

Tips for Home Buyers

Buyer Guide: Open House Dos and Don'ts

It's (likely) Sunday, and you're on the hunt for a new property. Here are some tips about open houses that will get you the best price and correct information for your potential next real estate deal:



Do: Use open houses as a convenient time for touring homes with your agent

Allocating weekly open house hours as a regular time to meet with your agent helps to avoid appointments scattered throughout the week with individual sellers. Savvy listing agents will take you more seriously as a represented, qualified buyer if you have an agent.



Don't: Leave for your open house without a plan

If you're going to take a trip out for an open house, try to make sure you get the most bang for your buck. To do this, search sites like Trulia.com using your computer or smart phone for open houses in your area and/or near specific listings of interest. Come up with a list to make sure you get the most bang for your buck when visiting the neighborhood.



Do: Open every door

If you're seriously interested in a home you're touring, make sure you look behind every door. Storage will be a big part of your experience as an owner. You don't want to get into a home and be surprised to find out that hall closet is taken up by a water heater or what you thought was an additional room is actually a closet.



Don't: Open every drawer

This tip is specific to furniture, rather than built-ins in kitchen cabinets and elsewhere. Resist the voyeuristic temptation to go "open house hunting." You don't need to see inside someone's dresser to know whether or not you like the home.



Don't: Show too much emotion

Buying a home is an exciting and emotional experience, but showing too much emotion may work against you if you make it to the negotiating table. Use open houses as your opportunity to investigate and analyze the positives and negatives of each property. Later, when you talk to your agent, feel free to express your reactions to properties you've seen.



Do: Take the takeaways

Grab a property flyer from each house you see and write down your reactions to the home – this can help you remember what you did and didn't like about the home later. If your agent isn't with you, this will make it easy to communicate your impression. An open house handout may even serve as a comparable for other interesting properties you see in the future.



Don't: Be afraid to ask questions

Open houses are about getting answers. Be sure to take advantage of the sales agent on-site to get answers to your questions about the property's condition and history on the spot. If you're going to spend the time (and gas) to visit a home, make sure it's worth it by getting the answers you need.