

The First-Time Buyer Checklist

Every step from “I think I’m ready” to keys in hand, in the order it usually happens. Check things off as you go.

Get ready 6-12 MONTHS OUT

A little prep now makes everything after it easier.

- ☐ **Pull your free credit reports**
Check all three bureaus at annualcreditreport.com and dispute anything that isn't yours.
- ☐ **Write down your monthly budget**
Include what you spend now, so you can pick a payment that feels comfortable, not just one you qualify for.
- ☐ **Start a separate savings bucket**
For your down payment, closing costs, moving costs and a cushion for after you move in.
- ☐ **Keep large deposits documented**
Lenders ask about deposits that aren't payroll. Keep a note and a paper trail for gifts, sales or transfers.
- ☐ **Hold off on new credit**
New cards, car loans and big financed purchases can change what you qualify for.
- ☐ **Look into down payment assistance**
Use the DPA Lookup on this site to see programs to ask about in your county and city.

Get pre-approved 1-3 MONTHS OUT

- ☐ **Book a 30-minute call with your loan officer**
Talk through goals, timeline and anything that worries you.
- ☐ **Gather your documents**
See the Documents Needed checklist.
- ☐ **Complete your application and credit review**
- ☐ **Get your pre-approval letter**
Pre-approval can take as little as 24 hours once your documents are in, and it comes with a call and an email walking you through your loan options, down payment and estimated monthly mortgage payment. Updated letters for each offer are delivered within 24 hours.
- ☐ **Ask about homebuyer education**
Many assistance programs require a HUD-approved course. Starting early keeps it from holding up closing.

Shop for your home

- ☐ Choose a Realtor you trust
- ☐ Make a needs vs. wants list
Bedrooms, commute, schools, pets, HOA rules, flood zone.
- ☐ Get homeowners and flood insurance quotes early
In South Florida, insurance can change your monthly budget a lot. Ask an agent before you fall in love with a home.
- ☐ Considering a condo? Check the building early
See the Condo Buyer Checklist and the Condo Hub.
- ☐ Send your loan officer the listing before you offer
A quick check can catch property or HOA issues early.

Under contract

The busiest stretch. Quick replies keep things on track.

- ☐ Deliver your escrow deposit on time
Follow the instructions from your title company or attorney. Verify wiring instructions by phone first.
- ☐ Schedule the home inspection
Ask about a wind mitigation report and, for older homes, a 4-point inspection. Both can affect insurance.
- ☐ Send requested documents quickly
Underwriting may ask for updated statements or letters of explanation.
- ☐ Bind your homeowners insurance
Your lender needs proof of insurance before closing.
- ☐ Keep your finances steady
No job changes, new credit, large purchases or unexplained deposits without talking to your loan officer first.
- ☐ Watch for appraisal and clear-to-close updates

Closing and after

- ☐ **Review your Closing Disclosure**
You should receive it at least 3 business days before closing. Compare it with your Loan Estimate and ask questions.
- ☐ **Confirm the amount and method for your funds to close**
Call the title company at a number you already know to confirm wiring instructions.
- ☐ **Do the final walk-through**
- ☐ **Bring a valid government-issued photo ID**
- ☐ **After closing, file for Florida homestead exemption**
Apply with your county property appraiser by March 1 of the year after you buy (you must own and live in the home as of January 1).

Your loan officer can tell you which steps apply to your loan. Not every item applies to every buyer.

Notes

General information only, not a commitment to lend. Requirements vary by loan program and lender guidelines.

Questions? Call or text Brittany at 954-990-3163.

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