



California Department of
Real Estate

[About DRE](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Forms](#) | [Publications](#)

Search



[HOME](#)

[CONSUMERS](#)

[LICENSEES](#)

[EXAMINEES](#)

[DEVELOPERS](#)

[Home](#) > [Consumers](#) > [FirstHomeCalifornia](#)



Helping Californians Buy Their **First** Home



Are you ready to buy your first home? Maybe you're not quite ready to buy yet, but you want to start getting all your pieces in place. Maybe buying your first home is still a distant dream, but you want to start learning about the process.

No matter your situation, you've landed in the right place.

DRE has developed the First Home California program to give first time homebuyers like you the basic information you'll need so you'll be ready for what's likely the largest financial investment you'll ever make.

Some of the topics covered here are based on complaints filed with DRE. So, take your time to explore the information.



FIRST HOME CALIFORNIA PODCAST EPISODES NOW AVAILABLE



▼ TOP TIPS

1. Buying a home is likely your largest financial investment - be sure to take your time
2. Find the right real estate agent for you and [check their license status with DRE](#)
3. Ask questions all along the way
4. Don't sign anything you don't understand
5. Don't sign any blank forms
6. Don't pay cash
7. Be cautious about electronic transfers of funds and don't share any passwords

▼ THE HOMEBUYING PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP

> 1. BEFORE YOU START LOOKING

> 2. FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

> 3. SECURE FINANCING

> 4. FIND A REAL ESTATE AGENT

> 5. FIND YOUR HOME

> 6. MAKE AN OFFER

> 7. HOME INSPECTION

> 8. APPRAISAL

> 9. DISCLOSURES

> 10. ESCROW

> 11. CLOSING AND TITLE

> 12. PAPERWORK

> 13. TROUBLE PAYING YOUR MORTGAGE

v FINDING A REAL ESTATE AGENT

Invest some time finding the right real estate agent and always check their license status on the [DRE website](#) or by calling DRE (877-373-4542). Keep in mind that this is a business relationship, not a personal one.

> DO'S AND DONT'S

> QUESTIONS TO ASK A PROSPECTIVE REAL ESTATE AGENT

v WHAT A REAL ESTATE AGENT DOES

A real estate agent should locate and show you homes that meet your needs and are in your price range, as well as assist in negotiating the entire purchase process, including making an offer, negotiating with the seller's agent, and explaining the disclosures and paperwork. Your agent must also provide you a copy of the purchase agreement and all documents/disclosures. Most real estate agents receive a commission, paid from the seller's proceeds.

> READING THE DRE LICENSE RECORD

v WHO'S WHO

> APPRAISER

> ESCROW OFFICER

> INSURANCE AGENT

> LOAN OFFICER

> MORTGAGE LOAN ORIGINATOR (MLO)

> MORTGAGE LENDER

> REAL ESTATE AGENT

> REAL ESTATE BROKER

> TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY

v APPLYING FOR A HOME LOAN AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

If using a mortgage broker, check their license with the [Department of Real Estate](#) (877) 373-4542 or the [California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation](#) (866-275-2677).

> QUESTIONS TO ASK

v FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Many programs offer loan and/or down payment assistance and help with closing costs for low- to moderate-income first-time homebuyers.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a network of approved housing counseling agencies that can provide information about financing programs and answer other questions. Visit the [HUD website](#) or call (800) 569-4287.

> CALIFORNIA HOUSE FINANCE AGENCY (CALHFA)

> CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

v FHA LOAN

Backed by the [Federal Housing Administration](#), requires a 3.5% down payment and a 580 minimum credit score. You will need to continue paying mortgage insurance unless you refinance with a different type of mortgage, move, or pay off the loan.

▼ **GOLDEN STATE FINANCE AUTHORITY**

The [Platinum Program](#) offers up to 5% of the purchase price for down payment and closing costs as a 0% second mortgage that is forgiven three years after escrow closes. The program is not limited to first-time homebuyers, but you do need a credit score of at least 640 and there are income qualifications.

The [OpenDoors Program](#) provides up to 7% of the first mortgage loan amount to low-to-moderate income buyers in the form of a second mortgage, which can be used to cover a down payment or closing costs. The loan does not accrue interest or require monthly payments and is due after the mortgage is paid off or refinanced. The program is not limited to first-time homebuyers, but there are income qualifications.

> **FREDDIE MAC DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

▼ **LOCAL PROGRAMS**

Check with local housing authorities and agencies for financing options and down payment assistance. The California Office of Planning and Research publishes a [Directory of Planning Agencies](#).

Below is a partial list of some local programs.

> **CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

[Low Income Assistance Program](#) - Provides deferred payment loans of up to \$90,000 to low-income buyers. There are no monthly payments but the loan must be repaid when you move or refinance.

[Mortgage Credit Certificate](#)

> **LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

> **SAN DIEGO**

> **SAN JOSE**

> **USDA LOAN**

> **VA LOAN**

> **MORTGAGE DISCRIMINATION**

> **SIGNS OF POTENTIAL FRAUD**

> **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

> **RESOURCES**



Select Language



Powered by [Google Translate](#)

This Google translation feature is provided for informational purposes only as DRE is unable to guarantee the accuracy of this translation. Please consult a translator for accuracy if you are relying on the translation or are using this site for official business.

[Accessibility](#) | [Conditions of Use](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Map](#)
Copyright © 2025 State of California