



Felder Hiken  
GROUP

# Buyer's Guide



## Step 1: Select the Right Agent



The first step in buying a home is to select a real estate professional to represent you, and working with the right agent is critical. You want to choose someone you can relate to, someone you feel you can trust, and someone who can guide you through the entire process with confidence and ease.

Not only will we listen and identify your needs, we will also share our knowledge of local communities, market conditions and trends to bring you up to speed on the inner workings of the fast-paced Bay Area real estate market. This education will be invaluable when we find the right property and you need to make informed decisions that will greatly impact your future. We have access to off-market listings as well as publicly listed properties and will keep you informed on every property which potentially fits your needs.

We have an excellent reputation among our peers, which has proved to be a valuable asset particularly when competing against other agents in multiple offer situations. It can also lead to cooperation in complicated transactions and can create streamlined and trouble-free closings.

## Step 2: Determine Your Budget and Get Pre-Approved



Assessing your financial readiness when it comes to buying a home is essential, and your current income, savings, fixed expenses, and debts will all help us gauge your budget. Before starting your home search, we will get you pre-qualified for a home loan either through one of our preferred lenders, or through an existing relationship you already have. This will estimate how much home you can afford and how much money a lender would be willing to loan you. Once pre-qualified, we'll have a good idea of what your price range for a home will be, and we can start actively looking at homes that fit your criteria.

Simultaneously, we will move forward with the process of getting you pre-approved for a loan. Pre-approval is a tentative commitment from a specific lender for mortgage funding. To obtain pre-approval, you will need to provide actual documentation of your income, assets, and debts, which the lender will use to calculate how large of a loan you qualify for. Once you are approved, the lender will give you a letter of commitment, stating how much money the bank is willing to loan you. This will help immensely when making an offer on a property, as sellers and their agents will take an offer much more seriously when they see you have mortgage funding in place.

### Step 3: Find Your Desired Community



Before we can find the right home, we'll need to start by identifying the communities and neighborhoods that appeal to you most. Our team has first-hand knowledge of the nuances of different neighborhoods and community highlights including schools, recreation, and market conditions. We can also identify the potential for home appreciation in different neighborhoods and lend insights into where you might get the most value for your money. By touring towns, getting a feel for particular areas, and visiting listings, we will find the right area for you.

### Step 4: Find The Right Home



After determining the communities and neighborhoods you would like to live in, we can then choose properties to view based on your preferences – be it the number of bedrooms, bathrooms, the square footage, lot size, age of the home, school district, or architectural style.



We will set up instant alerts that notify us immediately of new listings which meet your criteria, and we'll network with associates to discover upcoming and off-market listings. Together we can tour properties that fit your requirements, and when you find the right home, our team will carefully review all disclosures and reports, including the property inspection and title report, so you are armed with all the facts when deciding whether or not to make an offer.

## Step 5: Make an Offer



When we have found you the right home, then it is time for us to write the purchase offer. Placing an offer can be a delicate process. The number of offers on a property, current market conditions, time of year and any needed repairs on the home may all affect your proposal. Taking everything into account, we will advise you not only on the correct financial offer, but also on terms and conditions of the purchase, including contingencies for financing, the home inspection and appraisal. We will offer advice on how we might respond to counter offers, and we'll fiercely negotiate on your behalf until we are satisfied with the outcome.

## Step 6: Escrow



When both parties reach a contractual agreement and have signed the purchase contract, escrow begins. At this point, your earnest money is collected and deposited into an escrow account at the company specified in the contract. Simply put, escrow refers to the process by which a third party (typically a title company) holds funds and handles vital documents involved in the close of the sale. The escrow process ensures that the interests of all parties in a transaction are protected, and that all conditions of the sale, as outlined in the purchase contract, have been met before money and property change hands.

Negotiations can occur during the escrow process, particularly when there are contractual contingencies. The determinations of the bank appraisal, or conditions that emerge from a property inspection, may all have an effect on whether we advise renegotiating contract terms or ask for a credit from the seller prior to closing.

The length of escrow can range in duration depending on your mortgage lender and terms of the purchase contract, but in the Bay Area on average, escrow closes somewhere between 7 and 30 days.

## Step 7: Closing Escrow



To close escrow all negotiations must be completed, contingencies removed, documents signed, money transferred, and the deed recorded and confirmed by the title company. The escrow officer will handle all documents involved in the close of the sale, including insurance receipts, deposits, loan documents, and recordings. At least a day before closing, you will receive a statement of loan terms and closing costs, and, in preparation for closing, you will need to obtain a cashier's check or prepare a wire transfer for the amount of money due upon closing. Then, we will make an appointment with the title company where we will accompany you to sign all the necessary documents, commonly called the "sign-off."

On closing day, all escrow papers and loan documents are signed, and all money due is deposited into the escrow account. The deed to the property is then put in your name and given to the lending institution. The title company will register the mortgage and deed with the county courts, and when the title company receives confirmation that the deed has been recorded, you are officially the new homeowner and all funds due the seller, or seller's lender, are released.

Congratulations, escrow is now closed and it is time to enjoy your new home!



**Got Questions? We're here to help!**

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