



Your Home. Your Choice. Your Agent.

A buyer's guide to vetting real estate agents and navigating the Buyer Broker Agreement

Choosing the right real estate agent is one of the most important decisions you'll make in the home buying process. The agent you work with will be your guide, your negotiator, and your advocate through one of the largest financial transactions of your life. This guide gives you the questions to ask, the signs to watch for, and the tools to protect yourself before you sign anything.

How to Vet a Real Estate Agent

Ask these questions before you commit to working with anyone:

Q: How many buyers have you represented in the last 12 months?

What to listen for: An active buyer's agent should have a consistent track record. A low number isn't automatically disqualifying, but you want someone who knows the current market — not someone whose focus is primarily on listings.

Q: What areas and price ranges do you specialize in?

What to listen for: An agent who specializes in luxury listings may not be the right fit for a first-time buyer. Make sure their experience aligns with where you're shopping and what you're spending.

Q: Can you walk me through what happens from offer to closing?

What to listen for: This isn't a trick question — it's a competency check. A confident, experienced agent can walk you through this clearly and without hesitation.

Q: How do you communicate with your clients?

What to listen for: Find out how often they'll update you, what channel they prefer (text, email, call), and how quickly they typically respond. Miscommunication is one of the biggest sources of buyer frustration.

Q: Do you have references from recent buyers I can speak with?

What to listen for: Any reputable agent should be willing and able to provide references. Hesitation here is worth noting.

Q: Are you a full-time agent?

What to listen for: Part-time agents aren't necessarily bad, but availability matters. A home purchase moves fast, and you need someone who can respond and act quickly when it counts.

Red Flags Worth Paying Attention To

- Pressure to make decisions quickly without adequate time to review
- Vague or dismissive answers to direct questions about experience or process
- No written references or reviews available
- More focused on closing the deal than understanding what you actually want
- Unwilling to negotiate any terms on the Buyer Broker Agreement (more on this below)
- Hard to reach or slow to respond before you've even signed anything

A good agent earns your long-term commitment — they don't demand it upfront.

If an agent is confident in their ability to serve you, they should have no problem letting their work speak for itself before locking you into a lengthy agreement. Resistance to a short trial period isn't just inconvenient — it can be a signal about how they'll treat you throughout the process.

Understanding the Buyer Broker Agreement

The Buyer Broker Agreement is a contract between you and your real estate agent that defines the terms of your working relationship. Since recent industry changes took effect, many agents are required to have this agreement signed before they can show you homes. That is completely normal — but it does not mean you have to accept whatever terms are put in front of you.

What to negotiate before you sign:

Duration — ask for a short trial period

A standard agreement might run 3 to 6 months. You do not have to agree to that upfront. Ask for a 7 to 14 day trial period first, or request that the agreement cover only a specific property you are already interested in. This gives both of you a chance to see how you work together before making a longer commitment. An agent who refuses any form of short-term arrangement is worth reconsidering.

Geographic scope

The agreement may specify a broad area — sometimes an entire metro region. If you are only searching in specific neighborhoods or zip codes, ask that the agreement reflect that. You should not be locked in with one agent for areas you may explore independently.

Exclusivity

Some agreements prevent you from working with any other agent for the duration. This is a significant ask, especially early in the process. If an agent wants exclusivity, they should earn it — not require it on day one.

Compensation terms

The agreement will outline how the agent gets paid. Read this section carefully. Ask your agent to explain it plainly if anything is unclear. You have the right to fully understand what you are agreeing to.

Termination clause

Make sure there is a clear process for ending the agreement if things are not working out. Understand any conditions or notice requirements before signing.

Have questions about your mortgage before you even find your agent?

Getting pre-approved before you start working with an agent puts you in a stronger position from day one. It tells you exactly what you can afford, strengthens your offers, and ensures you are not wasting time on homes outside your budget. Reach out — I am happy to walk you through it at no cost and no obligation.

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