

Your First Home: The Complete Buyer's Guide

Buying your first home is one of the biggest financial decisions you'll ever make. This guide walks you through every step — from financial prep to closing day — with the expertise of a licensed real estate agent *and* attorney in your corner, at no extra cost.



Made with **GAMMA**

Why Your First Home Purchase Demands More Than Just an Agent



Central Florida's market is competitive — and emotional decisions can be costly. Many first-time buyers make avoidable mistakes:

- Shopping for homes before getting pre-approved
- Underestimating closing costs and recurring ownership expenses
- Signing contracts without legal review

This guide covers every step of your journey — with the dual advantage of market expertise and legal precision working for you.

YOUR ADVANTAGE

The Attorney Advantage: Why It Changes Everything

Most agents show homes. A realtor-attorney **protects your entire transaction** — at no extra cost over standard buyer representation.



Dual Protection

FAR/BAR contracts, contingency deadlines, and addendums reviewed with an attorney's eye — not just a standard agent checklist.



Negotiation Edge

Legal experience drives stronger tactics on repair requests, price credits, and seller disclosures — protecting your money.



Peace of Mind

Your largest asset purchase backed by both market expertise and contract precision. No extra fees. No fine-print surprises.

Getting Financially Fit & Mortgage Pre-Approved



Pre-Qualification vs. Pre-Approval

Sellers only take **pre-approval** seriously — it means your lender has verified your finances and you're ready to compete.

Key Financial Metrics

- Credit score review and optimization
- Debt-to-Income (DTI) ratio assessment
- Required tax documents and income verification

Mortgage & Assistance Options

Conventional, FHA, VA loans — plus Florida-specific programs like **Hometown Heroes** and **Florida Housing grants** for first-time buyers.

Budgeting Beyond the Purchase Price

Many buyers focus only on the listing price — then face sticker shock. Plan for **all** costs upfront:

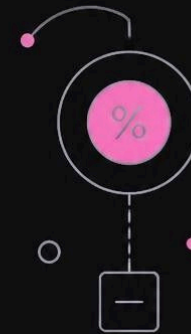
- **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD):** Typically 1–2% of purchase price, held in escrow
- **Inspection, Appraisal & Survey:** \$500–\$1,200+ combined
- **Closing Costs:** Typically 2–5% of your loan amount
- **Recurring Ownership Costs:** Property taxes, homeowners insurance, HOA/CDD fees, and a maintenance reserve fund

❏ In Florida, HOA and CDD fees can add hundreds monthly — always factor them into your budget before making an offer.

1)

Upfront Deposits

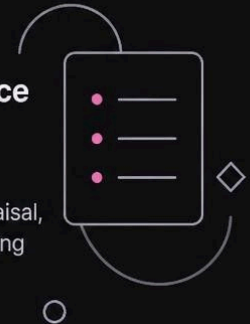
including Earnest Money Deposit
1–2% of price held in escrow



2)

Due Diligence Fees

including home inspection, appraisal, and survey totaling \$500 to \$1,200 or more



3)

Closing Costs

typically 2% to 5% of the loan amount paid at settlement



4)

Recurring Ownership Costs

including property taxes, homeowners insurance, HOA and CDD fees, and a monthly maintenance reserve fund



Defining Your Wish List & Finding "The One"



What to Look For During Showings

Look past the staging and fresh paint. Key factors to evaluate:

- **Roof Age:** Florida roofs typically last 15–25 years; age affects insurability
- **HVAC Condition:** Systems work hard year-round in Florida's climate
- **Structural Red Flags:** Cracks, water stains, and settlement signs
- **Deferred Maintenance:** Small neglected issues often signal bigger problems



Know Orlando's Local Nuances

HOA regulations, CDD fees, flood zones, and short-term rental restrictions vary by neighborhood — your agent should guide you through each area's specific rules before you fall in love with a property.



Define Your Wish List First

Before touring homes, clarify your must-haves vs. nice-to-haves. Consider commute, school districts, lifestyle needs, and future resale value to ensure the home you choose truly fits your life — not just the moment.

Crafting & Negotiating a Winning Offer



Comparative Market Analysis (CMA)

We determine true market value using recent comparable sales — so you never overpay in a competitive Orlando neighborhood.

Key Contract Components

- Purchase price and financing contingency deadlines
- Inspection period length and repair negotiation rights
- Closing date and possession terms

Legal Protection Built In

Every offer is drafted with precise legal language to protect your earnest money and eliminate breach-of-contract risk.

Under Contract: Inspections, Appraisal & Title Search

Home Inspection

Hire licensed inspector; review 4-point & wind reports



Title & Liens

Confirm clean title; search for mechanics liens



Appraisal

Lender orders appraisal; plan for appraisal gaps



This due-diligence window is your last chance to uncover issues and negotiate — having an attorney review every report and document is your strongest protection before closing.

Final Walkthrough & Closing Day



Clear to Close (CTC)

Your lender gives final approval. Review all loan documents carefully before closing day arrives.

Final Walkthrough

Verify all agreed repairs were completed and the property condition hasn't changed since your last visit.

Closing Documents & Wire Security

Review the Closing Disclosure (CD), wire funds only through verified channels, and watch for wire fraud scams — a critical final step in Florida transactions.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Let's Build Your First-Time Buyer Strategy Together

Your Complete Homebuying Journey

- Get financially pre-approved
- Define your must-haves and budget
- Start your personalized home search
- Make a protected, winning offer
- Close with confidence and zero surprises

Book Your Complimentary Strategy Session

Schedule a free 1-on-1 First-Time Homebuyer Strategy Session. We'll map out your timeline, financing options, and Orlando neighborhoods that fit your goals.

 **Call or text to schedule - (407) 801-1614**

 **[Book Consultation Now - Calendly.com/daviddowell](https://calendly.com/daviddowell)**

 **[Email to get started - ddowell500@gmail.com](mailto:ddowell500@gmail.com)**

"Working with an agent who's also an attorney gave us confidence we never knew we needed. We closed on our dream home stress-free." — Past Client, Orlando