

HOME BUYER TIPS FOR CHOOSING A REAL ESTATE AGENT



More than 90 percent of consumers work with a real estate agent in purchasing a home, by far the largest expenditure most of them will ever make. These home buyers face a tough choice among numerous agents whose services can vary greatly in quality. Here are tips about how buyers can select an agent that provides good value.

Before searching for an agent:

- Search online for the kind of house you wish to purchase – location, size, price, and other features – to make certain your aspiration is realistic.
- Qualify for a mortgage for this type of house, which will help ensure agent interest and attention.

Identify several agents to interview by asking friends/associates for suggestions and by searching Zillow’s “agent profiles.” Avoid referral agencies that, despite claims, do not recommend the best agents and, in collecting a portion of the commission, reduce your agent’s incentive to provide full service. For each agent, consider:

- Whether they have helped consumers purchase homes recently.
- Whether these properties are in your geographic area and in the price range of your home.
- In the price history section of each property, how long these homes took to sell and whether their price was marked up or down.
- Whether there are a large number of positive customer reviews about the agent with detailed information about buyer experience with this agent.

Select at least three agents to interview and ask them the following questions:

- **Representation:** Whether the agent will represent your fiduciary interests – that is, whether they will be completely loyal only to you – throughout the entire sales process. A few agents work exclusively with buyers. If the agent also lists the homes of sellers, ask them how they would resolve potential conflicts of interest between your interest and that of their sellers.
- **Delegation:** Whether the agent will work with you all the time or delegate much work, including visiting properties and responding to your calls or emails, to other team members.
- **Length of contract with agent:** While the most typical length is six months, if you wish to purchase quickly, ask the agent about a 90-day contract.
- **Home Inspection:** Even in a hot seller market, it is essential for an independent expert to assess the quality of the home you wish to purchase. Talk to the agent about this issue.
- **Commission:** While sellers typically pay the buyer agent commission, be aware that this fee is usually built into the sale price of the home. So it is worth asking if the agent is willing to rebate any of this commission back to you the buyer. Some agents will do so.

