

Buying your first home

Your checklist for all the key stages to get you on the property ladder

ARE YOU LOOKING to buy your first home but not sure where to start? Owning a home doesn't have to be a dream. Homeownership is something that is deeply ingrained in the Great British psyche. It's an aspiration for many people and brings with it a sense of financial security, both now and for the future.

But the process of buying a home for the first time can seem daunting and complex. Understandably, taking that first step on the property ladder is likely to be one of

the biggest decisions you'll ever have to make.

Here's our step-by-step guide to buying your first home, your checklist for all the key stages.

1. SAVE A DEPOSIT

Long before you can start looking at properties, you need to start saving. You will typically require a deposit of between 5% and 20%, which, based on the average house price in England of around £270,000^[1], could be approximately between £13,500 and £54,000.

The bigger the deposit you can save, the stronger the position you'll be in, which means a lower mortgage interest rate and lower monthly repayments. You'll also be at a lower risk of negative equity if you have a bigger cash deposit to put down.

2. GET A MORTGAGE AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE (AIP)

As a first-time buyer with an Agreement in Principle (AIP), you can take the first step to buying your home. It will improve your chances of having an offer accepted if you already have an AIP from a mortgage provider, which proves that they are in principle willing to lend you the amount you've requested.

As well as letting you know how much you could borrow, you'll also get an idea of how much you can afford to spend on your new home. That means you can start looking at properties in your price range.



3. MAKE A WISH LIST

Next, you need to decide what you're looking for from a first home. It's useful to make a wish list to help narrow down your search. Making a home hunting wish list can be exciting as you think of all the details, features and rooms you'd love to have. But, it's important to know that you may have to make a compromise or two if you ever expect to become a homeowner.

Consider key factors like whether you'd prefer a newly built or previously owned property, a flat or a house, how many bedrooms you need, which areas you'd be happy to live in, and whether you need a garden or parking.

4. SEARCH FOR SUITABLE PROPERTIES

Once you know what you're looking for, you can search for suitable properties online. There are plenty of reasons to consider online markets when seeking a new property. From convenience to greater choice, this will help you to see a vast array of options and understand what you might be able to afford.

You can search in exact locations using a variety of filters, choosing options such as garden, garage, new build, detached, etc. It's quick and easy to find the exact properties you want to shortlist and narrow down your selection quickly. But as well as looking online, you might want to speak directly to local estate agents and property developers, who may have options that are not listed.

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5. GO TO VIEWINGS

One of the most exciting parts of buying your new home is going on property viewings. Property viewings let you see what's available on the market for your budget.

Go along to viewings ready to take notes and photos and ask lots of questions. This is your opportunity to find out all the details of the property that you might not see in the listing.

6. MAKE AN OFFER

Once you've found the right property, you'll need to make an offer. If your offer is accepted, the property will be taken off the market and the sales process will begin.

As a first-time buyer, you're in a strong position to buy a property, as you're chain-free. Make sure that the estate agent mentions this to the seller when they pass on your offer.

7. CHOOSE A MORTGAGE

Now that you're ready to pay for the property, you'll need to find the right mortgage. There are many different types, and the rates and hidden costs can be confusing. It's important to see a professional mortgage adviser at the start of your mortgage journey. It can save you a lot of time and effort in the long run.

Working with a mortgage adviser can give you access to a wider range of mortgage options. They will also take care of the application

paperwork and know which lenders will likely process your application the quickest.

8. APPOINT A SOLICITOR OR CONVEYANCER

Once you've had your offer accepted and confirmed your mortgage, you need to decide whom you are going to appoint as your solicitor or conveyancer to handle the legal side of things. Their job is to draw up the contract, conduct searches and handle the money for you.

You may want to consider getting recommendations from family or friends. It is also worth checking reviews and recommendations online. The conveyancing process starts when your offer is accepted and ends when you receive the keys, and good conveyancing is key to keeping your property purchase on track.

9. GET A SURVEY

Before finalising the purchase of your new home, you'll probably want to check that the property is structurally sound and safe to live in. There are a number of different types of survey. What you choose depends on the depth of survey you want and your budget. A surveyor will assess the value of the property and identify any major problems you might need to deal with as the owner.

If the property you are buying is a new build and is





built ready, you would ideally carry out a snagging survey before exchange. If it's off-plan then try to carry out the survey pre-completion when you will have more negotiating power to get any problems fixed.

10. EXCHANGE CONTRACTS

Your solicitor will guide you through all the paperwork involved in your purchase, and then you'll be ready to exchange contracts. At this time, you'll pay your deposit, your mortgage provider will transfer the rest of the funds, and this legally commits you to the property purchase.

Soon, your sale will be complete, and you can collect the keys. ♦

>> READY TO APPLY FOR YOUR NEW MORTGAGE? <<

If you're a first-time buyer you've probably got a lot of questions. Our expert mortgage advisers are on hand to help you find a mortgage deal that suits your needs and we'll guide you through the mortgage process. To discuss your requirements, contact **TFA Mortgages**
– telephone **0800 3899 708**
– email **enquiries@tfagroup.co.uk**

Source data: [1] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/housepriceindex/april2021>