

SPENCER GRP • LOS ANGELES

The Home Buyer Checklist

A practical step-by-step guide from preparation to keys.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Your Purchase, Organized.

Buying a home involves dozens of decisions, documents and deadlines. Use this guide as your working checklist throughout the process. Check items off, write down your numbers and questions, and keep it with your transaction documents.

Important: Your actual purchase agreement and transaction-specific instructions control. Dates, contingencies, disclosures and requirements vary by property, financing and contract.

MY BUYING GOAL

Target purchase price	
Maximum comfort price	
Target monthly payment	
Down payment	
Preferred areas	
Ideal move date	

MY TOP 3 PRIORITIES

1.	
2.	
3.	

STEP 01

Financial Preparation

Get clear on the numbers before the property search becomes emotional.

- ☐ Decide the monthly housing payment you are personally comfortable carrying.
- ☐ Review savings available for down payment, closing costs, moving costs and reserves.
- ☐ Review your credit and discuss any concerns with a qualified lender.
- ☐ Gather income documentation, recent bank/asset statements and tax documents requested by your lender.
- ☐ Speak with a qualified lender and compare appropriate loan options and estimated costs.
- ☐ Obtain a current pre-approval before seriously shopping.
- ☐ Understand the difference between the maximum amount you may qualify for and the amount you actually want to spend.
- ☐ Avoid opening unnecessary new credit, financing a vehicle or making major purchases without first speaking with your lender.

YOUR FINANCING NOTES

Lender	_____
Loan type	_____
Pre-approval amount	_____
Pre-approval expires	_____
Estimated cash to close	_____
Questions	_____

STEP 02

Build Your Home Search

Separate what you need from what would simply be nice to have.

- ☐ Choose your preferred Los Angeles neighborhoods and acceptable alternatives.
- ☐ Choose property types you will consider: single-family, condo, townhome or other.
- ☐ Set minimum bedrooms, bathrooms and approximate square footage.
- ☐ Decide whether garage, outdoor space, home office or views are priorities.
- ☐ Decide whether you will consider renovation work or prefer move-in-ready.
- ☐ Set your comfort level for HOA dues and review special assessments when applicable.
- ☐ Consider commute, transportation, parking and access to amenities important to you.
- ☐ Research property-specific school assignments if relevant to your household.
- ☐ Think about future resale factors, not only today's needs.

MUST HAVE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

WOULD LIKE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DEAL BREAKERS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 03

Representation & Strategy

Establish how you will work with your real estate professional before touring seriously.

- ☐ Choose the real estate professional you want representing your interests.
- ☐ Verify California license information.
- ☐ Discuss goals, budget, timing and communication preferences.
- ☐ Understand the agency relationship and review the buyer representation agreement before signing.
- ☐ Understand services, compensation and any financial obligations.
- ☐ Keep copies of agreements and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

SPENCER GRP NOTE: The consultation is where we establish the search and negotiation strategy - not simply start opening doors.

STEP 04

Search & Shortlist

- ☐ Set up your MLS search and review new listings regularly.
- ☐ Watch price reductions and properties returning to market.
- ☐ Compare active listings with recent comparable sales.
- ☐ Identify properties worth touring and keep notes on serious contenders.
- ☐ Before eliminating a property from photos alone, ask whether there is information or context worth reviewing.

STEP 05

Property Tour Worksheet

Use one copy of this page for every serious contender.

Property address	_____
Asking price	_____
Beds / baths	_____
Approx. sq. ft.	_____
Lot	_____
HOA	_____

- ☐ Street, traffic and noise work for me.
- ☐ Parking and garage meet my needs.
- ☐ Layout and room sizes work for daily life.
- ☐ Natural light and storage are acceptable.
- ☐ Kitchen and bathroom condition noted.
- ☐ Visible roof/exterior/drainage concerns noted for professional review.
- ☐ Visible moisture, cracking or damage noted for professional review.
- ☐ Heating/cooling, electrical and plumbing questions noted.
- ☐ Outdoor space meets my needs.
- ☐ I have written down anything I want an inspector or specialist to investigate.

MY IMPRESSION

Rating / 10	_____
What I love	_____
What concerns me	_____
Questions for Monica	_____

Do not try to diagnose building systems yourself. Visible concerns are prompts for the appropriate licensed or qualified inspector or specialist.

STEP 06

Before Writing an Offer

Price is only one part of an offer. Terms, timing and risk matter too.

- ☐ Review relevant comparable sales and the property's current market position with Monica.
- ☐ Discuss known competition and days on market.
- ☐ Choose your offer price and decide your maximum comfort level before negotiating.
- ☐ Review financing terms, deposit and requested closing date.
- ☐ Discuss inspection/investigation, loan and appraisal contingencies if applicable.
- ☐ Review included and excluded items.
- ☐ Review seller disclosures available before the offer.
- ☐ Understand buyer-agent compensation provisions.
- ☐ Read the complete offer before signing and ask questions about anything unclear.

OFFER SNAPSHOT

Offer price	_____
Deposit	_____
Closing target	_____
Inspection terms	_____
Loan terms	_____
Appraisal terms	_____
Other key terms	_____

STEP 07

Offer Accepted & Escrow

Once accepted, the transaction becomes deadline-driven.

- ☐ Receive the fully executed contract and confirm acceptance.
- ☐ Receive escrow information and note the escrow officer and escrow number.
- ☐ Deliver the required deposit within the contractual timeframe.
- ☐ Confirm deposit receipt.
- ☐ Send the executed contract to your lender.
- ☐ Track every contractual deadline with Monica.
- ☐ Respond promptly to escrow, lender and transaction requests.

WIRE FRAUD WARNING: Never rely solely on emailed wiring instructions. Independently verify wiring information using a trusted telephone number before sending funds.

IMPORTANT DATES

Acceptance	_____
Deposit due	_____
Investigation deadline	_____
Appraisal deadline	_____
Loan deadline	_____
Final walkthrough	_____
Signing	_____
Estimated closing	_____

STEP 08

Seller Disclosures & Documents

Read the documents - do not simply click through signatures.

- ☐ Review property-condition and seller disclosures provided in the transaction.
- ☐ Review agent visual inspection disclosures when applicable.
- ☐ Review natural-hazard information and other property-specific disclosures.
- ☐ Review the preliminary title report.
- ☐ Review HOA documents if applicable.
- ☐ Review information regarding solar, permits, additions or other property-specific matters when provided.
- ☐ Highlight anything unclear and discuss questions with Monica.
- ☐ Share relevant information with inspectors or specialists where appropriate.
- ☐ Investigate anything that requires further review within your contractual timeframes.

STEP 09

Inspections & Due Diligence

A general home inspection may identify areas that deserve specialist review.

- ☐ General home inspection.
- ☐ Roof inspection when appropriate.
- ☐ Plumbing and/or sewer-line inspection when appropriate.
- ☐ Electrical inspection when appropriate.
- ☐ HVAC inspection when appropriate.
- ☐ Foundation or structural specialist review when appropriate.
- ☐ Termite / wood-destroying pest inspection when appropriate.
- ☐ Chimney / fireplace inspection when appropriate.
- ☐ Pool / spa inspection when applicable.
- ☐ Moisture or mold investigation when indicated.
- ☐ Drainage or geotechnical review when appropriate.
- ☐ Septic, well or water testing when applicable.
- ☐ Solar-system review when applicable.
- ☐ Permit research and specialist follow-up where appropriate.

AFTER INSPECTIONS

- ☐ Read the complete reports.
- ☐ Identify safety concerns and major systems requiring attention.
- ☐ Obtain specialist opinions or estimates when appropriate.
- ☐ Discuss findings and contractual options with Monica.
- ☐ Make decisions within the applicable contract deadlines.

STEP 10

Title & HOA Review

- ☐ Review the preliminary title report and ask questions about unfamiliar exceptions.
- ☐ Review liens, easements and recorded restrictions shown in the report.
- ☐ Confirm title-insurance arrangements.
- ☐ If applicable, review HOA dues and what they cover.
- ☐ Review CC&Rs,, rules, financial/reserve information and current or potential special assessments.
- ☐ Review parking, pet, rental and renovation restrictions if applicable.
- ☐ Review HOA insurance information and other documents provided for review.

STEP 11

Loan, Appraisal & Insurance

Keep financing and insurance moving while due diligence is underway.

- ☐ Submit lender-requested documents promptly.
- ☐ Avoid major financial changes without first discussing them with your lender.
- ☐ Confirm appraisal is ordered if required.
- ☐ Review the appraisal result and address any issue through the appropriate process.
- ☐ Satisfy lender conditions and confirm final loan approval.
- ☐ Begin homeowners-insurance research early.
- ☐ Obtain insurance quotes and confirm the property is insurable on acceptable terms.
- ☐ Understand coverage, exclusions and deductibles.
- ☐ Provide insurance information to your lender when requested.

Remember: An appraisal is an opinion of value for lending purposes. It is not a substitute for a property inspection.

STEP 12

Prepare for Closing

- ☐ Review your Closing Disclosure if financing.
- ☐ Confirm final funds required.
- ☐ Independently verify wiring instructions before sending money.
- ☐ Arrange transfer of final funds as instructed.
- ☐ Confirm signing appointment and required identification.
- ☐ Arrange utilities and moving logistics.
- ☐ Keep your lender, escrow and Monica informed of anything that could affect closing.

STEP 13

Final Walkthrough

- ☐ Confirm the property remains substantially in the expected condition.
- ☐ Review agreed repairs/items as applicable.
- ☐ Confirm included appliances, fixtures and items remain as agreed.
- ☐ Look for unexpected damage or changes.
- ☐ Report questions or issues to Monica immediately.

The final walkthrough is not a new home inspection. It is a final opportunity to observe the property's condition before closing.

STEP 14

Closing Day & After the Keys

- ☐ Final documents signed.
- ☐ Final funds delivered as instructed.
- ☐ Lender funding confirmed if applicable.
- ☐ Recording and closing confirmed by escrow.
- ☐ Keys received.
- ☐ Rekey exterior locks and change access/garage codes.
- ☐ Locate water shutoff, gas shutoff and electrical panel.
- ☐ Store inspection reports, warranties, closing documents and title information.
- ☐ Create a basic home-maintenance schedule.
- ☐ Keep Monica's contact information for future real estate questions.

YOUR PURCHASE TEAM

Lender	_____
Escrow officer	_____
Title contact	_____
Home inspector	_____
Insurance contact	_____

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A GUIDE, NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE.

Every California real estate transaction is different. This checklist is a general organizational and educational resource. It does not replace your purchase agreement, transaction-specific deadlines, disclosures, inspections, lender requirements, escrow instructions, legal advice, tax advice, insurance advice or other professional guidance. Follow the terms and deadlines of your actual transaction.