FREE GUIDE · JESSICA SCHWARTZ

First-Time Homebuyer Checklist

Everything you need to do before you buy your first home

PREPARED BY

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Before You Start

Buying your first home is exciting — and overwhelming. There are a lot of moving pieces, and most first-time buyers don't know where to start. This checklist walks you through exactly what to do, in the order you should do it, so you can move forward with confidence.

Work through each section at your own pace. When you're ready to talk through your situation, call or text me, or book a free call.

> **TIP** Most people skip to house hunting first. Do these steps BEFORE you start looking at homes. You'll save yourself time, money, and stress.

1. Get Your Finances in Order

- [ ] Check your credit score (free through most bank and card apps)
- [ ] Pull your full credit report from annualcreditreport.com — look for errors
- [ ] Pay down credit card balances to under 30% of your limit if possible
- [ ] Avoid opening new credit cards or financing anything big (car, furniture)
- [ ] Don't make large cash deposits — lenders need to source every dollar
- [ ] Gather 2 months of bank statements (checking, savings, investments)
- [ ] Calculate your debt-to-income ratio — aim for under 43%

2. Plan for the Money You'll Need

- [ ] Save 3–5% for a down payment (some loans allow 0–3.5%)
- [ ] Save an extra 2–5% for closing costs
- [ ] Keep 3–6 months of reserves in savings (for lender requirements + peace of mind)
- [ ] Ask me about Florida first-time buyer assistance programs
- [ ] Consider gift funds from family — lenders allow these with a gift letter

3. Get Pre-Approved (Not Just Pre-Qualified)

- [ ] Call or text (772) 297-1400 to start your pre-approval
- [ ] Gather your documents — see the Home Loan Document Checklist
- [ ] Discuss loan options (Conventional, FHA, VA, USDA)
- [ ] Get your pre-approval letter BEFORE you start house hunting
- [ ] Know your max comfortable monthly payment (not just what you qualify for)

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IMPORTANT Pre-qualification is NOT the same as pre-approval. Sellers want to see a real pre-approval letter before they accept your offer.

4. Find Your Home

- ☐ Choose a Realtor AFTER you're pre-approved (you'll be taken more seriously)
- ☐ Make a list of must-haves vs. nice-to-haves
- ☐ Research neighborhoods — drive through at different times of day
- ☐ Check school zones, even if you don't have kids (affects resale)
- ☐ Tour homes within (or slightly under) your pre-approval max
- ☐ Don't fall in love with the first home you see

5. Making an Offer & Under Contract

- ☐ Write a competitive offer with your Realtor
- ☐ Be ready for counter-offers — don't take them personally
- ☐ Once accepted, let me know right away so we can start the loan process
- ☐ Schedule a home inspection within the first 7–10 days
- ☐ Appraisal is ordered (your lender coordinates this)
- ☐ Do NOT make any major purchases until after closing
- ☐ Keep all pay stubs and bank statements coming — we'll need the latest

6. Closing Day & Beyond

- ☐ Set up homeowners insurance BEFORE closing day
- ☐ Review your Closing Disclosure 3 days before closing
- ☐ Do a final walk-through of the home before closing
- ☐ Bring your ID and any required funds (wire transfer or cashier's check)
- ☐ Sign documents — closing typically takes 45–90 minutes
- ☐ Get your keys!
- ☐ Save all your closing paperwork — you'll need it for taxes

NEXT STEP Ready to start? Call or text me at (772) 297-1400, or book a free 15-minute call at homespsl.com. I'll walk you through your options and help you figure out what you qualify for.

This guide is for informational purposes only and is not a commitment to lend. All loans are subject to credit approval, underwriting guidelines, and program availability. Rates, terms, fees and eligibility vary by borrower, lender, and property and are subject to change. Jessica Schwartz, Licensed Loan Officer, NMLS #2704014 | RMI Brokers, Inc. dba One Brokerage, NMLS #2142653 | Equal Housing Opportunity.