

Buying Your First Home: A Step-by-Step Guide



NESTING
in
NASHVILLE

Hi there! We're James & Steph, and we're dedicated to making your property journey informed and enjoyable. We get it – buying a home can be overwhelming. That's why we're here to help.

With 20 years of experience helping folks just like you, we'd love to guide you through the vast Nashville marketplace, and the complex negotiating and lending process with peace of mind and confidence.

Ready to start your journey? Let's break down the home-buying process into six manageable steps:



Preparing for Your Home Search

- Get excited! This doesn't have to be stressful. It all starts with a phone call.
- Get pre-approved for a mortgage to understand your buying power, down payment options, and closing cost scenarios. We'll connect you with some terrific local lenders.
- Make a list of your must-haves and nice-to-haves in a home. Meet with us to brainstorm ideas, neighborhoods, and ideal timeline.



House Hunting

- We'll set up custom listing alerts via our app and email to keep you informed.
- Use our app to browse MLS listings, but feel free to check other sites too.
- As your agents, we'll also look beyond MLS for hidden opportunities.
- Discuss local showing protocol and visit open houses.
- *Fun Fact:* According to the National Association of Realtors®, the average buyer previews 7-11 homes over five weeks!

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Craft a Winning Offer

- We'll review similar sales to craft a smart offer strategy.
- Our goal: Get you the best deal while aiming for a win-win with the seller.
- Once accepted, we'll keep you on track with important deadlines. The first is making the 1% earnest money deposit.



Due Diligence

- Complete the full mortgage application, submit supporting documents, and lock-in your interest rate.
- We'll help you hire inspectors to scope out the property thoroughly. If issues are uncovered, we'll discuss how to handle them and negotiate further if needed.
- An appraiser will ensure the home is a good investment for the lender.



Entering Escrow

- Work with your lender to submit any final underwriting requests or missing documents.
- We'll order a title search and arrange for title insurance with the closing attorney's office
- Secure your homeowner's insurance policy.
- Receive and carefully review your Closing Disclosure, which details your final costs (you'll get this at least three days before closing).



Seal the Deal

- Do a final walk-through to ensure the home is in the agreed-upon condition.
- Wire your down payment + closing costs.
- Sign the papers and get your keys!

Congratulations & Welcome Home!

All About Financing



Before you start browsing properties in person, it's crucial to get a clear picture of your financial situation. This step will help you shop confidently and make informed decisions throughout your home buying journey.

Connect with a Lender

- **Preliminary Loan Pre-Approval:** This is a critical first step. You can't make a serious offer without a written pre-approval letter. It gives you a realistic idea of your budget and buying power. Always remember that just because you can afford it doesn't mean you should. We never recommend maxing out your budget. Be sure to convey a comfortable monthly payment to your lender that doesn't stretch beyond your means.
- **Explore Financing Options:** Our lenders can explain various loan types (conventional, FHA, VA, etc.) and help you choose the best fit for your situation.
- **Understand the True Costs:** Your lender will break down all the costs involved in purchasing a home, including:
 - Down payment options.
 - Closing costs. Typically, 2-3% of the loan amount.
 - Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI), if applicable.
 - Property taxes, Homeowners insurance.
 - HOA dues, if applicable.

Pro Tips

- Always work with a local lender. Big banks and online lenders may sound like good ideas, but experienced agents know it's essential to have a local contact. Accountability is impossible when your primary contact is a 1-800 number.
- When setting a budget, remember to factor in utility costs for electricity, water, gas, internet, etc.
- Besides your down payment, aim to have 3-6 months of living expenses saved as an emergency fund.
- Plan to set aside 1-3% of your home's value annually for upkeep and future upgrades.
- Consider paying down some of your existing debt load. Lenders prefer a debt-to-income ratio of 43% or less.

★ Next Steps

1. Gather up necessary financial documents (pay stubs, last two tax returns, recent bank statements, list of debts, etc.)
2. Shop around. It's okay to interview several mortgage brokers. Multiple credit inquiries will not affect your credit score if done in a timely manner.

Commission Changes: What's In It For You?



In 2024, new rules emerged due to a national class-action commission settlement. These changes primarily affect how you hire and pay your buyer's agent.

We're excited about the recent changes in real estate commissions. Here's why you should be too.

Our Advantage

1. **Potential Savings:** Our buy-side commission rate is 2% of the sales price, lower than industry norms.
2. **More Money in Your Pocket:** When sellers offer a higher compensation rate, we work to pass the difference to you.

Key Changes Mandated for All Realtors in 2024

1. **A Written Agreement Is Now Required Before Touring Homes.**
 - All buyers must establish a written agreement specifying agent services, compensation, and timeframe of the agreement.
 - Note: agreement isn't needed to attend open houses.
2. **New Commission Marketing Structure:**
 - Listing agents can no longer publish buyer agent compensation in the MLS, though most sellers will continue to offer it or will agree to pay it.

How We Make These Changes Work for You

1. If sellers offer more compensation than 2%, we work to use the overage for your benefit (e.g., price reduction, closing cost contribution, or other concessions).
 - Note: cash rebates after closing are not allowed in Tennessee, so we use legal alternatives to pass savings on to you.
2. In the event seller compensation is insufficient:
 - We'll negotiate for the seller to cover it as part of our offer terms.
 - Buyer pays. We'll build in into the offer/loan.

★ Next Steps

1. Schedule a no-obligation homebuyer consultation with us.
2. We'll prepare a written agreement outlining our services and compensation.
3. Begin your home search with confidence and clarity.

We are committed to ensuring you get the most benefit from these new rules throughout your home-buying journey.

James & Stephanie Crawford



WHEELS UP, DEALS DOWN

Roll with The Crawfords

We're a husband-and-wife realtor team based in Nashville. We bring over twenty years of experience and a personal touch to the real estate business. Unlike large teams, with us, you're not just another transaction. We don't have giant billboards, nor do we pass our clients off to showing assistants or trainees. Instead, we take pride in our boutique approach—a locally-owned, small business that focuses on serving just a handful of clients each month. This ensures that you receive the personalized attention you deserve, and it offers us work we're genuinely proud of.

We're passionate about the power of homeownership and its ability to transform lives. It's not just our business; it's our way of paying it forward, having experienced firsthand the impact it can have. If you're seeking conscientious agents who will put your interests at the forefront and guide you every step of the way, let's have a conversation. We'd love the opportunity to see how we can help you achieve your home-ownership goals.