

HOW TO

Prepare for House-Hunting

Know that there's no "right" time to buy.

If you find the perfect home now, don't risk losing it because you're trying to guess where the housing market and interest rates are going. Those factors usually don't change fast enough to make a difference in an individual home's price.

Don't ask for too many opinions.

It's natural to want reassurance for such a big decision, but too many ideas from too many people will make it much harder to make a decision. Focus on the wants and needs of the people who will actually be living in the home.

Accept that no house is ever perfect.

If it's in the right location, the yard may be a bit smaller than you had hoped. The kitchen may be perfect, but the roof needs repair. Make a list of your top priorities and focus on things that are most important to you. Let the minor ones go. Also, accept that a little buyer's remorse is inevitable and will most likely pass.

Don't try to be a killer negotiator.

Negotiation is definitely a part of the real estate process, but trying to "win" by getting an extra-low price or refusing to budge may cost you the home you love.

Remember your home doesn't exist in a vacuum.

Don't get so caught up in the physical aspects of the house itself that you forget about important issues such as noise level, access to amenities, and other aspects that also have a big impact on your quality of life.

Plan ahead.

Don't wait until you've found a home to get approved for a mortgage, investigate insurance, or consider a moving schedule. Being prepared will make your bid more attractive to sellers.

Choose a home first because you love it; then think about appreciation.

A home is still considered a great investment, but its most important role is as a comfortable, safe place to live.