

Welcome, and congratulations on starting this journey! Buying a home has a lot of moving parts, but every one of them happens in a predictable order. This guide walks you through each stage so you always know what is happening, what is coming next, and what we need from you. Keep it handy, write in it, and ask us anything, anytime.

YOUR TEAM & CONTACTS

BUYER(S)

YOUR EQUITY AGENT (NAME / PHONE / EMAIL)

LENDER / LOAN OFFICER

TITLE / ESCROW OFFICER

HOME INSPECTOR

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE AGENT

TARGET MOVE-IN DATE / AREAS / BUDGET NOTES

THE ROADMAP AT A GLANCE

Typical financed purchase: about 30 to 45 days from accepted offer to closing. Your contract dates always rule.



START HERE: YOUR FIRST WEEK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Meet with your agent and review the buyer representation agreement (we will explain how agents are paid).
- ☐ Talk to a lender and get pre-approved (not just pre-qualified).
- ☐ Pull your free credit reports at annualcreditreport.com and dispute any errors.
- ☐ Decide on a monthly payment that feels comfortable, not just the maximum you can be approved for.
- ☐ Gather documents: 2 years of tax returns and W-2s, 30 days of pay stubs, 2 months of bank statements, photo ID.
- ☐ Write your must-haves vs. nice-to-haves (commute, bedrooms, yard, schools, lot, HOA or no HOA).
- ☐ Start saving for down payment, earnest money, inspections, closing costs and moving costs.
- ☐ Pause big financial moves: no new credit, new car, job change, or large undocumented deposits.
- ☐ Start a folder (paper or digital) for everything you sign and receive.

MY BUDGET SNAPSHOT (COMPLETE WITH YOUR LENDER)

PRE-APPROVAL AMOUNT

COMFORTABLE MONTHLY PAYMENT

LOAN TYPE & TERM

DOWN PAYMENT AVAILABLE

EARNEST MONEY PLANNED

CASH SET ASIDE FOR CLOSING COSTS

1 Get Ready & Get Pre-Approved

Start here

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- You and your agent talk through your goals, timeline, budget, and the buyer representation agreement.
- A lender reviews your income, assets, credit and debts and issues a **pre-approval letter**. This is verified, so sellers take it far more seriously than a pre-qualification, which is only a quick estimate.
- You compare loan options: Conventional, FHA, VA, USDA, or cash. Ask lenders about first-time buyer and down payment assistance programs in Oregon and Washington.
- Your lender explains rates, points, and the cash you will need at closing.

YOUR TO-DO

- Compare at least two or three lenders on rate *and* fees.
- Ask what total monthly payment looks like: principal, interest, taxes, insurance, and any HOA dues.
- Ask how long your pre-approval is valid and what could change it.
- Keep your finances steady. Lenders re-check credit and employment before closing.
- Ask your agent about neighborhoods, price ranges, and how the local market is moving.

PRO TIP: Rate checks from several mortgage lenders within a short window are usually counted as a single credit inquiry, so comparison shopping is safe.

2 Search & Tour Homes

Weeks to months

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Your agent sets up listing alerts and schedules showings. In busy markets, great homes can go under contract in days.
- You tour homes, take photos and notes, and narrow down to finalists. Revisit favorites at a different time of day.
- Your agent pulls comparable sales (comps), price history and days on market to help you understand value.
- You may need to decide quickly, so know your numbers before you tour.

YOUR TO-DO

- Rank your must-haves; be flexible on nice-to-haves.
- Research the area: commute, noise, schools, future development, and flood, wildfire, landslide or earthquake risk.
- Note the age of the roof, furnace, water heater, windows and sewer line. Older Northwest homes can have oil tanks, knob-and-tube wiring or galvanized pipes.
- Rural property? Ask about wells, septic systems and shared road agreements.
- Ask about HOA dues, rules, and reserves.

PRO TIP: Keep your pre-approval letter on your phone so you can make a fast, confident offer when the right home appears.

3 Make an Offer

Day 0: when you find the one

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Your agent drafts the offer on the standard form (OREF in Oregon, NWMLS in Washington): price, earnest money, financing, contingencies, closing date, possession and included items.
- The seller can accept, reject, or counter. Counteroffers can go back and forth until everyone agrees.
- When all parties sign the final terms, that is **mutual acceptance**. It is Day 0, and your deadlines count from this date.

YOUR TO-DO

- Decide your price and your walk-away number with your agent, based on comps.
- **Earnest money** shows good faith. The amount is negotiated, held by title/escrow, and credited toward your costs at closing.
- Strong offers can include flexible closing and possession dates and a clear pre-approval.
- Read everything. Do not waive protections unless you fully understand the risk.

PRO TIP: Your earnest money can be at risk if you miss a deadline or default. Mark every date from the contract on your calendar.

4 Under Contract: Inspections & Due Diligence

Days 1 - 14 (typical)

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Your earnest money goes to title/escrow. Escrow opens and orders the **preliminary title report**.
- The seller delivers disclosures (Oregon: Seller's Property Disclosure Statement. Washington: NWMLS Form 17). Read them closely and ask your agent about anything unclear.
- During your inspection period you hire inspectors, review reports with your agent, then request repairs, credits, or a price change. If your contract allows, you may also end the contract.
- You and your agent review title exceptions and, if applicable, HOA or condo documents.

YOUR TO-DO

- Schedule your general home inspection right away, and attend if you can.
- Consider add-ons as they apply: sewer scope, radon, pest / wood-destroying organisms, roof, chimney, oil tank sweep, well flow and water quality, septic pump and inspection.
- Complete your loan application and send documents to your lender quickly.
- Respond to repair, title and HOA deadlines on time.
- **Get homeowners insurance quotes now** (see page 5).

PRO TIP: Contract deadlines are firm. Missing one can mean losing a protection or even your earnest money.

EXAMPLE: WHAT A 30-DAY FINANCED TIMELINE CAN LOOK LIKE

● Day 0	Mutual acceptance. The contract is signed and the clock starts.
● Days 1 - 3	Earnest money delivered. Escrow opens. Title report ordered.
● Days 1 - 10	Inspections done. Seller disclosures reviewed.
● About Day 10	Repair request / inspection response and negotiation.
● Days 5 - 14	Loan application complete. Appraisal ordered.
● Days 14 - 21	Title and HOA review done. Appraisal received.
● Days 21 - 28	Underwriting. Conditions cleared. Insurance in place.
● 3+ business days before closing	Lender delivers your Closing Disclosure.
● Day 30 - 45	Final walk-through, signing, funding, recording, keys.

CALENDAR vs. BUSINESS DAYS

Some deadlines count calendar days and others count business days (weekends and holidays excluded). Oregon and Washington forms can differ. **Your agent will give you a personalized Transaction Timeline with exact dates.** Keep it next to this guide.

MY KEY DATES (FILL IN WITH YOUR AGENT AFTER MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE)

MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE

EARNEST MONEY DUE

INSPECTION DEADLINE

REPAIR RESPONSE DEADLINE

TITLE / HOA REVIEW DEADLINE

LOAN / FINANCING DEADLINE

FINAL WALK-THROUGH

CLOSING / POSSESSION

COMMON "WHAT IF?" QUESTIONS

The inspection finds problems. You do not have to fix everything. Focus on safety, structure, water and major systems. Your agent helps you request repairs, credits or a price change, or end the contract if your inspection contingency allows.

The appraisal comes in low. Options can include renegotiating the price, covering the gap in cash, asking the lender to reconsider the value, or ending the contract if your contingency allows.

I need more time to close. Tell your agent right away. Changing a deadline requires a written agreement signed by all parties. Verbal promises do not count.

My loan is delayed or questioned. Call your lender and agent immediately. Your financing deadline and protections depend on your contract, so do not wait.

5 Loan Approval & Final Prep

Days 14 - 30+

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Your lender orders an **appraisal**. It needs to support the purchase price. If it comes in low, options can include renegotiating, bringing extra cash, or ending the contract if your contingency allows.
- The underwriter reviews your file and may ask for more documents (called conditions).
- When all conditions are met you receive **clear to close**. The lender must deliver your Closing Disclosure at least 3 business days before closing.

YOUR TO-DO

- Answer lender requests the same day when possible.
- Do not change jobs, open credit, or move large sums of money without talking to your lender first.
- Bind your homeowners insurance and send proof to your lender.
- Compare the Closing Disclosure to your Loan Estimate line by line. Ask about anything that changed.
- Confirm your cash-to-close amount and how to send it.

PRO TIP: Wire fraud is real. Never wire money based on an emailed instruction. Call your title/escrow officer at a phone number you already know to verify every wire.

6 Closing Day

Day 30 - 45 (typical)

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- **Final walk-through**, usually 24 to 48 hours before signing. You confirm the home is in the agreed condition, repairs are done, and included items remain.
- **Signing** at the title/escrow office or with a mobile notary, usually 30 to 60 minutes.
- **Funding and recording**: the lender funds the loan and escrow records your deed. You receive keys when the sale records, or as the possession terms in your contract state.

YOUR TO-DO

- Bring a government photo ID.
- Send your cash to close by verified wire (or as escrow instructs) ahead of time.
- Walk-through checklist: run faucets and toilets, test appliances, heat and A/C, open windows and doors, check for new damage, confirm repair receipts, test garage remotes.
- Collect keys, remotes, codes, manuals, and warranties.

PRO TIP: If something is wrong at the walk-through, tell your agent right away, before you sign.

7 Move In & Settle

Day 1 and beyond

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Congratulations, you are a homeowner! Your final settlement statement, deed and owner's title policy will follow by mail or email.
- Your **loan servicer** will contact you. Servicing can be sold, so verify any payment-change notice before acting.
- Property taxes are often collected through your lender's escrow account. If not, you pay the county directly.

YOUR TO-DO

- Rekey or replace exterior locks and reset garage and smart-home codes.
- Find your main water shutoff, gas shutoff and electrical panel.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Change HVAC filters.
- Save closing documents and improvement receipts for your records.
- Plan to budget roughly 1% of your home's value each year for maintenance.

WHO DOES WHAT

YOUR EQUITY AGENT

- Guides strategy, pricing and negotiation
- Writes and tracks contract deadlines
- Coordinates inspections, title and lender

YOUR LENDER

- Approves and funds your loan
- Orders the appraisal
- Issues your Loan Estimate and Closing Disclosure

TITLE / ESCROW

- Holds earnest money and closing funds
- Researches title and issues the title policy
- Prepares documents, records the deed

DON'T FORGET: HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Your lender will require proof of homeowners insurance before closing, and usually the first year's premium is paid at closing.
- Start early. Roof age, wiring, heating oil tanks, claims history, wildfire exposure and flood zones can affect price and even availability.
- **Flood and earthquake coverage are usually separate policies.** Ask if either makes sense for your home.
- Owner's title insurance (a one-time premium at closing) protects you against title problems.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INSURANCE AGENT

- Is the home covered for full replacement cost?
- What are the deductibles, including for wind, hail or wildfire?
- What discounts are available for bundling auto, a newer roof, or security systems?
- Does the policy cover detached structures, outbuildings and valuables?
- Optional: an umbrella policy and a home warranty. Ask what each covers and excludes.

DON'T FORGET: UTILITIES & SERVICES

Call each provider 1 to 2 weeks before closing to start service on your possession date. Ask the seller for current providers.

SERVICE	PROVIDER / COMPANY	PHONE / ACCOUNT #	START DATE	DONE
Electric	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
Natural gas / propane / heating oil	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
Water & sewer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
Garbage, recycling & yard debris	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
Internet / cable / phone	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
Security / alarm / smart home	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
HOA dues & portal set-up	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐
Other:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	☐

Tip: ask for final meter readings, set up auto-pay, and check whether propane or oil tanks come full or need a fill.

DON'T FORGET: CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ USPS mail forwarding (usps.com) | ☐ Driver's license & vehicle registration |
| ☐ Employer / payroll | ☐ Banks, credit cards & loans |
| ☐ Auto & other insurance policies | ☐ Voter registration |
| ☐ IRS (Form 8822) & Social Security | ☐ Subscriptions, shopping & delivery accounts |
| ☐ Doctors, dentist, pharmacy & schools | ☐ Pet licenses & microchip info |
| ☐ Cancel or transfer old utilities / lease | ☐ Friends, family & your new neighbors |

YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS AS A HOMEOWNER

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Rekey or replace exterior locks | ☐ Locate water, gas and electric shutoffs |
| ☐ Test smoke & CO alarms | ☐ Change HVAC filters; note the size |
| ☐ Register appliance warranties | ☐ Set up a home maintenance calendar |
| ☐ Store closing documents safely | ☐ Save receipts for improvements |
| ☐ Confirm who bills your property taxes | ☐ Meet your neighbors |

WHAT YOU'LL PAY: BUDGET BEFORE YOU BUY

UP FRONT

- Earnest money (credited to you at closing)
- Home inspection and add-on inspections
- Appraisal and loan application fees (if charged)
- Your down payment funds, seasoned in your account

AT CLOSING

- Down payment
- Lender and loan fees; prepaid interest
- Title and escrow fees; owner's title policy
- Prepaid homeowners insurance and property tax reserves
- Total closing costs are often around 2 to 5% of the price; your Loan Estimate shows yours

AFTER CLOSING

- Moving costs and immediate repairs
- Furniture, window coverings, and tools
- Ongoing maintenance and repairs
- HOA dues, utilities and property tax if not escrowed

DO THIS

- Respond to your agent, lender and escrow quickly
- Keep paying all bills on time and keep your job
- Document any large deposits with a paper trail
- Ask questions before you sign anything
- Verify wire instructions by phone, every time
- Keep all deadlines on your calendar

AVOID THIS UNTIL AFTER CLOSING

- Opening new credit cards or loans
- Financing a car, furniture or appliances
- Changing jobs or going self-employed
- Co-signing for anyone else
- Moving money between accounts without telling your lender
- Making big purchases before closing

OREGON & WASHINGTON QUICK NOTES

- **Forms:** Oregon transactions commonly use OREF forms; Washington transactions commonly use NWMLS forms. Your agent will handle which forms apply.
- **Seller disclosures:** Oregon uses the Seller's Property Disclosure Statement; Washington uses NWMLS Form 17.
- **Property taxes:** Oregon's tax year runs July 1 to June 30, with installments due Nov. 15, Feb. 15 and May 15. In Washington, taxes are generally due in two halves (April 30 and October 31). Your escrow officer prorates taxes at closing.
- **Local risks to ask about:** radon, sewer line condition, old oil tanks, well and septic systems, earthquake and landslide zones, wildfire and flood zones.
- **Title and escrow:** a neutral title/escrow company holds funds, prepares closing documents and records your deed.

WIRE FRAUD ALERT: Criminals send fake emails that look like they come from your title company, lender or agent. **Never wire funds based on emailed instructions.** Call your escrow officer at a phone number you already trust, confirm the instructions, and confirm receipt after you send.

HOME MAINTENANCE: A SIMPLE NORTHWEST SEASONAL CALENDAR

SPRING

- Inspect roof and gutters
- Service A/C or heat pump
- Check for moss and drainage issues
- Test smoke and CO alarms

SUMMER

- Clear brush and create defensible space
- Check crawl space for moisture
- Power-wash and reseal decks
- Inspect exterior paint and caulk

FALL

- Clean gutters and downspouts
- Service the furnace
- Disconnect outdoor hoses
- Know your sump or drain locations

WINTER

- Insulate exposed pipes
- Know how to shut off water fast
- Check attic for leaks or ice dams
- Keep storm supplies ready

PLAIN-ENGLISH GLOSSARY

Appraisal: An independent opinion of value ordered by the lender.

Closing Disclosure: Final loan terms and costs; delivered at least 3 business days before closing.

Contingency: A condition in the contract (like inspection or financing) that lets you adjust or exit if not satisfied.

Clear to Close: The lender has approved everything and is ready for signing.

Earnest Money: A deposit that shows good faith, held by escrow and credited to you at closing.

Escrow: A neutral third party that holds funds and documents until all conditions are met.

Loan Estimate: Your lender's early snapshot of loan terms and estimated costs.

Mutual Acceptance: The moment all parties have signed the final agreed terms. Day 0.

Prorations: Splitting costs like property tax and HOA dues between buyer and seller by closing date.

Preliminary Title Report: A report on ownership, liens and exceptions that affect the property.

Recording: Filing your deed with the county so ownership becomes official.

Underwriting: The lender's review of your finances and the property before final approval.

QUESTIONS TO ASK MY AGENT & NOTES

THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING US WITH YOUR HOME PURCHASE

We are with you at every step, from your first showing to the day you get your keys and long after. Questions about any step in this roadmap? Call or text your agent anytime.