

First Time Home Buyer Guide

Buying a home is exciting – but can be
overwhelming



**Here's Your Step-by-Step Roadmap to
Property Ownership**

Buying your first home is a big deal – and you deserve to feel confident, prepared, and protected every step of the way. This guide walks you through the essentials so you can move forward strategically.

Alanis Raschke | CENTURY 21 Morrison Realty

THE HOME BUYING STRATEGY

1: Plan Early. Win Later.

If you're thinking about buying within the next 6–12 months, now is the time to prepare.

Early planning allows you to:

- Improve credit if needed
- Save strategically
- Watch the market
- Act quickly when the right home appears



2 : Know Your Numbers First

Before touring homes, talk to a trusted lender.

You need to know:

- Your comfortable monthly payment
- Estimated interest rate
- Down payment amount
- Closing costs
- Loan program options

A pre-approval strengthens your offer and gives you clarity.



3: Understand What Your Payment Includes

Your mortgage payment is more than just the home price.

It may include:

- Principal
- Interest
- Property Taxes
- Homeowners Insurance
- Mortgage Insurance (if applicable)
- HOA Fees (if applicable)



We review the full breakdown so there are no surprises.

4: Protect Your Credit During the Process

Once pre-approved:

DO NOT:

- Open new credit cards
- Finance furniture or appliances
- Buy or lease a vehicle
- Make large unexplained deposits
- Miss any payments

Small changes can impact your loan approval.



5: You Likely Don't Need 20% Down

Many first-time buyers qualify with less.

Common options include:

- Conventional Loans
- FHA Loans
- Down Payment Assistance Programs

We connect you with the best lender for your situation.



6: The Inspection Protects You

A home inspection is not meant to scare you — it is designed to protect you.

It helps identify:

- Safety concerns
- Structural issues
- Major mechanical problems

If needed, we negotiate repairs or credits.



Home Buying Timeline

6–12 Months Before Buying

- Improve credit if needed
- Pay down debt
- Build savings
- Meet with a lender for early strategy

3–6 Months Before Buying

- Get pre-approved
- Narrow down preferred neighborhoods
- Track market trends
- Discuss monthly comfort range

1–3 Months Before Buying

- Begin touring homes
- Submit offers
- Negotiate terms

30–45 Days Before Closing

- Complete inspection
- Finalize financing
- Secure homeowners insurance
- Prepare closing funds

Closing Week

- Review final numbers
- Complete final walk-through
- Sign paperwork
- Celebrate becoming a homeowner

First Time Home Buyer Checklist

Before Looking

- Review credit score
- Avoid opening new credit accounts
- Save for down payment and closing costs
- Speak with a trusted lender
- Get pre-approved



During Home Search

- Find a trusted, local real estate agent
- Define must-haves vs. nice-to-haves
- Tour homes strategically
- Review comparable sales
- Submit strong, clean offer



Under Contract

- Schedule home inspection
- Review inspection report
- Negotiate repairs if needed
- Finalize loan documents
- Avoid major financial changes
- Schedule final walk-through



Closing Day

- Bring valid ID
- Wire closing funds (if applicable)
- Review closing disclosure
- Sign documents
- Get your keys
- Celebrate!

Common Questions First-Time Home Buyers Ask

How much money do I actually need to buy a house?

Most buyers put 3–5% down, but you'll also need closing costs (usually 2–4% of the purchase price – includes lender fees, title fees, and prepaid taxes and insurance.)

How long does the buying process take?

Once you're under contract, closing usually takes 30–45 days.

Can I look at houses before getting pre-approved?

You can, but getting pre-approved first helps you know your price range and strengthens your offer.

Do I have to pay my real estate agent?

In most transactions the seller pays the buyer's agent commission.

What credit score do I need?

Many loan programs allow buyers with scores around 620+, but better scores can improve interest rates.

What is earnest money?

Earnest money is a deposit you make when submitting an offer to show the seller you're serious about buying the home. It's typically 1–3% of the purchase price and is applied toward your down payment or closing costs at closing.

Do I have to buy the first house I make an offer on?

No. If inspections reveal issues or the deal doesn't meet contract terms, buyers may be able to renegotiate or walk away depending on contingencies.

Costs First-Time Buyers Don't Expect

- Home inspection (\$300–\$500)
 - Appraisal (\$500–\$800)
 - Earnest money deposit
 - Moving costs
 - Utility setup
 - Repairs after moving in
-

What Happens After Your Offer Is Accepted?

1. Earnest money is deposited
2. Home inspection is scheduled
3. Appraisal is ordered by the lender
4. Loan underwriting reviews your finances
5. Final walk-through before closing
6. Closing day — sign documents and receive keys

The Beginning of Something Bigger

Buying your first home is more than just a purchase. It's an investment in stability, independence, and the start to generational wealth. And remember, the sooner you invest in your future the more your assets will grow.

The process may feel complex at times, but every step forward brings you closer to a place that is truly yours.

With preparation, patience, and the right knowledge, homeownership becomes not just possible — but achievable.

What You Can Expect Working With Me

- Clear communication
- Strategic guidance
- Strong negotiation
- Education at every step
- A calm, confident process

Ready to Start?

If homeownership is even on your radar this year, let's build your strategy. Your future home starts with preparation.



Alanis Raschke

Realtor | Century 21
Morrison

Bismarck- Mandan Area
C: 701.595.6274

O: 701.223.6654

alanis@c21morrison.com

www.HomesByAlanis.com