



# First-Time Homebuyer Guide

A colorful, easy-to-follow roadmap for buying your first home in  
DFW

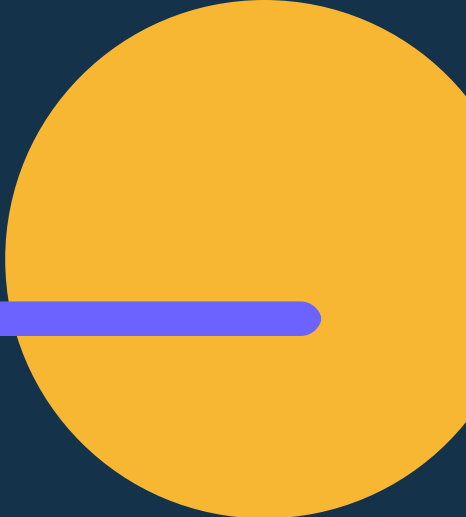
## Know your numbers

Budget, credit, down payment, closing costs,  
and monthly payment comfort.

## Shop with confidence

Understand pre-approval, home searches,  
offers, inspections, and closing.

Prepared as an educational resource for future homeowners.



# Your Homebuying Roadmap

Buying your first home does not have to feel confusing. Use this guide as a step-by-step map from preparation to closing day. The goal is to help you ask better questions, avoid surprises, and feel confident before you sign.

1

## **Prepare your finances**

Review income, debts, savings, credit, and the monthly payment you can comfortably handle.

2

## **Get pre-approved**

A lender reviews your documents and gives you a stronger price range before you shop.

3

## **Choose the right team**

Work with a REALTOR®, lender, inspector, insurance agent, and title company.

4

## **Tour homes wisely**

Look beyond paint colors. Pay attention to roof, foundation, HVAC, plumbing, layout, location, and taxes.

5

## **Make an offer**

Your offer includes price, financing, option period, earnest money, closing date, and requested concessions.

6

## **Inspect, appraise, and close**

Review repairs, appraisal, loan approval, closing disclosure, final walkthrough, and keys.

**Quick reminder:** The prettiest home is not always the best financial fit. A smart purchase balances condition, location, monthly payment, and long-term plans.

# Step 1: Know Your Numbers

Before you fall in love with a home, understand the total monthly cost. Your payment can include principal, interest, property taxes, homeowners insurance, mortgage insurance, HOA dues, and sometimes flood insurance.

## Monthly comfort number

Ask yourself: "What payment lets me live, save, and handle repairs?" Do not shop only from the maximum approval amount.

## Cash needed

Plan for earnest money, option fee, inspection, appraisal, down payment, closing costs, moving costs, and basic repairs.

## Debt-to-income

Lenders compare monthly debt to monthly income. Lower debts can improve approval strength and payment comfort.

## Emergency cushion

A home can need repairs after closing. Try to keep savings available instead of spending every dollar at closing.

## Simple monthly payment worksheet

| Item                           | Estimated Amount |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Principal + interest           | \$               |
| Property taxes                 | \$               |
| Homeowners insurance           | \$               |
| Mortgage insurance / PMI / MIP | \$               |
| HOA dues                       | \$               |
| Utilities estimate             | \$               |
| Maintenance savings            | \$               |
| Total monthly housing cost     | \$               |

# Step 2: Pre-Qualified vs. Pre-Approved

These terms are often used together, but they do not mean the same thing. A stronger loan review can make your offer more attractive because the seller sees you have already started the financing process.

| Pre-Qualified                                   | Pre-Approved                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Usually based on basic information you provide. | Usually based on lender review of income, credit, assets, and documents. |
| Helpful for an early estimate.                  | Stronger for shopping and writing offers.                                |
| May not require full document review.           | Often requires pay stubs, W-2s, bank statements, ID, and credit review.  |
| Good first conversation.                        | Better before serious home tours.                                        |

## Documents to gather

- Photo ID
- Last 30 days of pay stubs
- Last 2 years of W-2s or tax returns
- 2 months of bank statements
- Proof of other income, if applicable
- Current debts and monthly payments
- Gift letter information, if using gift funds

**Ask your lender:** What loan types fit me? What down payment options are available? Are there down payment assistance programs I may qualify for? How much cash should I expect to bring to closing?

# Step 3: Search Like a Smart Buyer

A first home should match your needs, your budget, and your future plans. In DFW, property taxes, school districts, commute time, HOA rules, and insurance can change your monthly payment and overall satisfaction.

| Tip                      | Why it matters                                                                        |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Look at more than beauty | Check age of roof, HVAC, water heater, windows, foundation signs, drainage, and re    |
| Compare the full payment | Two homes at the same price can have different taxes, insurance, HOA dues, and re     |
| Respect your budget      | A lower purchase price may be wiser if the home needs less work or keeps your pay     |
| Think resale             | Location, layout, condition, parking, and neighborhood trends matter when you sell la |

## Offer terms to understand

- Offer price
- Earnest money
- Option fee and option period
- Financing type
- Seller concessions or closing cost help
- Closing date
- Appliances or personal property included
- Survey, HOA documents, and title policy details

## Step 4: Inspection, Appraisal, and Negotiation

After your offer is accepted, the real due diligence begins. This is when you learn more about the home's condition and whether the price is supported by the lender's appraisal.

### Inspection

A home inspector reviews visible systems and gives you a report. You can ask for repairs, credits, or decide whether the home still works for you.

### Appraisal

The lender orders an appraisal to help confirm value. If the appraisal comes in low, you may need to renegotiate, bring extra cash, or review options.

### Insurance

Get insurance quotes early. Roof age, claims history, location, and coverage can impact cost and loan approval.

### Title review

The title company checks ownership and title issues. Review closing documents carefully and ask questions before signing.

## Questions to ask after inspection

- Are there safety concerns?
- Are there major repairs or only cosmetic items?
- What needs attention now versus later?
- Could repairs affect insurance or loan approval?
- Do I still feel comfortable with this home and payment?

## Step 5: Closing Day and Keys

Closing is the final step where documents are signed, funds are handled, and ownership transfers. Before closing, you should receive a Closing Disclosure showing final loan terms and closing costs.

### Before closing checklist

- Review your Closing Disclosure with your lender
- Confirm your cash-to-close amount and wiring instructions
- Do not open new credit or make large purchases before closing
- Schedule your final walkthrough
- Confirm repairs were completed, if agreed
- Bring your photo ID to closing
- Ask when funding and keys will happen

**Warning:** Wire fraud is real. Always call the title company using a verified phone number before sending money. Do not rely only on email instructions.

### After you move in

- Change locks and garage codes
- Set up utilities
- Keep copies of closing documents
- Start a home maintenance file
- Budget for seasonal maintenance
- Review your homestead exemption eligibility with local guidance

# First-Time Buyer Cheat Sheet

Use this page as a quick reference when you are ready to start your homebuying journey.

| Do this first                            | Why                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pick your monthly comfort number         | Keeps your home search realistic and protects your budget.                        |
| Talk to a lender before serious shopping | Helps confirm price range, loan type, and cash needed.                            |
| Gather documents early                   | Reduces delays once you find the right home.                                      |
| Tour with a checklist                    | Helps you compare homes instead of relying on emotion.                            |
| Inspect before you fully commit          | Helps uncover repair needs and negotiation points.                                |
| Read every document                      | Protects you from misunderstandings about money, deadlines, and responsibilities. |

## My homebuying goals

Desired monthly payment: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred areas: \_\_\_\_\_

Must-haves: \_\_\_\_\_

Deal breakers: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions for my lender/REALTOR®: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This guide is for general education and does not replace advice from a licensed lender, real estate professional, attorney, inspector, insurance agent, tax professional, or title company.