THE HOME BUYER'S ROADMAP

A step-by-step guide to help you navigate the home buying process with confidence.

O'Halloran Group
KELLER WILLIAMS LAKES & MOUNTAINS REALTY

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THE HOME BUYER'S ROADMAP

The Importance of being an informed buyer

Buying a home is one of the most significant financial decisions you'll make, and being well-informed can make the process smoother, less stressful, and more rewarding. Informed decisions start with reliable data and a clear understanding of the many factors that can impact your success—from market trends and pricing dynamics to financing options and negotiation strategies.

Key areas we will focus on and why they matter

- **REAL ESTATE RELATIONSHIPS:** Understanding the types of representation and how they impact you as a buyer.
- **MARKET AWARENESS:** Knowing the local market trends will help you make an informed decision, based on accurate data. This helps reduce risk and can aid in your negotiation strategy.
- **FINANCIAL READINESS:** Understanding mortgage options, interest rates, and hidden costs to ensure that you stay within budget and secure the best loan terms.
- **PREPARING FOR NEGOTIATIONS:** Informed buyers can make strategic offers, understand contingencies, and negotiate effectively to get the best deal and reduce unnecessary risks.
- **AVOIDING SURPRISES:** Understanding the value of home inspections, the role of appraisals, and diving into closing costs, helps prevent last-minute obstacles that could delay or derail your purchase.
- **LONG-TERM SUCCESS:** Understanding YOUR unique real estate goals is key to making the right choice. Whether you're buying for the long haul or with future plans in mind, considering factors like resale value, property maintenance, and neighborhood trends will help ensure your purchase is in alignment with your objectives.

You're not just buying a house—you're about to open the door to your next chapter. This guide is here to help you move forward with confidence, clarity, and a little excitement too. You've got this... let's go!

EXPLORE THE GUIDE

CHOOSING YOUR REAL ESTATE TEAM

Finding the Right Realtor

Choosing the right real estate advisor is a key step in ensuring a smooth and successful home-buying experience. A knowledgeable and proficient agent will not only guide you through the process but also advocate for your best interests every step of the way.

When selecting a Realtor, look for

LOCAL MARKET EXPERTISE: A strong understanding of neighborhood trends, pricing, and inventory ensures you make informed decisions.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION: Your agent should be responsive, transparent, and able to explain complex details in a way that makes sense to you.

NEGOTIATION SKILLS: A skilled negotiator can help you secure the best terms while protecting your interests. Ask how your agent approaches negotiations, what strategies they use in competitive situations, and whether they collaborate with a broker or team for added expertise. Their ability to advocate for you confidently and strategically is key to achieving the best possible outcome.

PERSONALIZED GUIDANCE: Every home purchase is unique—your agent should take the time to understand your goals and tailor their approach to your needs.

A GOOD FIT: Beyond experience and skills, you should feel comfortable and confident working with your agent. Trust and open communication are key to a successful partnership.

The right real estate advisor will not only simplify the process but also provide the insight and support needed to help you move forward with confidence. Make sure to check out our Home Buyer Resources at the end of this guide for a list of interview questions.

Pro Tip:

It's OK (and encouraged!) to interview multiple realtors to make sure you feel confident in the person who will be advocating for you, negotiating on your behalf, and helping to guide you through each step of your real estate purchase.

Understanding Commissions and Services

The terms of your agreement—including services provided, commission, and contract length—are negotiable. Discuss these details upfront to ensure you understand what to expect and how your agent is compensated. A clear agreement helps align expectations and ensures you receive the value and support you need throughout the homebuying process.

Partnering with a Lender

Just as selecting the right realtor is important, so is finding a lender you trust. Your lender will guide you through the mortgage process, and it's important to work with someone who is knowledgeable, communicative, and responsive.

Mortgage options go beyond just interest rates—loan products and terms can vary greatly, and an experienced lender will help you navigate the best choices for your specific financial situation. It's beneficial to interview multiple lenders to compare options and find the best fit. To help with this process, we've included a list of key questions to ask potential lenders at the end of this guide.

Prequalification versus Preapproval

Prequalification provides a general indication of what you might be able to borrow based on basic financial details that you share with a lender while Pre-approval is a more in-depth process where a lender verifies your financial information. Pre-approval gives a clearer picture of your borrowing power and signals to sellers that you're a serious buyer.

Feature	Prequalification	Preapproval
Purpose	Provides an estimate of borrowing power	Confirms how much you can borrow based on verified financials
Process	Quick and informal	More in-depth and required documentation
Credit Check	May require a soft credit check	Requires a hard credit check
Required Documents	Based on self-reported information	Requires proof of income, assets and debts
Strength for Offers	Gives the buyer a general idea of affordability	Shows sellers you're a serious buyer and ready to purchase

FINDING THE RIGHT HOME

Define Your Criteria

Start by identifying the features you want in your ideal home and prioritize the most important ones. The more your realtor understands your preferences, the easier it will be for them to help you find the perfect home.

OF BEDROOMS ________

OF BATHROOMS ________

PREFERRED LOCATION ________________________

MUST HAVES

NICE TO HAVES

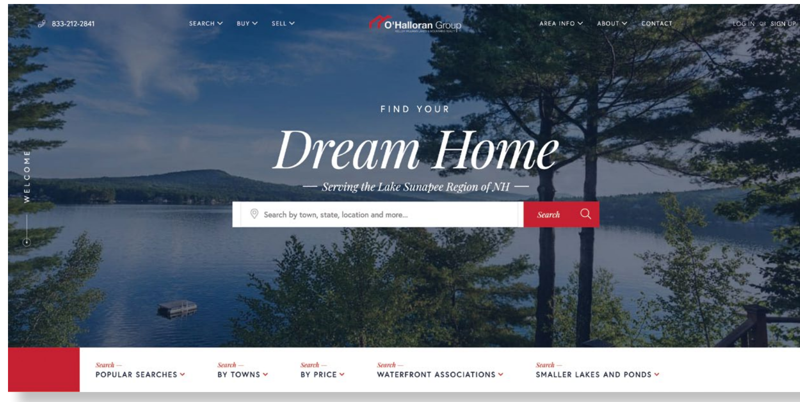
DEAL BREAKERS

List any features that would make you walk away from a home.

Online Tools

OHGRP.COM

Of course, we are a little biased here, but we always recommend setting up an account on ohgrp.com to enhance your property search experience. Not only can you save your favorite listings, but a saved search also helps us understand your preferences better, so we can tailor our search to suit your needs.



As your trusted real estate advisor, we don't just monitor active listings; we also keep an eye on properties that aren't on the market yet but could be a perfect fit for you. Having toured countless homes, we often have firsthand knowledge of properties you might be interested in—**insights that go beyond what online photos** can show. This allows us to provide a deeper, more informed perspective, helping you make confident decisions.

Note: ohgrp.com pulls listing information directly from PrimeMLS (New Hampshire's multiple listing service (MLS) database), the same source that large online home search engines receive their listing information from.

LARGE ONLINE HOME SEARCH ENGINES

Many buyers use large online home search engines like Realtor.com which can be a great resource for browsing homes but might not serve as a collaborative platform for you and your realtor to connect on. All real estate search engines pull from the same data source for active on market properties. In New Hampshire, that source is PrimeMLS. Which means no matter what site you're using to search, they will have the same information.

Open Houses

Open houses are a great way to start refining your wants and needs. It will also help you better understand the values of homes in the area you are searching, bringing more confidence to your final decision. Buyers CAN tour homes at an Open House without signing a representation agreement with an agent.

Pro Tip:

If you're still deciding whether to work with a real estate professional—and who to hire—be thoughtful about the information you disclose. Even seemingly small details, like a tight timeline to buy, could affect your negotiating position later. It's also important to understand the difference between being represented as a client versus being treated as a customer. The New Hampshire Brokerage Relationship Form outlines these differences. **Check out the Brokerage Relationship Disclosure Form at the back of this guide.**

Off Market Properties

While many homes are listed on the MLS, buyers can take proactive steps to find off-market opportunities:

1

DRIVE THROUGH NEIGHBORHOODS:
Look for "For Sale by Owner" signs or homes that appear vacant or in transition.

2

CHECK PUBLIC RECORDS:
Research foreclosure auctions, probate listings, or tax lien properties.

3

NETWORK LOCALLY:
Spread the word to friends, family, and colleagues that you're looking to buy.

4

USE ONLINE RESOURCES:
Search real estate investor forums, local Facebook groups, or neighborhood platforms like Nextdoor for potential leads.

How a Realtor Can Help

A knowledgeable realtor has access to a broader network of sellers, including those considering selling but not yet listed. Through industry connections, past clients, and local insights, an agent can identify off-market homes and present opportunities that may not be available to the public.

MAKING AN OFFER

When you're ready to move forward with purchasing a home, it's time to start constructing your offer. In New Hampshire, you'll want to use a Purchase and Sales Agreement—a legally binding contract outlining the terms of the sale. If accepted by the seller, this contract **serves as the blueprint** for the rest of your transaction. Here's what you'll typically fill in:

BUYER AND SELLER INFORMATION: Your legal name and the seller's legal name.

PROPERTY DETAILS: The property's complete address including the county and the book and page that reference the properties deed.

PURCHASE PRICE AND DEPOSIT: The sales price you are willing to purchase the property for, any deposits being made, and how and when they will be delivered.

FINANCING TERMS: Whether your offer is contingent on securing a mortgage including key loan details.

INSPECTION CONTINGENCIES: Any inspections (home, septic, water, etc.) and deadlines for completion.

INCLUDED/EXCLUDED ITEMS: Appliances, fixtures, or other personal property staying with the home.

TITLE AND DEED: Conditions for verifying a clear title before closing.

DUE DILIGENCE: Timeframe to thoroughly investigate the property, including zoning, permits, homeowner's insurance, and any factors affecting your decision to proceed.

SIGNATURES AND DEADLINES: Both you and the seller must sign, and all deadlines must be met for the contract to remain valid.

CLOSING AND POSSESSION DATE: When the sale will be finalized and when you'll take ownership.

Understanding Property Disclosures

In New Hampshire, home sellers are legally required to disclose important details about the condition of their property by completing a property disclosure form. Before submitting an offer, it's essential to carefully review these documents and ask any questions about the information provided.

The type of disclosures you'll need to review will depend on the type of property and the age. Common disclosures include:

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY DISCLOSURE: Covers the general condition of a single-family home.

MULTI-FAMILY PROPERTY DISCLOSURE: Specific to multi-unit properties.

LAND PROPERTY DISCLOSURE: Details relevant to vacant land purchases.

CONDOMINIUM, CO-OP, PUD, AND HOMEOWNER ASSOCIATIONS DISCLOSURE RIDER: Provides information on shared ownership communities and association fees.

LEAD-BASED PAINT DISCLOSURE: Required for residential properties built before 1978.

Reviewing disclosures upfront helps you make an informed decision and avoid surprises later in the process. Your realtor can help you interpret these forms and guide you through any concerns that arise.

Offer Negotiations

After you submit an offer, the seller can accept it, reject it, or respond with a counteroffer. A counteroffer means the seller is open to negotiating and would like to adjust one or more terms—such as price, closing date, or contingencies. This back-and-forth continues until both parties reach a meeting of the minds. It's not until the Purchase and Sales Agreement is signed by both the buyer and seller that the offer becomes a legally binding contract.

FULFILLING CONTRACT CONDITIONS

Once your offer is accepted and the Purchase and Sales Agreement is signed, you enter the next important phase of the buying process: **meeting your contract deadlines**. These deadlines are legally binding and outline when specific steps—such as inspections, financing, and additional deposits—must be completed.

Staying on track with these timelines is essential to protect your deposit and ensure a smooth path to closing. Missing a deadline could put the entire transaction at risk or open the door for the seller to walk away.

If a Deadline Might Be Missed

If you're unable to meet a deadline—such as for inspections, financing, or reviewing documents—it's important to address it right away. In many cases, a written extension can be requested to help keep the transaction moving forward. Because these deadlines are legally binding, missing one could put your escrow deposit or the purchase itself at risk. Staying proactive and keeping open communication with all parties involved is essential to protecting your interest in the property.

Pro Tip:

Don't delay scheduling! Professionals such as home inspectors, title companies and attorneys often book out in advance, and getting on their calendars early ensures you stay on track with your contract deadlines and avoid any delays in the process.

Title Marketability

Section 9 of the Purchase and Sales Agreement allows the buyer time to have the property's title examined to ensure it is marketable—meaning it can be transferred without legal complications. This process checks for any title defects, such as outstanding liens, claims, undisclosed easements, or other encumbrances that could impact ownership or resale.

As the buyer, you're responsible for hiring a title company or attorney to conduct this examination and cover the associated cost. These professionals will review the property's ownership history and confirm that the title can be transferred free and clear at closing. In many cases, the same company that performs the title search also offers title insurance to help protect your ownership rights moving forward.

Pro Tip: The Importance of Title Insurance

Even with a thorough title search, unexpected issues can sometimes arise after closing—like undiscovered liens, boundary disputes, or clerical errors. Title insurance is a one-time cost that protects your ownership rights and provides peace of mind. While your lender may require it, buyers can also choose to purchase an owner's policy for added protection.

Due Diligence

Section 16 of the Purchase and Sales Agreement gives buyers a set period to complete their Due Diligence—an opportunity to review aspects of the property that may affect their decision to move forward. This may include reviewing restrictive covenants, easements, zoning regulations, condominium or association rules, the ability to secure insurance, or other matters of record that could impact how you plan to use or enjoy the property.

Pro Tip:
How do you want to feel?

When you think about Due Diligence, consider how you want to live and feel at the property once you own it. For example, if there's an easement that allows neighbors or the public to cross part of your land to access a trail or pond, would that feel comfortable to you? If you're buying a condo and the association rules limit how many pets you can have, would that fit your lifestyle? The goal of this review period is to ensure the property aligns with your expectations—before moving forward.

Home Inspections

A home inspection is a crucial step in the buying process. It provides an objective evaluation of the property's condition and helps identify any issues—big or small—that may affect your decision to move forward. While inspections are optional, they're highly recommended as they give buyers the opportunity to better understand what they're purchasing and potentially renegotiate based on findings.

Top Things to Consider During the Home Inspection:

CHOOSE A QUALIFIED INSPECTOR: Look for someone licensed (if required in your state), experienced, and with positive reviews.

BE PRESENT IF POSSIBLE: Attending the inspection allows you to ask questions in real time and see any issues firsthand.

PAY ATTENTION TO MAJOR SYSTEMS: Take note of the condition of the roof, foundation, plumbing, electrical, and heating/cooling systems, as these can have a significant impact on the home's safety and long-term costs.

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF: Most homes have minor issues. Focus on larger concerns that affect safety, structure, function, or health.

FOLLOW UP ON RECOMMENDATIONS: If the inspector suggests further evaluation (e.g., by an electrician or structural engineer), consider doing so before finalizing the sale.

Pro Tip:

Schedule your inspection as soon as possible after your offer is accepted to stay within your contract timeline. If concerns arise, you may be able to negotiate repairs, request a credit, or—in some cases—walk away from the deal if the contract allows. The inspection is your opportunity to make a fully informed decision.

Renegotiating

Once the home inspection is complete, you'll receive a detailed report outlining the condition of the property. If the inspection reveals issues you weren't aware of—especially those that affect health, safety, structure, or major systems—you may have the option to renegotiate, depending on the terms outlined in the inspection contingency (found in Section 15 of the Purchase and Sales Agreement).

It's important to approach this step thoughtfully and within the timeframes outlined in your agreement. Clear communication and documentation are key. If both parties are willing to work together, solutions can often be reached that keep the transaction moving forward while protecting your interests.

Bank Appraisal

A home appraisal is an important part of the financing process. Ordered by your lender and conducted by a licensed appraiser, it provides an independent estimate of the property's current market value. To determine that value, the appraiser will evaluate the home's condition and compare it to recent sales of similar properties in the surrounding area.

Appraisals help lenders assess the value of the property they're financing and understand any potential risk. If the appraisal comes in lower than the agreed-upon purchase price, the lender may not approve the full loan amount, which could require renegotiating the contract or covering the difference out of pocket.

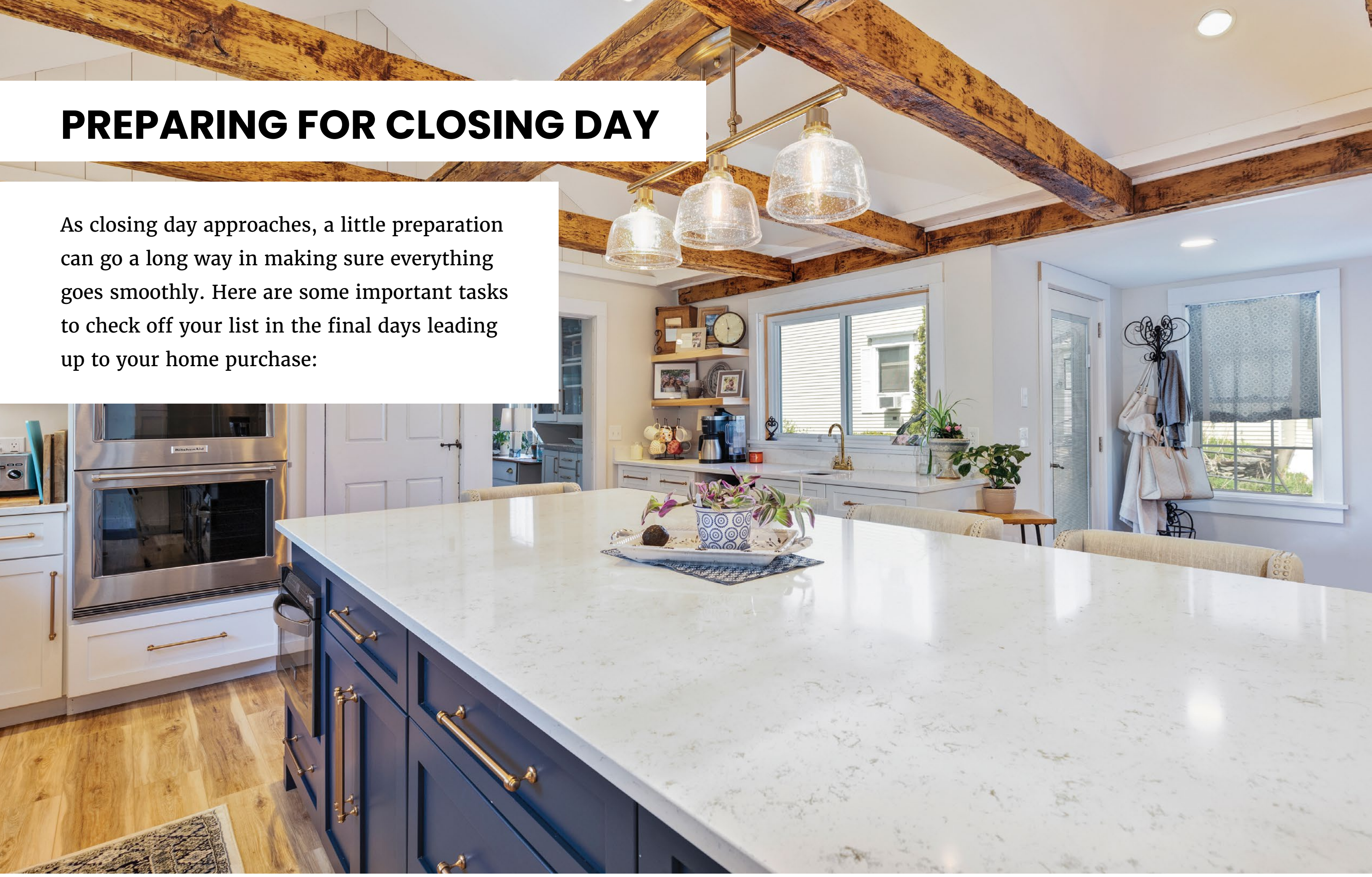
Financing Commitment

As the buyer, you're responsible for satisfying the conditions outlined in your loan commitment, as described in Section 19 of the Purchase and Sales Agreement. This involves working closely with your lender to complete your formal mortgage application, submitting all required documentation, and meeting the deadlines outlined in your contract.

Timely communication with your lender is essential during this stage. Any delays in submitting paperwork or meeting conditions could affect your financing approval and, ultimately, your ability to move forward with the purchase.

PREPARING FOR CLOSING DAY

As closing day approaches, a little preparation can go a long way in making sure everything goes smoothly. Here are some important tasks to check off your list in the final days leading up to your home purchase:



CONFIRM THE CLOSING TIME AND LOCATION

Double-check the date, time, and address of your closing appointment. Make sure you know what to bring, such as a government-issued ID and any required funds for closing.

CONTACT MOVERS

Whether you're hiring professionals or handling the move yourself, it's a good idea to have your moving plan locked in ahead of time.

SET UP UTILITIES

Arrange for services like electricity, water, fuel providers, internet, and trash pickup to be transferred into your name starting on closing day. Don't forget to schedule cancellations or transfers for your current residence.

FORWARD YOUR MAIL

File a change of address with the USPS and notify important contacts (banks, employers, healthcare providers, etc.) of your move.

SCHEDULE YOUR FINAL WALKTHROUGH

Typically done within 24 hours of closing, the final walkthrough allows you to confirm that the property is in the expected condition and that any agreed-upon repairs have been completed.

REVIEW YOUR SETTLEMENT STATEMENT

You'll receive a final breakdown of costs—often referred to as a Closing Disclosure—a few days before closing. Take time to review it carefully, and if anything seems off, raise questions before the day of closing to avoid last-minute surprises.

CLOSING DAY

After all the planning, paperwork, and preparation, it's time to officially become a homeowner. Closing day is when the final documents are signed, funds are transferred, and the keys to your new home are handed over.

While most of the heavy lifting has already been done, there are still a few final details to keep in mind. **Be sure to bring a government-issued photo ID and any certified funds required for closing** (your lender or title company will confirm the amount and how to deliver it). You'll also want to review your Closing Disclosure ahead of time so there are no surprises when you sit down at the table.

Most importantly—take a moment to enjoy it. This is a major milestone, and you've worked hard to get here. Whether you're picking up the keys that afternoon or moving in a few days later, today marks the start of an exciting new chapter. Congratulations!

Pro Tip:

A government-issued photo ID is required to verify your identity. Also, confirm with the closing attorney or title company exactly how your funds should be delivered—typically via certified check or wire transfer. **Be cautious about wire fraud and always verify instructions with a phone call to a trusted number.**

Pro Tip:

Take Your Time and Ask Questions! Don't feel rushed. You'll be signing legally binding documents, and it's important that you understand what you're agreeing to. A good closing attorney or title company will gladly explain any terms or paperwork—so speak up if something's unclear.

FINDING THE RIGHT REALTOR
Essential Interview Questions

O'Halloran Group
KELLER WILLIAMS LAKES & MOUNTAINS REALTY

How long have you been working as a realtor?

How many buyers have you represented in the past year?

Can you provide insights into recent sales trends in *[name the towns/region you're interested in]?*

How do you typically communicate with your clients and how often?

Can you highlight the steps I can expect to take when buying a home?

How do you help your buyers stand out in multiple offer situations?

What are the common pitfalls you see buyers encounter and how do you help clients avoid them?

How do you stay current with changes in the real estate market and regulations?

What are your fees and how are they structured?

Can you provide references from recent buyers you've worked with?

FINDING THE RIGHT MORTGAGE LENDER
Essential Interview Questions

O'Halloran Group
KELLER WILLIAMS LAKES & MOUNTAINS REALTY

How long have you been working as a mortgage professional? ____________________

Do you have experience with borrowers in a similar situation to me? ____________________

Will I be dealing directly with you throughout the entire process? ____________________

How do you help buyers choose the best loan for their situation? ____________________

____

What is your typical interest rate range, and how do you determine my rate? ____________________

What are your closing costs and fees? ____________________
(are there any origination fees, processing fees, or other lender-related charges?)

Can you walk me through the loan application process? ____________________

____

____

What is the typical timeline for approval and closing? ____________________

How do you communicate with clients throughout the process? ____________________

Will you service my loan, or will it be sold to another company? ____________________

What happens if I need to make changes or need flexibility during the loan process? ____________________

____

What is your approach to helping buyers understand mortgage insurance and its impact on monthly payments?

____

Can you provide references from past clients? ____________________

____

State of New Hampshire

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION
DIVISION OF LICENSING AND BOARD ADMINISTRATION

7 Eagle Square, Concord, NH 03301-4980
Phone: 603-271-2152

BROKERAGE RELATIONSHIP DISCLOSURE FORM

(This is Not a Contract)

This form shall be presented to the consumer at the time of first business meeting, prior to any discussion of confidential information

Right Now, You Are a Customer

As a customer, the licensee with whom you are working is not obligated to keep confidential the information that you might share with him or her. As a customer, you should not reveal any confidential information that could harm your bargaining position.

As a customer, you can expect a real estate licensee to provide the following customer-level services:

- To disclose all material defects known by the licensee pertaining to the on-site physical condition of the real estate;
- To treat both the buyer/tenant and seller/landlord honestly;
- To provide reasonable care and skill;
- To account for all monies received from or on behalf of the buyer/tenant or seller/landlord relating to the transaction;
- To comply with all state and federal laws relating to real estate brokerage activity; and
- To perform ministerial acts, such as showing property, preparing, and conveying offers, and providing information and administrative assistance.

To Become a Client

Clients receive more services than customers. You become a client by entering into a written contract for representation as a seller/landlord or as a buver/tenant.

As a client, in addition to the customer-level services, you can expect the following client-level services

- Confidentiality;
- Loyalty;
- Disclosure;
- Lawful Obedience; and
- Promotion of the client's best interest.
- For seller/landlord clients this means the agent will put the seller/landlord's interests first and work on behalf of the seller/landlord.
- For buyer/tenant clients this means the agent will put the buyer/tenant's interest first and work on behalf of the buyer/tenant.

Client-level services also include advice, counsel, and assistance in negotiations.

For important information about your choices in real estate relationships, please see page 2 of this disclosure form.

I acknowledge receipt of this disclosure as required by the New Hampshire Real Estate Commission (Pursuant to Rea 701.01).
I understand as a customer I should not disclose confidential information.

Name of Consumer (Please Print) | Name of Consumer (Please Print)

Signature of Consumer | Date | Signature of Consumer | Date

Provided by: Name & License # | Date | (Name and License # of Real Estate Brokerage Firm)

_____ consumer has declined to sign this form
(Licensees Initials)

To check on the license status of a real estate firm or licensee use the licensee look up at oplc.nh.gov
Inactive licensees *may not practice real estate brokerage. 8/18/17*

Types of Brokerage Relationships commonly practiced in New Hampshire

SELLER AGENCY (RSA 331-A:25-b)

A seller agent is a licensee who acts on behalf of a seller or landlord in the sale, exchange, rental, or lease of real estate. The seller is the licensee's client, and the licensee has the duty to represent the seller's best interest in the real estate transaction.

BUYER AGENCY (RSA 331-A:25-c)

A buyer agent is a licensee who acts on behalf of a buyer or tenant in the purchase, exchange, rental, or lease of real estate. The buyer is the licensee's client, and the licensee has the duty to represent the buyer's best interests in the real estate transaction.

SINGLE AGENCY (RSA 331-A:25-b; RSA 331-A:25-c)

Single agency is a practice where a firm represents the buyer only, or the seller only, but never in the same transaction. Disclosed dual agency cannot occur.

SUB-AGENCY (RSA 331-A:2, XIII)

A sub-agent is a licensee who works for one firm but is engaged by the principal broker of another firm to perform agency functions on behalf of the principal broker's client. A sub-agent does not have an agency relationship with the customer.

DISCLOSED DUAL AGENCY (RSA 331-A:25-d)

A disclosed dual agent is a licensee acting for both the seller/landlord and the buyer/tenant in the same transaction with the knowledge and written consent of all parties.

The licensee cannot advocate on behalf of one client over another. Because the full range of duties cannot be delivered to both parties, written informed consent must be given by all clients in the transaction.

A dual agent may not reveal confidential information without written consent, such as:

1. Willingness of the seller to accept less than the asking price.
2. Willingness of the buyer to pay more than what has been offered.
3. Confidential negotiating strategy not disclosed in the sales contract as terms of the sale.
4. Motivation of the seller for selling nor the motivation of the buyer for buying.

DESIGNATED AGENCY (RSA 331-A:25-e)

A designated agent is a licensee who represents one party of a real estate transaction and who owes that party client-level services, whether or not the other party to the same transaction is represented by another individual licensee associated with the same brokerage firm.

FACILITATOR (RSA 331-A:25-f)

A facilitator is an individual licensee who assists one or more parties during all or a portion of a real estate transaction without being an agent or advocate for the interests of any party to such transaction. A facilitator can perform ministerial acts, such as showing property, preparing and conveying offers, and providing information and administrative assistance, and other customer-level services listed on page 1 of this form. This relationship may change to an agency relationship by entering into a written contract for representation, prior to the preparation of an offer.

ANOTHER RELATIONSHIP (RSA 331-A:25-a)

If another relationship between the licensee who performs the service and the seller, landlord, buyer or tenant is intended, it must be described in writing and signed by all parties to the relationship prior to services being rendered.

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Each office is independently owned and operated