

Here's a list of important things to know when buying a home, along with useful resources and links:

1. Check Your Credit Score & Improve It If Needed

- A higher credit score means better mortgage rates.
 - Free credit reports:
 - [Annual Credit Report](#)
 - [Credit Karma](#)
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2. Determine Your Budget & Get Pre-Approved

- Calculate how much home you can afford before shopping.
 - Use mortgage calculators:
 - [Bankrate Mortgage Calculator](#)
 - [NerdWallet Home Affordability Calculator](#)
 - Get pre-approved for a mortgage through lenders or banks before house hunting.
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3. Save for a Down Payment & Closing Costs

- A conventional loan typically requires 5%-20% down, but some loans offer lower options.
 - Down Payment Assistance:
 - [HUD State-Specific Down Payment Assistance](#)
 - [FHA Down Payment Programs](#)
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4. Explore Mortgage Options

- Common types of loans:
 - **Conventional Loan** – Requires good credit, typically 5-20% down.
 - **FHA Loan** – 3.5% down, great for first-time buyers.
 - **VA Loan** – Zero down for eligible military members.
 - **USDA Loan** – Zero down for rural home buyers.
 - Learn more:
 - [Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac Mortgage Programs](#)
 - [VA Home Loans](#)
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5. Find a Trustworthy Real Estate Agent

- A good agent can help negotiate, find the right home, and handle paperwork.
 - Search for agents:
 - [Realtor.com Agent Finder](#)
 - [Zillow Premier Agents](#)
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6. Research Neighborhoods & Home Values

- Consider crime rates, schools, commute times, and future property value.
 - Check area stats:
 - [Niche Neighborhood Research](#)
 - [Redfin Market Trends](#)
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7. Get a Home Inspection Before Buying

- Avoid costly repairs by hiring a certified inspector.
 - Find licensed inspectors:
 - [American Society of Home Inspectors](#)
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8. Understand Closing Costs & Hidden Fees

- Closing costs typically range from 2%-5% of the home price.
 - Learn more:
 - [CFPB Closing Costs Guide](#)
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9. Read & Understand the Purchase Agreement

- Ensure terms, conditions, and contingencies are in your favor before signing.
 - Legal contract resources:
 - [Rocket Lawyer Real Estate Contracts](#)
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10. Be Ready for Ongoing Homeownership Costs

- Plan for maintenance, property taxes, insurance, and utility bills.
 - Budgeting resources:
 - [Home Affordability Guide by HUD](#)
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By following these critical steps, you can make informed decisions and secure a home with confidence.