

A NO-FLUFF GUIDE TO BUYING YOUR HOME IN THE GTA

THE HOME BUYER'S PLAYBOOK



What it costs. How offers work. What to sign.
Everything, in plain English — in about ten minutes.

BETTER PROPERTIES



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01 • THE GAME PLAN

Five steps. That's the whole game.

Buying a home looks complicated from the outside. It isn't. Here's the entire process, end to end:

- 1 Pick the right person in your corner.**
A buyer representative is legally and ethically bound to protect your interests — every step. This is the biggest purchase of your life. Interview them like it.
- 2 Know your numbers.**
Get pre-approved before you fall in love with a house. Even if you're already pre-approved, a free second-opinion mortgage analysis is a smart move.
- 3 Hunt smart.**
Keep an open mind, look past the staging, and judge every home on layout, condition and long-term potential.
- 4 Make your offer count.**
Price it on real comparable sold properties — not on hope. Structure the terms. Negotiate like you mean it.
- 5 Satisfy your conditions, then close.**
Financing, inspection, status certificate. Once they're met, the deal is firm — and we count down to keys.

The rest of this guide is just these five steps, unpacked. Ten minutes here saves you ten headaches later.

02 • KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Get pre-approved first. Full stop.

Before you fall in love with a home, know exactly what you can afford. Pre-approval does three things for you:

- **Locks in your real budget.** No guessing, no heartbreak on a house you can't carry.
- **Holds your rate.** While you shop, the rate you were quoted is protected.
- **Makes you credible.** Sellers take pre-approved buyers seriously. On a multiple-offer night, it's table stakes.

Already pre-approved? Get a second opinion anyway. A free, no-obligation mortgage analysis often turns up a better structure or a better rate — ask me and I'll connect you.

Jim's rule: never start booking showings until the money conversation is done. Touring homes you can't buy is how bad decisions get made.

03 • HOUSE HUNTING

Shop like a pro, not a tourist.

Keep an open mind.

You may be set on one type of home — but townhomes, condos or semis can fit your goals in ways you didn't expect. Don't rule anything out too fast.

Look past the staging.

Sellers hire professionals to make a home feel perfect. Our job at every showing: ignore the décor, judge the fundamentals — layout, condition, long-term potential. A pretty surface on a bad bones house is still a bad house.

Widen the map if you have to.

Sometimes the right property sits just outside the area you had in mind — with more space or better value. We'll read the market together and compare.

VIEWING ETIQUETTE — THE SHORT VERSION

- Sellers usually need **overnight notice** to prepare. Some set specific days and times.
- **30 minutes max** on a first viewing. Don't overstay.
- **Shoes off**, in all weather.
- **No photos** without the seller's or their agent's okay.
- **No pets. No smoking** in or around the property.

04 • OFFERS DECODED

This is where deals are won.

Whether a property goes to single or multiple offers is the seller's strategy — but either way, your offer needs a steady hand behind it. Here's the vocabulary:

- **Single offer.** One buyer, one negotiation. Your agent runs a Comparative Market Analysis — real comparable sold properties — to establish fair market value, then you decide what you're willing to pay.
- **Multiple offers.** Every buyer submits the same evening. Price is one lever; terms are the other — deposit size, conditions, closing date all talk.
- **Bully (pre-emptive) offer.** An offer registered before the set offer date. It only works if it's strong enough to make the seller cancel the crowd and take it.
- **Deposit — typically 5%.** Your good-faith money, applied to the purchase price on closing. Usually delivered with the offer, within 24 hours of acceptance.
- **Conditions.** Financing, home inspection, status certificate review (for condos). The fewest conditions wins — but never waive protection you actually need.
- **Irrevocable.** The deadline the seller has to answer your offer. A short fuse creates pressure; a long one risks getting shopped.
- **Closing date.** Negotiated, not fixed. We pick a business day that works for everyone — ownership, funds and title all change hands that day.

What I do for you here: honest pricing from sold comparables, terms structured to win without overexposing you, and negotiation that doesn't blink.

05 • WHAT IT ACTUALLY COSTS

Budget beyond the down payment.

Closing costs land at two different moments. Plan for both:

DUE WHEN YOUR OFFER IS ACCEPTED		
Deposit	5% of price	Credited against the price on closing.
Appraisal fee	\$300–\$500	Lender-ordered, before closing.
Home inspection	\$500–\$900+	Varies by type, size and age.
DUE ON CLOSING		
Legal fees	~\$2,000	Includes disbursements.
Land transfer tax	0.5%–2.5%	Marginal brackets on price. Toronto pays provincial AND city.
First-time buyer rebates	up to \$4,000 + \$4,475	Provincial up to \$4,000; Toronto adds up to \$4,475.
Mortgage insurance	up to 4.5%	Of the mortgage amount, when down payment is under 20%. Premium rolls into the mortgage; PST due on closing.
Title insurance	one-time	Lenders typically require it.
Status certificate	\$100	Condos only. Your lawyer reviews it.
Closing adjustments	varies	Your share of taxes, utilities and condo fees.
Tax advance	varies	Property taxes collected at closing.
HST (new construction)	13%	Minus rebates. Most GTA new builds advertise HST-included.
Property insurance	varies	Required for the mortgage.

Rates and rebates change. These are the current figures — your lawyer confirms the exact numbers before closing. When in doubt, ask early.

06 • THE PAPERWORK

Translated into English.

You'll sign a handful of documents. Here's what each one actually is — no legalese:

RECO Information Guide

Required under Ontario's Trust in Real Estate Services Act. A plain-English explainer of how representation works. You sign it to confirm you understand it — it's informational, not a contract.

Buyer Representation Agreement

The contract between you and your agent. It sets out the services you'll get, how commission works, and the holdover period after it expires. It's exclusive — you're putting one professional fully in your corner.

Agreement of Purchase and Sale

The legally binding contract between you and the seller: price, deposit, conditions, closing date. This is the document that makes the deal real.

Confirmation of Co-operation and Representation

One page, on the record: who represents whom in this transaction. No ambiguity, no surprises.

Read everything. Ask about anything. There are no dumb questions when you're signing the biggest contract of your life — that's literally what I'm here for.

07 • ALMOST HOME

The waiting period, handled.

Offer's firm. Now you wait for closing day — but there's a short to-do list in between:

- **Visit twice.** Once firm, you typically get **two pre-closing visits** — with the seller's permission, 24 hours' notice, one hour each, usually in the final week. Measure rooms, plan furniture, confirm everything's in order.
- **Finalize the mortgage.** Sign your mortgage documents if you haven't already.
- **Get insured.** Home insurance policy in place — the lender won't fund without it.
- **See your lawyer.** Bring the closing funds and sign the final paperwork.
- **Book the movers.** Earlier than you think. Good movers book out.
- **Change the locks.** You don't know how many keys are out there. Do it day one.

CHANGE-OF-ADDRESS CHECKLIST

- Canada Post (mail forwarding) · Service Ontario (driver's licence, health card)
- Bank · credit cards · employer · schools
- Insurance provider (home, auto) · alarm company
- Utilities: hydro, gas, cable, internet · subscriptions
- Doctor · dentist · vet · accountant · lawyer (wills, power of attorney)

On closing day, funds move in the morning and title transfers after — expect keys by late afternoon. Then it's yours.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Let's buy better.

Talk to me before you fall in love with a listing.
Straight answers, real numbers, zero pressure.

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