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26 Questions You Should Ask Before Hiring a Real Estate Agent

1. How long have you been an agent?

An agent that's been in the business for a good amount of time will be able to anticipate problems before they arise and have tried and tested negotiation techniques. They will also have relationships with other real estate professionals already.

2. How many homes do you help buyers purchase each year? How many homes, total, do you help close?

The [average number of homes closed per year for a real estate agent is 12](#), so if your agent is batting way below that, it could be a red flag.

3. Do you work full-time or part-time as an agent?

Full-time agents are more likely to be able to devote more time to working for you than someone who is pursuing real estate on the side. The first question I would recommend asking is, 'Are you a full-time agent or are you a part-time agent?'



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4. Do you work with both buyers and sellers?

Many agents work as either buyer specialists or seller specialists. While it's great to find someone who specializes, an agent who does both could offer some great insights on either side of the process.

5. How many buyer clients do you have right now?

This is a line to toe carefully. Too many clients may mean your agent doesn't have time to devote to you; too few may be a red flag.

6. What's the ratio of buyers to sellers that you represent?

Getting a feel for the ratio of buyers to sellers will give you some indication of your agent's area of expertise. If they have a balanced roster of clients, it could mean they are very knowledgeable about both sides of the process.

7. How long do you usually work with buyers, from the first home you see together to the closing table?

Though few buyers find their dream home immediately, your real estate agent can play a huge role in the length of time it takes to find your perfect home. Many things factor into how long it takes to find a home; however, you should be wary if your agent habitually works with clients for six months or longer.

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8. Can I see your real estate license?

This seems obvious, but always make sure you're working with a licensed professional. There are lots of scams running out there in the world!

9. Do you have references I can call?

If you hired a new employee, you would probably call their references, right? Be sure you're vetting your new agent with the same rigor you would any professional working for you. If they can't offer you a list of satisfied clients, be careful.

10. Have you helped buyers find homes in these areas?

Your real estate agent should be knowledgeable about the area you're looking at. Communities differ in terms of what types of homes buyers want, what types of homes sell, and so on. Make sure your agent knows the area where you want to buy.

11. Have you helped buyers find homes at these price ranges?

Price ranges can dramatically alter the way a home is marketed, and can also alter the way agents view them. You're less likely to get attention from an agent who specializes in multimillion-dollar listings if your budget is \$300,000.

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12. Will I be working with you individually, or with a team?

If you enter an agent-buyer relationship with the understanding that the agent will be handling you personally, it can be alarming to be handed off to an assistant. Be clear about who you will primarily be dealing with, what your agent will handle personally, and what gets delegated to their support staff.

“It’s very important for an agent to have a good support system behind them to make sure that the buyer is looked after,” explains Monaghan. “Having a good support system sets buyers up to win because we can really dig in and understand their goals and what’s important to them.”

13. Can you recommend (fill in the blank)?

Mortgage broker, appraiser, inspector, real estate lawyer, general contractor, moving companies, and anything else you can think of involving homes should all be things your agent can recommend.

14. How does your commission work?

As with any financial transaction, get a good understanding of how your agent is compensated before entering into a relationship with them.

Typically, buyers do not pay agent commission fees. Fees are paid by the seller to their broker, and then the commission is split with the buyer’s agent. The percentage varies by agent and market, but is usually around 6% for both the buyer’s agent and seller’s agent commission.

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15. How do you help buyers compete in this market?

If you're looking to buy in a competitive market, standing out from the competition is essential. Ask your prospective agent how they're going to help you stand out in a potential sea of offers.

After you hire an agent

You've found your agent. Great! The interview process isn't over, though. There are still some questions you should be asking:

16. Can you explain the homebuying process from start to finish?

The process can be long and complicated for first-time homebuyers. Ask your agent to explain the process to you from beginning to end, and take notes, being sure to ask for clarifications you need along the way.

Some good topics to cover are: how do showings go, how do offers work, what happens during a home inspection, what happens after an offer is accepted, what happens during the closing process, what is the timeline from start to finish — and anything else you can think of.



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17. What's the best way to contact you?

Within reason, your agent should never be out of touch, especially in a competitive market where waiting even an hour for a response can mean the difference between getting and losing a home.

18. When is your best availability during the day and week, typically?

Confirm that your agent has the availability to show you houses during the hours that you're available. Most open houses happen on weekends, so if your agent is unavailable on weekends, you may want to take that into consideration.

Once you have found a house

19. Can I see a CMA for this house?

A CMA, or comparative market analysis, basically looks at around 10 properties in the area of a home that are comparable to determine a home's value. It's important to see a CMA to determine whether the home you're looking at is priced reasonably for the market.

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20. Do you see any major red flags with this house? What are your concerns?

An agent will often be able to see problems with a home that a buyer may not catch, so take advantage of their experience and expertise.

21. What offer would guarantee this house? What offer would be a good jumping-off point for negotiation?

If you're in a competitive market, an offer that is too low may not even be looked at by the seller. If you're in a market where negotiation is possible, you don't want to make an offer that's too high and risk overpaying. Experience should enable an agent to give you advice on exactly what to offer for a home and why.

22. What other concessions should I ask for or make in this offer?

A concession with an offer is a request that the seller pay for something as a compromise to the buyer. Concessions can range from the seller paying to fix something that was caught on the inspection to paying a home warranty for a year. It's an opportunity for the seller to sweeten the deal and get it closed, and it's especially common in a buyer's market.

23. Should I offer earnest money? How much?

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Earnest money is a deposit paid when you enter into a contract to buy a home. If you're in a seller's market, earnest money can go a long way toward locking in

your contract. However, if it's not necessary in your specific situation, it's an extra expense that just puts a strain on your finances.

24. What happens if the inspector finds something?

There's nothing worse than finding your dream home and discovering it has termites, right? Not necessarily. Talk with your agent about how they'll handle unforeseen problems. Usually, terms can be worked out with the seller in the form of repairs or concessions to make up for any issues uncovered during the inspection.

25. What happens if the house appraises under the offer price?

If the appraisal comes in low, you're not necessarily out of options. Ask your agent for their recommended tactics if the appraisal comes in lower than you anticipated.

26. What are closing costs? How much will they be?

Closing costs are expenses involved in buying a house that don't include the price of a property; they include attorney fees, lender costs, title fees, and more. Getting a handle on how much potential closing costs will be is important so you don't end up with a gut punch in the end.

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Whether you're a first-time homebuyer or moving in to your second or third house, hiring the right agent is crucial. These questions will help you choose the perfect agent and make your homebuying process easy and successful.

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