

Preparing to Buy

A little effort at the beginning of your home search can pay off in the end. You may save time, money and you'll likely be happier with your home with you approach the process with as much information as you can.

Needs vs. Wants

You want a home that meets the needs of your current lifestyle, but there are very few homebuyers who don't have to make some sort of compromise. Factors such as house cost, neighbourhood, lot size and special features play a big role in your decision. Determining which features your new house absolutely must have, and which features you could live without, is your first step in the home buying process.

Separating your must-have features from the ones you can live without

Just as you wouldn't set out to buy groceries without a list, you shouldn't start looking at houses before you know for sure what you want and need in a home.

Focus your home search early on by writing out the features your new house absolutely must have, and those features that, while nice to have, are not necessarily deal breakers.

You can start by asking yourself the following questions:

Cost

Knowing your budget will help you decide which of your desired home features should stay on your shortlist. Here are the two factors to consider:

- How much can I afford to spend on my new house?
- How much renovating and remodeling am I willing to do?

Neighbourhood

Some home buyers are willing to compromise on location, and for others location is everything. To determine how important it is to you, answer these questions:

- Where do I want to live? (community/general area)
- Is the quality and proximity of schools a factor?
- How far am I willing to commute to work?
- Is being close to public transportation important?
- Which amenities should be close by? (grocery store, medical clinic, mechanic)

The basics

These are the features every prospective home buyer must consider. Determine which ones you're dead-set on, and which ones could go either way: Do I want a brand new house, or an older one?

- What style of house do I prefer? (ranch, colonial, split-level, multi-level, town home, condo, multi-family, bungalow, other)
- How big a home do I want? How many square feet?
- What sort of lot would I like? (small yard, large yard, fenced, garage, patio/deck, other buildings)
- How many bedrooms do I need? How many would I like to have?
- How many bathrooms do I need? How many would I like to have?

Special features

Although special features are less important than the basics, most home owners have at least a few they're not willing to compromise on. Find out which are must-haves for you:

- What features are important in your new house? (air conditioning, carpeting, ceramic tile floors, hardwood floors, eat-in kitchen, separate dining room, formal living room, family room, den, library, basement, separate laundry room, fireplace, workshop)
- Do I have special medical issues that require accommodation, such as wheelchair access ramps?
- Do I have pets to consider? (fence, big yard, mud room)

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