



7-Step First-Time Home Buyer Checklist

1. Check Your Credit Score

Your credit score affects your loan options, interest rate, and monthly payments. Aim for a score of 580 or higher for FHA loans, or 620+ for conventional loans.

Pro Tip: Get a free credit report at AnnualCreditReport.com and dispute any errors before applying.

2. Set a Realistic Budget

Know how much you can afford monthly and upfront. Include down payment, closing costs, taxes, and insurance.

Budget Tip: Use the 28/36 rule - your housing costs should not exceed 28% of your gross income.

3. Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage

Before you start home shopping, get pre-approved by a lender. This gives you a clear budget and makes your offers more competitive.

Bonus: Many lenders offer same-day pre-approvals. We can connect you with a trusted one.

4. Choose the Right Loan Type

- FHA: Lower credit, 3.5% down
- VA: No down payment (for veterans/military)
- Conventional: Better rates for good credit

Each has pros and cons. Ask your lender to compare all three for your situation.

5. Start Your Home Search the Smart Way

Look for homes slightly below your approved amount to stay flexible. Prioritize neighborhoods, safety, commute time, and resale value.

Avoid bidding wars by looking at off-market or wholesale deals - we specialize in those.

6. Make a Strong Offer

Lean on your pre-approval and use recent sales in the area to justify your price. Include an earnest

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money deposit and be clear about contingencies.

Tip: A fast close or flexible timeline can make your offer more attractive without overpaying.

7. Prepare for a Smooth Closing

Once your offer is accepted, stay organized. Schedule an inspection, finalize your loan, and review the closing disclosure.

Final Step: Do a walk-through before closing to make sure the home is in agreed condition.