several budgeting different methods you can try until you find the one that fits you and your life the best.



MORTGAGE PREPARATION



Savings

Building Your Savings

Before you begin applying for a mortgage, you'll want to save up for a down payment. The more you are able to pay upfront, the less money you'll have to borrow on the back-end. Typical down payment requirements amount to about 20% of the home's total price. Once you create a budget and figure out how much you are able to spend, you can estimate about how much your down payment will be. The typical bank limit for a monthly mortgage payment is around 28% of your monthly income.

Cyprus Credit Union has several options when it comes to your saving needs.

Shared Savings Account

This is the account you open when you first become a member of Cyprus Credit Union. There is just a \$5 balance required upon opening and you'll have easy and convenient access to your information through our Home and Mobile Banking systems (which is free to all members). This type of account features a lower interest rate compared to other types of savings accounts. However, your interest rate will increase once you have a balance of \$10,000 or more.

Certificate Accounts

This type of account features a higher rate than Shared Savings, but is less liquid and requires at least a \$1,000 deposit at opening. You will not be able to add money after your initial deposit or make any withdrawals until the investment term (6 months to 5 years) is over. The longer of term that is set, the higher the rate of interest will be.

Dream Certificates

A Dream Certificate is a type of Certificate Account that allows you to add money monthly but still has a higher interest rate than a regular savings account. You can open this type of account for as little as one dollar. Similar to Certificate Accounts, you have to invest for a specific period of time (from 6 months to 5 years) and early withdrawals result in a penalty.

Money Markets

Unlike Certificate Accounts, there is no minimum deposit and you can make up to six withdrawals or transfers in a calendar month with no penalty. They also feature a higher interest rate than a regular Shared Savings account. Money Markets do not feature an investment term length. Instead, the interest rate is dependent upon the account's balance.

All of our savings accounts are federally insured up to \$250,000 by the NCUA, interest rates are compounded & paid each month.

For more information about any of our savings accounts or to see current rates, check out cypruscu.com, call (801) 260-7600 option 1, or visit a branch.



Pre-Mortgage Preparedness

Pre-Qualified vs. Pre-Approved

Although these processes sound similar, they have very different outcomes. In

pre-qualification, you provide your lender with your income to debt ratio and various assets, but not a credit report. This means you may not be getting the most accurate estimate of what you can afford and you are not guaranteed to receive this amount once you begin officially applying for mortgage. This practice can usually be done over the phone or even the internet.

The **pre-approval** process is a bit more complex because you have to provide more of your information, fill out an official mortgage application, and pay any applicable fees. However, you leave these meetings with a conditional commitment in writing for an exact loan amount. This enables you to start making offers on houses more quickly because you don't have to wait for your financing to be approved later.

Here's everything that you may need as you prepare to apply for a mortgage:

- **Basic Information** – Just like with a regular loan, you will need to provide the lender with your name, address, former addresses, social security number, and photo ID.
- **Proof of Income** – You will need some type of verification of your income when you are applying for a mortgage. This can be a W2, a paystub, or other forms of proof. Additionally, you should plan on having at least two to three years' worth of tax returns at hand.
- **Bank Statements** – Lenders need to determine your assets. This includes all checking, savings, investment, and retirement accounts that are under your name. You will also need to provide the source of your down payment.
- **Credit History** – While your credit is going to be pulled, it may be helpful to have a printed copy of your credit report. If you credit is frozen prior to applying, you will need to make sure you disable it so that your credit can be pulled.
- **Gift Money** – If friends or family are gifting you funds to go towards your down payment, you will need proof that it is a gift and not a loan that will need to be paid back.
- **Renting History** – If you have been renting, you may need to provide proof of on time rent payments over a period of 12 months.



FINDING A HOUSE



House Hunting



Selecting an Agent

This is the first important step towards looking for a new home. Real estate agents not only know the business inside and out, they have connections everywhere, from home inspectors to interior decorators. They also handle a lot of the legwork, have access to listings that aren't available to the public, negotiate to get you the best deal, and just make the overall process easier.

Ask Friends & Family.

A great place to start looking for an agent is right in your own backyard. Talk to people that you know and trust, that live in your area, and have recently moved about their real estate agent experience.

Get References.

Check the agent's website for any reviews from previous clients. You can also ask for a list of references with contact information during the interview process, which any good real estate agent should have no problem letting you have.

Find an Expert.

A real estate agent should not only be familiar with the area to which you are moving but also with the type of property you are buying. Drive around your neighborhood and look for houses that are for sale and find the names of agents that already have a foot in the door of your community.

Real Estate Agent Interview Questions

After compiling a list of potential agents, set up interviews with your top choices. These will usually be done over the phone or at the agent's office. Be prepared with questions, something to take notes with, and be prepared to answer some questions from the agent as well. Here is a list of sample questions to ask during the interview:

What is your experience and education?

There's only so much you can learn about a person from a short bio on a website. Use the interviewing process to learn more about the agent, go in-depth on their qualifications & experience, and see if you are compatible with their work style.



FINDING A HOUSE



Do you work on your own or part of a team?

If the agent you are interviewing with runs a large office, there's a possibility you may work with several people throughout your home search and purchase. If so, ask if you'll get the chance to meet those people prior to selecting an agent.

How many clients do you currently represent?

There isn't a right or wrong answer for this question, but if the number seems too high or too low that may be a red flag. If a number concerns you in any way, bring it up with the agent. Maybe they simply choose to take on a small number of clients in order to make sure they provide a sufficient amount of time for everyone.

May I have a list of references?

Although most real estate agents have reviews on their website, they only put what they want you to see. By calling former clients, you can gain a better understanding of what it is like to work with that particular agent. Make sure to ask if they felt like the agent communicated enough throughout the process and if the reference would use them again.

Is this your full-time job?

Some agents only work part-time and while this shouldn't automatically put them out of the running, they may not always be available when you need them. If you're okay working around their schedule and everything else seems to check out, then go for it. If you want someone who is available to show your house with minimal notice, maybe keep looking.

Do you have any special certifications or designations?

Any additional certifications mean that the agent has completed courses of training beyond the minimum requirements for the job. This also means they could have expertise in a certain aspect of real estate and, depending on your situation this may be an added bonus for you.

Are you a member of any professional real estate organizations?

Similar to certifications, this just means that the real estate agent you are interviewing has completed additional training. For example, not all real estate agents are Realtors. Realtors are members of the National Association of Realtors that have pledged to a code of ethics and standards of practice.

FINDING A HOUSE



How many homes did you sell last year? How many in my neighborhood?

As with anyone that you hire to do a job, you want to know how successful they have been in the past, especially with products similar to yours. The more familiar they are with your area, the better they'll understand what will help sell your home.

What's the average variation between your initial listing & final sale price?

You want to make sure that you get the best value out of your home and that your realtor's negotiation and pricing skills are up to par. No real estate agent will have sold every home for the original asking price, but if it seems to be a common theme for a particular agent, that may be an area of concern. The goal should be to sell your home for at least 90% of the selling price.

How will you keep me informed about the progress of my transaction?

Communication is the most important part of a real estate agent-client relationship. So find out how often they will be in touch with you, what kind of information they will be sharing, how will they contact you, and how can you get in contact with them.

What are the negatives of my house?

This may be the hardest part to hear, especially if you love your home, but it's essential to find out what you need to fix before putting your house on the market. If you've selected an agent that is familiar with the area, they'll know what helps sell a home and what doesn't. However, if there is something that you know needs to be fixed and the agent doesn't bring it up and just says how fantastic your home is, they may not be as straightforward as you need them to be.



Needs and Wants

Once you have an agent in place, they need to start compiling a list of potential locations to start the house hunting process. To narrow down the options, create a list of what you need in a house and what you want in a house.

Needs are non-negotiable. These are usually things that can't be or would be very difficult to change. This includes location, single or multiple stories, the age of a home, or amount of bedrooms. Wants are things that would be nice but you can live without or just add later. This includes things like hardwood floors, an updated kitchen, or a finished basement.

Unless you are building a home from the foundation up, the chances of finding a home that hits every item on both lists is very slim. Prioritize your needs list and aim to hit about 60% of the wants list. An open mind towards a home's potential is a necessity during house hunting.

FINDING A HOUSE



House Hunting Tips

Once you begin looking, keep notes about what you liked and what you didn't about every house. This can be anything from a basic list of pros and cons on your phone to a sketch of the floor plan in a notepad. This will help you keep track as you begin the process of narrowing down houses. Use your phone or a camera to take photos of all the properties you view. Since you'll be viewing an average of between 5 to 7 homes a day every time you go out, it's important to stay organized.

Prior to making a final decision, if you are able to, walk through the house and drive through the neighborhood several times at different times of day. You are bound to see and hear different things about both the house and the community each time you visit, helping you to make a more informed decision on whether or not that is the place for you.

Most importantly, after selecting an agent and giving them your budget and needs list, let them do their job. If they haven't shown you a particular home that you know is for sale, there is probably a reason why. Don't start investigating properties on your own because you may end up falling in love with a place you can't afford.





Selling your Home

Once you decide to sell your home, it becomes just another product within the housing market and in order to beat out the competition, you need to make it the best option available. Here are some things you can do to prepare your home before listing it.

Organize & Clean

Leaving out clutter can make a room seem smaller, regardless of whether it's on the floor or sitting on the counter, so pick up and put away everything. While cleaning, separate your items into keep, donate or sell, and throw-away piles. If you are having trouble making decisions, decide whether or not you think it's worth it to pay to have that item shipped to your new home. Don't just hide things in your closets because potential buyers looking at the house will open them and you don't want them caught in an avalanche of your belongings. Keep furniture to a minimum to create a nice flow throughout the house. Bulky furniture can make a room hard to navigate around during an open house. If necessary, rent out a storage unit to use while the house is being shown.

Go Neutral

You may love your bright red dining room but, for the most part, buyers don't. Make sure all of the main living areas are neutral colors. At the same time, avoid using too much white because it can feel sterile and cold. Grey, beige, cream, and tan are good color options that will warm up your home without being over the top. For the bathrooms, pale greens and blues are a good way to offset the cold metal feel of the room.

De-Home your House

You want prospective buyers to imagine your home as theirs, which can be difficult with photos of your family vacations covering the walls and kid's trophies on the mantle. Remove all personal items throughout the home and repair any holes in the walls as a result from hanging photos. Keep decor impersonal and minimal, like flowers, candles, nonspecific pictures, and plants. Secure any items of value, such as jewelry, cash, or other important keepsakes in a safe place while people are coming in and out of your house.



BUYING AND SELLING



Quick & Easy Fixes

It doesn't make sense to completely renovate your home before moving, but you can make some small, and sometimes inexpensive, changes that can help make it look more modern before putting it on the market. Update cabinet hardware, door handles, and light fixtures so everything matches. Fix the leaky faucets, wash the curtains, and change out the light bulbs throughout the house. Also, take the time to make sure that the bathtub and shower are squeaky clean; a closed curtain or door won't be able to keep curious buyers away. Scrub the tile and replace the grout if necessary.

Take Magazine Worthy Photos

Many people take a look at online listings before stopping by to see the house in real life. No matter how great the house looks, if you use low quality photos with bad lighting, that won't strike up much interest. Either invest in a nice camera or borrow one as opposed to quickly snapping a few pictures on your cell phone. Stage your home in a way that every room has a functional purpose. Show off all aspects of your home to help the buyer envision how they can make the house their own. Use natural light whenever possible and take photos from multiple angles until you find what shows off your home in the best light. Don't worry about photo overload, because according to Trulia, listings with more than 6 pictures are twice more likely to be viewed by prospective buyers than those with fewer than 6.

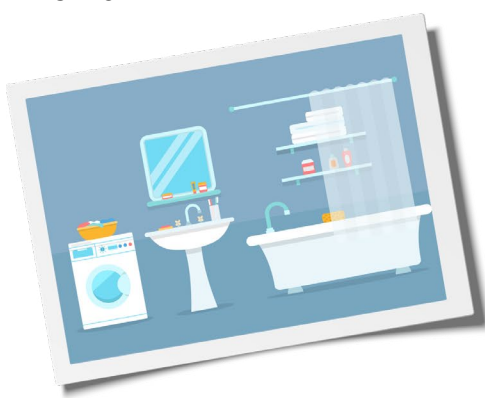
Be Invisible

When people stop by to take a look at the house, you and your family should not be there. Having the home owner hovering around while buyers try to discuss the pros and cons of the house can be an uncomfortable situation for all involved. This goes for your furry and feathered family members as well. Make sure all of their belongings are out of sight and arrange for them to stay at a friend or family member's house. Ideally, people looking at the house shouldn't be able to tell that a pet lives there.

Curb Appeal Matters

It doesn't really matter how much time you spend on the inside of your home if buyers don't even want to take a look after seeing the outside. Keep the sidewalks and walkways clear, mow your lawn, plant flowers, wash windows, and paint any faded trim. Double check that your house number is clear and visible from the street so prospective buyers will be able to find it.

Although these are all simple steps that can help you get top dollar on your sale, like most home projects, it usually takes longer than you plan and you'll sometimes discover a much bigger problem. All things considered, you should give yourself about 30 days to prepare your home before putting it on the market.





Inspections & Appraisals

Home Inspection Checklist

A home inspection will not only give you the peace of mind that you're purchasing a home that's in good condition, but it can also help you determine how much to offer if you decide it's the house for you. The things you should have inspected are:

Structure

This includes items such as the foundation and the framing. The foundation should be clear of any cracks or movement and the framing should be secure.

Exterior

After checking the structure, the inspector should take a look at the windows, doors, trim, surface, and the sidewalk and driveway. If the home has a porch, deck, or balcony, these should also be inspected.

Roofing

While there's a good chance you may have deal with roof repairs at some point during your time as a home owner (the common asphalt shingle has a life expectancy of 15 to 40 years) you don't want it to be a problem right out of the gate. Have the inspector check the shingles or tiles for signs of aging or falling off all together. A bad roof can lead to thousands of dollars in water damage repairs, and that's on top of fixing the roof.

Heating and Air

Everything from the vents to the water heater should be checked that they are working correctly (and efficiently) and are sufficient enough for the size of the home.

Electrical

There should be a comprehensive inspection of all electrical components in the house including the wires, electrical systems, and any appliances. Wires or systems that don't meet code could short circuit and potentially cause a fire.

Plumbing

Common problems such as reduced water pressure, noisy pipes, or rust can be a sign of bigger problems with the house's plumbing system. Drainage and sump pumps should also be examined and checked for effectiveness.

Interior

Have the inspector check out the walls, floors, stairs, counters, and cupboards throughout the entire house. In particular, be on the lookout for water damage, rot, construction defects, and signs of rodents or termites.

Ventilation/Insulation

The inspector should check that your attic is properly insulated and that it meets the required R-Level for your location. The colder the climate, the higher the R-Level score will be. The home should have good ventilation to avoid overheating in the summer time and keep air conditioning costs lower.

Fireplaces

You'll want to make sure that your new fireplace both works and is installed correctly.

If there are substantial issues with the home, there are a few options available. First, you can decrease the amount you will offer and use the money you save to make the repairs yourself. Second, have the seller agree pay for the repairs before you close on your mortgage. Third, walk away completely if the challenge of fixing up the home seems too overwhelming.



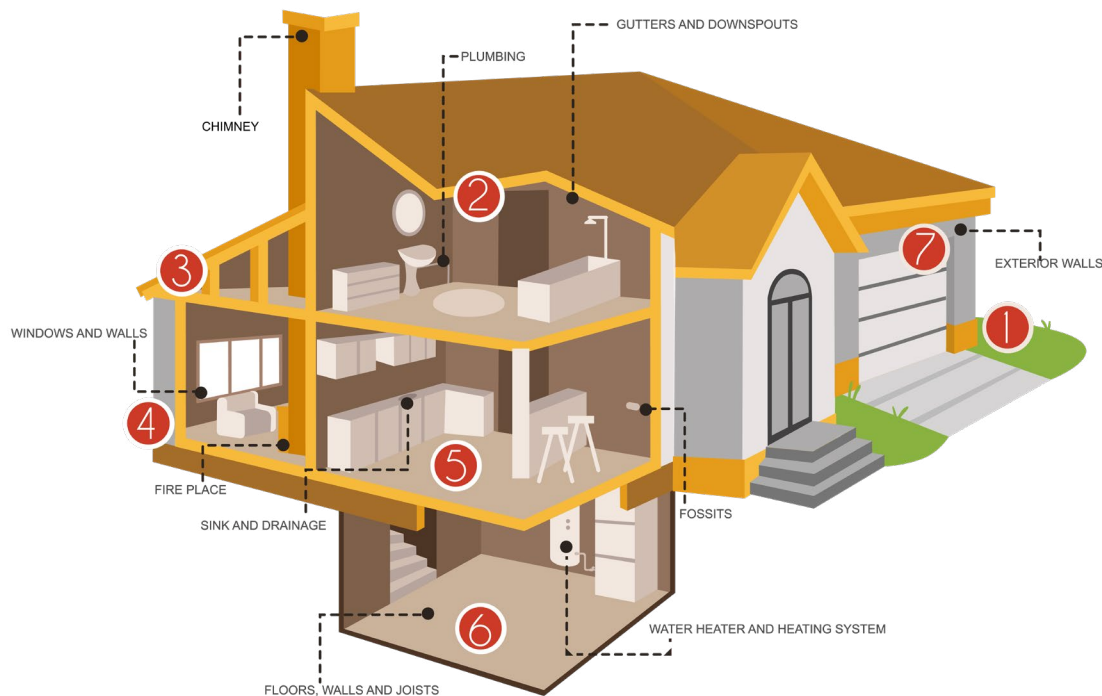
Home Appraisals

An appraisal is basically a very educated guess of what your home is worth. There are very few kinds of mortgage loans that don't require some type of appraisal process. When it comes to the home buying process, the seller of the home usually pays for the appraisal and they average around a few hundred dollars.

If the appraiser notices something wrong with the house, they may take note of it for the inspector, but they won't go in depth. The main focus of the appraiser is to find the value of the property as opposed to any defects within the house.

Due to federal guidelines, the average length of an appraisal is about a week. The eventual length is dependent upon how much information the underwriter requests. You can find out more about underwriting on page XX.

Just like an open house, you want your home makes a good first impression for the appraiser. Make sure everything is clean, the lawn is mowed, the garden is free of weeds, and the drive way is clear. Also, make a list of any improvements or repairs you have made over the years.





Mortgage Application

Types of Mortgages



10 to 30 Year Fixed Rate

This type of mortgage features a fixed interest rate throughout the entire term of the loan. This means that your loan payment will not change regardless of the market's interest rate adjusting. These loans usually have larger initial payments than compared to those with a variable rate mortgage.



Variable Rate Mortgage

With a variable rate mortgage, the interest rate adjusts periodically. Monthly principal and interest payments change according to a predetermined schedule throughout the life of the loan. These usually have a lower interest rate than a fixed rate mortgage for the first few years which can lead to significant savings. After the introductory period ends, the rate will change depending on the market interest rate change.



FHA Loans

Federal Housing Administration loans are the most common mortgage programs used by first time buyers. This allows a buyer to put as little as 3.5% down on the home. FHA also allows for limited credit, lower credit scores, and non-occupant co-borrowers. This loan can also allow the seller to pay most of the buyer's loans closing costs.



Investment Property Loans

With as many homes that are currently available on the market, now is a great time for real estate investors to add to their portfolios. Cyprus offers extremely competitive rates and programs to help experienced members invest in real estate.

BUYING AND SELLING



Reverse Mortgages

For homeowners aged 62 years or older, reverse mortgages can be a great financial tool to help eliminate financial concerns during retirement. The proceeds from this program can be used for home improvements, ongoing medical or living expenses, or any other needs of the borrower. There is no monthly payment and the house remains in the borrower's name.



Utah Housing

Utah Housing is a program sponsored by the state of Utah that allows certain borrowers to obtain a low fixed rate loan with no money out of pocket. There are specific income, credit, and eligibility requirements to qualify for this program and it is specifically designed for first time home buyers.



Refinance Mortgages

Refinancing your current mortgage for a lower rate can save you money. The process is quick and easy and we'd be happy to review your current situation and suggest ways to streamline your expenses.



Short & Sweet Mortgage

Our short and sweet mortgage loans require no appraisal and offer a fixed closing fee of \$250, a significant savings over the costs and fees of a traditional 30 year loan. Your mortgage is held in-house at Cyprus Credit Union which ensures quick loan closing, easy account and payment access at any branch, by phone or online through Home Banking.



Application Process

After speaking with one of our mortgage specialists and selecting the loan program that fits you best, it's time to start the official application process. Your mortgage advisor may ask you to bring certain documents with you to the meeting, even if you have been pre-qualified for a loan.

After you've completed the application, your mortgage advisor will verify that all of the information you have provided in your application is correct.

You will then receive the following documents from your advisor:

Loan Estimate

A Loan Estimate is your Mortgage advisor's best estimate of any fees you may be charged to process or close your loan, such as title insurance, recording fees, and mortgage insurance.

It also estimates your finance charge, annual percentage rate, number of payments you will make, how much your payment will be, what your late fees will be, and the total amount that you will pay over the entire term of the mortgage.

Commitment Letter

This is the written agreement that you will receive your loan. It includes all of the specifics of the loan as well as any conditions you have agreed to meet prior to closing.

Your advisor will also submit an order for the following documents:

Property Appraisal

In most cases, in order to receive a mortgage, the property you are looking to purchase must be appraised. Loans will only be approved once it is determined that the property is worth the value of the loan.

Credit Report

Your advisor will also order a copy of your credit report which, if you have followed this manual, should be in order and ready to go. If you don't have traditional forms of credit, you will need to provide another form of evidence of making timely payments. This could include receipts or canceled checks for rent or utilities.

BUYING AND SELLING



Your application will then be passed onto an underwriter. The underwriter verifies that all requirements of the loan are met and that the information you have provided is both correct and truthful. For example, they may call your boss to make sure that you are in fact an employee and that your salary is accurate.

At this point, your application will either be accepted, denied, or the underwriter will request more

information. If this is the case, pass on the additional information as quickly as possible. The underwriter may also approve your loan with conditions, which means they still need additional information, but you can provide it at closing.

Once your loan is approved (you're almost there) you will move onto the pre-closing stage where you will order your title insurance, any approval contingencies are met, and the closing is scheduled.

At closing, you will order homeowners insurance. This will protect your new home against damages or losses caused by fire, flood, burglary, and more. Since your home is the collateral for the loan, you'll want to make sure that the value is fully protected against damages.

You will also receive your loan proceeds and present your down payment and the closing costs in the form of a certified check. Lastly, your loan will be formally closed and you're finally done.

You did it!
Congratulations,
you are now officially
a home owner.





Packing & Moving

Before you start packing, take inventory of all of your belongings. Are there clothes you don't wear anymore? Perhaps some furniture that has passed its prime or won't fit in your new house? Appliances that don't work or could use some updating? Don't pay to have these moved to your new home only to be put in storage or thrown away. Sort everything into either sell, donate, throw away, and keep categories and then act accordingly. Not only will this help lighten your moving load but you could potentially earn a little extra money.

Some items in your house can't simply be thrown into a box and put in a truck. Do a little research on how to move some bigger ticket items such as plasma TVs, washer & dryer, refrigerators, artwork, and china. Materials to pack these items may have to be special ordered if they aren't provided by your movers.

If possible, put heavier items in smaller boxes and lighter items in bigger boxes. Boxes that are both large AND heavy are usually more difficult to maneuver through hallways and stairwells. Also, make sure your boxes are packed tightly to reduce the likelihood of something breaking. You can use towels, paper towels, packing paper, or even clothing to fill in the cracks.

Come up with a consistent system to mark your moving boxes. Write what room they belong in, how many boxes go in that room, and a description of what's inside. Avoid packing things from multiple rooms into one box otherwise; you'll end up unpacking and repacking the same things as you move the box around the house. It's also helpful

to make a checklist for yourself so you can make sure that everything gets moved from your old house to the truck and finally, into your new home. Make sure to mark all sides of the box so you can see where it belongs no matter the angle.

Leading up to the big move, keep your grocery shopping to a minimum. Plan meals using ingredients you already have in your kitchen. This will not only save you money leading up to the move, but decrease the amount of 'stuff' you'll need to transport to the new house. Some professional moving companies are actually prohibited by law from transporting certain types of perishable food, so check with them so you don't end up throwing away a ton of food. Arrange for your utilities to be shut off in your current home one day after your move out date.

If you are planning on hiring a moving company, make sure to do your research. Moving companies are often one of the most complained about businesses in the country. Ask friends or family for suggestions and utilize websites such as Yelp or Better Business Bureau where companies can't pay to have bad reviews removed. Once you've narrowed down the list, get a detailed price quote in writing from several different companies to find the best value and avoid being overcharged once the move is over.

Don't forget to let people know about your address change. This includes family, friends, the post office, and any other businesses or accounts that routinely send you mail. Cancel your newspaper delivery if you have one and set it up for your new home.

HOME SWEET HOME



Move-In Checklist

Moving is an exciting new chapter in anybody's life, but there are a few things you need to do before you can officially call your new house a home.

Contact the utility companies

Arrange for all services in your home to be turned on the day before you move in and check that they are all in your name. This includes cable, internet, telephone, water, heating/air, electricity, gas, garbage, and sewer.

Evict unwanted guests

Depending on how long the house has been empty or if something was discovered during your inspection, there may be a few pests hanging out in your new digs. Before moving in your furniture, have an exterminator stop by or set off a bug bomb to start with a clean slate.

Deep Clean

Take advantage of the fact there's no furniture in the way to make sure everything is spotlessly clean (especially if you followed the previous tip and had an exterminator stop by). Start at the ceiling and work all the way down to the floor. Not only will it feel good to know your new house is spotless, but it will pretty much eliminate the need to clean during and after unpacking.

Fix It Up

If there are any small changes you want to make in the home, such as a fresh paint job, changing out light fixtures, or repairing in holes in the wall, moving in the best time to do it. No matter how much care the previous owner put into the house, there's bound to be a few things here and there that need to be changed.

Change the Locks

There's a chance that there may be spare copies of your house key floating around that the previous owner forgot about. While this isn't a requirement, it's better to be safe than sorry and it helps make your new home feel like yours.

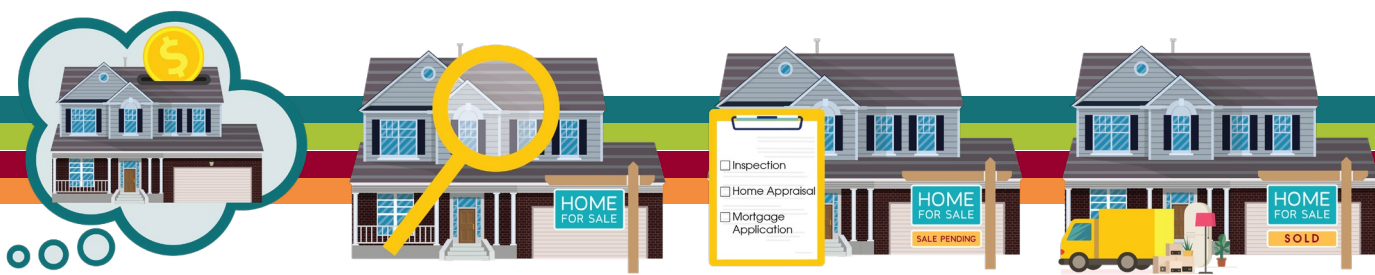
Find the mains

This includes the main circuit breaker and the main water shut-off valve. You'll need to know how both of these work in case of an emergency. If the breaker is not already labeled, take the time to figure out what room each switch controls and label it yourself.

Test smoke detectors.

Make sure they all work and that there are enough of them throughout the house. Buy a spare pack of batteries specifically for the smoke detectors to keep somewhere safe. Also, create a fire plan with your family that includes several ways to get out of the house, fire extinguishers on every floor, and where to meet after evacuation.





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