

01 Understand Agents Work on Commission



Very few real estate agents work on salary and if they do, you probably don't want them.

Most **real estate agents** are paid a **commission**. If an agent does not close a transaction, she does not get paid. Agents are highly motivated to do a good job for you.

Agents are not public servants and do not work for free. Do not ask an agent to work for you if you intend to cut the agent out of your deal.

02 Keep Appointments and Be on Time



Be respectful, use common courtesy and don't expect an agent to drop what she is doing to run out and show you a home. You are probably not that agent's only prospect or client. And if you are, lord help you.¹

Do not make an appointment with an agent and then forget to show up.

If you are running late, call and let your agent know when you expect to arrive. Just show respect.

03 Choose a Real Estate Agent



Decide whether you want to work without representation, dealing directly with listing agents, or if you want to hire your own agent.

If you decide to hire your own agent, [interview agents](#) to find an agent with whom you are comfortable.

If you are [interviewing agents](#), let each agent know you are in the interview stage.

Never, never, never interview two [different agents from the same company](#). Trust me: Don't do it.

04 Do Not Call the Listing Agent If You Are Working With a Buying Agent



[Listing agents](#) work for the seller, not the buyer. If you hire the listing agent to represent you, that agent will now be working under [dual agency](#). Conflicts of interest may occur.

If a listing agent shows you the property, the listing agent will expect to represent you. Ethics prevent a listing agent from showing preferential treatment. If you ask a listing agent to do you a favor and try to discount the price, it's compromising integrity and most won't do it.²

Listing agents do not want to do the [buying agent's job](#). Let your buyer's agent do her job.

05 Practice Open House Protocol



Ask your agent if it's considered proper for you to attend [open houses](#) alone. In some areas, it's frowned upon to go to open houses unescorted.

Hand your agent's business card to the agent hosting the open house. Sometimes this agent will be the listing agent, but often it is a buyer's agent also looking for unrepresented buyers. Announcing you are represented protects you.

Do not ask the [open house host questions](#) about the seller or the seller's motivation. Let your agent ask those questions for you. Your agent will probably use a different approach that works.

06 Sign a Buyer's Broker Agreement With a Buying Agent



Expect to sign a [buyer's broker agreement](#). It creates a relationship between you and the agent and explains the agent's duties to you, and vice versa.

Ask about the difference between an [Exclusive and Non-Exclusive Buyer's Broker Agreement](#).

If you're not ready to sign with a buyer's broker, do not ask that agent to show you homes. Otherwise, a [procuring clause](#) may pop up.

Ask your agent if she will release you from the contract if you become dissatisfied. If she refuses, hire somebody else. Your agent should also be respectful of your goals.

07 Always Ask for and Sign an Agency Agreement



By law, agents are required to give buyers an agency disclosure. This document varies across state lines.

Signing an agency disclosure is your proof of receipt. It is solely a disclosure. It is not an agreement to agency. Read it.

The best and most practiced type of agency is the [single agency](#). This means you are represented by your own agent, who owes you a [fiduciary](#) responsibility.

08 Make Your Expectations Known

If you expect your agent to pick you up at your front door and drive you home after [showing homes](#), tell her. Many will provide that service. If not, they will ask you to meet at the office.³

Let your agent know how you want her to communicate with you and how often. Do you want phone calls, emails, [text messages](#), IMs or all of the above?

Set realistic goals and a time frame to find your home. Ask your agent how you can help by supplying feedback.

If you are displeased, say so. Please. Agents want to make you happy. Don't be afraid to speak up.

09 Do Not Sign Forms You Do Not Understand



Do not feel silly for asking your agent to explain a form to you. It's her job. Many forms are second nature to agents but not to you, so ask for explanations until you are satisfied you understand.

Try not to sign forms titled "Consent to Represent More Than One Buyer." This is never in your best interest. But sometimes you can't help it because your agent could work for a large brokerage. That brokerage could represent more than one buyer, not your agent.

Realize agents are not lawyers and cannot interpret law. Don't ask agents to give a legal opinion, prefaced by the statement you are not asking for a legal opinion.

10 Be Ready to Buy



If you aren't ready to buy, you don't need a real estate agent. You can go to [open houses](#) by yourself and call listing agents for showings — but be honest. Say you are "only shopping." Look at homes online, but don't waste an agent's time if you aren't ready to act.

If possible, hire a babysitter to care for children who are too young to stay out all morning or afternoon touring homes.

Bring your checkbook. You'll need it to write an offer because an [earnest money deposit](#) may be required to accompany your [purchase offer](#). And please, be [pre-approved](#).