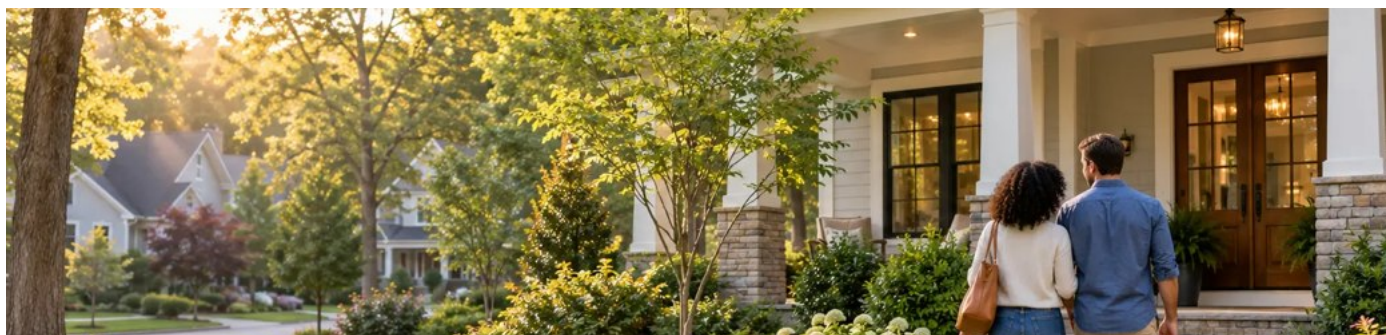


# Your first-home field guide

Prepare the money, paperwork and questions before your first offer.



FOUNDATIONS / BUYING

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Plain-language explanations. A practical worksheet. Room for your questions.

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# Start with readiness

You do not need every answer before your first conversation.

## Separate readiness from certainty

Buying always involves unknowns. The useful question is whether you can describe the likely payment, upfront cash, ownership responsibilities and next steps well enough to make a considered decision.

## Test the budget in real life

Review several months of spending and include expenses that only arrive occasionally. Compare the proposed housing budget with what you actually save each month. A practical budget should survive ordinary changes, not require a perfect month. <sup>1</sup>

## Make a two-column question list

Put financing questions on one side: income, credit, payment and cash. Put property questions on the other: condition, location, inspections and contract terms. Share the list with the person best placed to answer it.

| You can prepare now          | The team can help clarify          |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Spending and savings records | What income and assets can qualify |
| Your comfortable payment     | Program and property requirements  |
| Your moving priorities       | A realistic financing sequence     |

### TAKE THIS INTO YOUR NEXT CONVERSATION

You can decide to keep preparing. An early conversation does not oblige you to buy.

# Credit and income: what gets reviewed

An online score alone does not tell the whole story.

## Ask what will be verified

The mortgage review considers income, debts, assets and credit information. Ask which records will be used and what assumptions support a preliminary answer.<sup>2</sup>

## Recognize the debt-to-income calculation

DTI compares qualifying monthly debts, including the proposed housing obligation, with qualifying gross monthly income. Different products use different limits and income calculations. It is an underwriting measure, not a complete household spending plan.<sup>3</sup>

## Organize unusual situations early

If income varies, you changed jobs, or you own a business, describe that at the start. Do not assume that a bank deposit equals qualifying income. Request a tailored document list instead of sending unrelated files.<sup>4</sup>

## Do not guess at credit fixes

Before paying off accounts or changing how you use credit for the mortgage, discuss the goal with your team. Ask what evidence would show that the change helps and whether it affects available closing funds.

### TAKE THIS INTO YOUR NEXT CONVERSATION

Useful question: What is verified today, and what still needs documentation?

# Know when the cash is needed

Money due before closing and money due at closing belong in the same plan.

## Map the sequence

Ask your agent about contract deposits and inspections. Ask your mortgage team about valuation and financing charges. Ask the closing attorney about settlement funds. Record the payee, due date and payment instructions rather than relying on a single total.

## Distinguish the main buckets

The down payment is your share of the purchase price. Settlement charges, prepaid expenses and initial escrow funding may also be due. Credits and deposits already paid affect the final cash calculation.<sup>5</sup>

## Keep a documentation trail

If another person is helping with funds, ask about gift eligibility and documentation before money moves. Keep complete statements and records of transfers when requested. The documentation needs depend on your loan.<sup>4</sup>

| Timing              | Ask before paying                                |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Offer / contract    | What is due, to whom, and under what terms?      |
| During the contract | What inspection or valuation charges arise now?  |
| Closing             | Which earlier payments are already credited?     |
| After moving        | What cash remains for repairs and regular bills? |

TAKE THIS INTO YOUR NEXT CONVERSATION

Never put a purchase on a new credit account without first discussing the mortgage impact.

# The people and the promises

You should know who to call and what an update means.

## Your mortgage broker

Unity helps organize financing choices and coordinate the loan process. Final approval depends on the funding lender, underwriting requirements and the property. Ask who will send updates and how to raise a time-sensitive concern.

## Your real estate agent and attorney

Your agent helps with the property search and transaction coordination. Your attorney explains legal issues and closing documents. Ask the right professional to interpret contract deadlines, termination rights and deposit consequences.

## Your inspector and insurance provider

An inspection helps you assess condition; it is not the same as a valuation used for financing. Get insurance information early enough to discuss cost and coverage. Ask whether flood or other separate coverage needs review.

## Make each conversation useful

Finish by naming one next action, its owner and its due date. If an answer changes, ask what changed and why. Clear explanations build confidence more effectively than assurances with no detail.

### TAKE THIS INTO YOUR NEXT CONVERSATION

Save the phone numbers you trust before the closing period becomes busy.

# First-buyer readiness checklist

Use this as an organizer, not a qualification test. An unchecked item is a question to discuss.

- ☐ I know my comfortable payment and savings goals.
- ☐ I have identified cash available and reserves to keep.
- ☐ I can obtain my income and asset records.
- ☐ I have discussed gifts or unusual income, if relevant.
- ☐ I understand what my pre-approval assumes.
- ☐ I know who explains contract money and deadlines.
- ☐ I know how to deliver documents securely.
- ☐ I have listed questions to ask before an offer.

My biggest remaining question

One action I can take this week

Who I will contact / when

What would help me feel ready?

My notes / next conversation

Print and write, or fill in with a compatible PDF reader. Save your completed copy privately.

# Keep learning. Ask clearly.

Use these references to explore a question further, then ask how it applies to your transaction.

[01 CFPB | Preparing to shop](#)

[02 CFPB | Get a preapproval letter](#)

[03 CFPB | Debt-to-income ratio](#)

[04 CFPB | Create a loan application packet](#)

[05 CFPB | Loan Estimate explainer](#)

References reviewed September 7, 2026. Source links are clickable. Program requirements and individual circumstances can change. These organizations do not endorse Unity Mortgage Group.

## Bring your questions to Unity.

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