Buying a home in Arizona

Eight steps, in order. What happens at each one, what you'll need, and who you'll work with.

AZ FLAT FEE
• FLAT FEE, FULL SERVICE, REAL ESTATE •

BUYER GUIDE

Phoenix 480-771-1564
Tucson 520-500-1783
azflatfee.com

Inside

Buying a home has a lot of moving parts. This guide takes them one at a time, in the order they happen, so you always know what comes next and what to ask.

ROAD MAP	**Two halves of buying a home** Getting ready, then under contract	03
STEP 01	**Know your numbers** Cash up front and a monthly payment	04
STEP 02	**Get pre-approved** A lender confirms what you can borrow	05
STEP 03	**Choose your agent** Sign a written buyer agreement	06
STEP 04	**Shop and tour** See homes and narrow the list	07
STEP 05	**Make an offer** Contract accepted, escrow opens	08
STEP 06	**Inspection period** Inspect, review, request repairs	09
STEP 07	**Appraisal and loan approval** Value confirmed, loan finalized	10
STEP 08	**Walk-through and closing** Sign, fund, record, keys	11
REFERENCE	**Glossary** The terms you will hear, A to Z	12

Two halves: getting ready, then under contract.

The first four steps run on your schedule. Once a seller accepts your offer, the contract sets the dates and the pace picks up.

Getting ready

At your pace

01 Know your numbers
Cash up front and a monthly payment

02 Get pre-approved
A lender confirms what you can borrow

03 Choose your agent
Sign a written buyer agreement

04 Shop and tour
See homes and narrow the list

Under contract

About 30 to 45 days

05 Make an offer
Contract accepted, escrow opens

06 Inspection period
Inspect, review, request repairs

07 Appraisal and loan approval
Value confirmed, loan finalized

08 Walk-through and closing
Sign, fund, record, keys

3 days for seller disclosures

10 days to inspect and decide

30–45 days to close, with a loan

01

STEP 01 OF 08

Know your numbers

Before you look at a single listing, work out the cash you'll need up front and the monthly payment you're comfortable with.

WHEN
Before you start looking

YOU'LL NEED
Recent pay stubs
Account balances
Your monthly debts

WHO'S INVOLVED
You and a lender

Earnest money	About 1% to 2% of the price Paid after acceptance; credited to you at closing
Down payment	From 3% on many loans; 0% on VA and USDA Paid at closing
Closing costs	About 2% to 5% of the loan Lender, title and escrow fees, prepaid taxes and insurance
Inspections	A few hundred dollars each Paid to inspectors during the inspection period
Appraisal	Several hundred dollars Ordered and billed by your lender
Cushion	Your choice Moving, utility deposits and first repairs

For the monthly payment, lenders count principal, interest, property taxes and homeowner's insurance, plus HOA dues and mortgage insurance when they apply. Choose the payment first and let it set your price range. The ranges above are typical; your lender's Loan Estimate will show your actual numbers.

ARIZONA NOTE
Arizona has state and local down payment assistance programs for buyers who qualify. Ask your lender which ones you're eligible for.

02

STEP 02 OF 08

Get pre-approved

A pre-approval letter shows sellers your offer can close. Your agent will need one before writing an offer.

WHEN

Before your first tour

YOU'LL NEED

Two years of W-2s or tax returns

30 days of pay stubs

Two months of bank statements

Photo ID

Notes on large deposits

WHO'S INVOLVED

A lender or mortgage broker

Prequalification

An estimate based on what you tell a lender. Useful early, but sellers give it little weight.

Pre-approval

The lender has checked your credit, income and assets. This is the letter that goes with your offer.

Common loan types

Conventional	Down payments from about 3%. Mortgage insurance until you reach 20% equity.
FHA	Down payments from 3.5%, with more flexible credit requirements.
VA	For eligible veterans and service members. Often no down payment.
USDA	For eligible rural areas and incomes. Often no down payment.

Until you close, avoid

- New credit cards or loans
- Financing a car or furniture
- Changing jobs
- Undocumented transfers
- Missed payments

03

STEP 03 OF 08

Choose your agent

Your agent is your guide and negotiator from the first tour to the day you get the keys.

WHEN
Before touring homes together

YOU'LL SIGN
A written buyer agreement

WHO'S INVOLVED
You and your agent

Since August 2024, buyers sign a written agreement with their agent before touring homes together. It states how your agent is paid, how long the agreement lasts and how to end it. Read it before you sign.

What your agent handles

- Sets up your search and books showings
- Pulls recent sales to guide your price
- Writes and negotiates your offer
- Tracks every contract deadline
- Coordinates inspectors, lender and escrow
- Gets you to the closing table

Ask before you sign

How are you paid, and by whom?

How long does the agreement last?

How do I end it if it isn't working?

Who will I talk to day to day?

04

WHEN

A week to a few months

YOU'LL NEED

Your pre-approval letter

A short must-have list

STEP 04 OF 08

Shop and tour

Write down the few things your home must have and what you could live without. Rate each home the same day you see it, while it's fresh. On every tour, look closely at the items that cost the most to fix in Arizona:

AC. Ask the age of each unit and its service history

Roof. Tile lasts; the underlayment beneath it wears out

Sun. West-facing rooms and yards run hot in summer

Pool. Budget for equipment, chemicals and service

Solar. Find out if panels are owned or leased

HOA. Ask about dues and rules on parking and rentals

05

STEP 05 OF 08

Make an offer

When the seller accepts, your offer becomes the contract, escrow opens, and the deadlines below begin.

WHEN
Day 0

YOU'LL NEED
Pre-approval letter
Earnest money

WHO'S INVOLVED
Your agent, the listing agent, the escrow company

Most Arizona resale homes are bought on the standard Residential Resale Real Estate Purchase Contract. Your offer sets:

- Price
- Earnest money
- Loan type and down payment
- Closing date
- Seller credits
- Items that stay

Typical deadlines after acceptance

Your contract sets the exact dates

Day 0
Accepted
Escrow opens; earnest money deposited

Day 3
Disclosures
Seller delivers the SPDS

Day 10
Inspections end
Your BINSR is due; lender sends the LSU

+5 days
Seller replies
Then you have 5 days to accept or cancel

COE
Closing
Often 30 to 45 days after acceptance

Deadlines are firm. If the inspection period ends without a BINSR from you, you've accepted the home's condition. Your agent tracks every date with you.

06

STEP 06 OF 08

Inspection period

Ten days to inspect the home, read every disclosure, and decide whether to move forward.

WHEN

Days 1 to 10

YOU'LL NEED

Inspectors booked on day 1

An insurance quote

WHO'S INVOLVED

Inspectors, your agent, an insurance agent

Inspections

General home. Structure, roof, AC, plumbing, electrical

Termite. A wood-destroying insect report

Sewer scope. A camera check of the line to the street

Pool. Equipment, surface and safety barriers

Specialists. Roof, HVAC or septic if flagged

Documents

SPDS. What the seller knows about the home

CLUE report. Past insurance claims on the property

HOA documents. Budget, rules, pending assessments; 5 days to review

Insurance quote. Confirm the home is insurable

Solar lease. Terms and transfer, if any

ARIZONA NOTE · THE BINSR

The Buyer's Inspection Notice and Seller's Response is how you tell the seller what you found. You have three choices:

Accept
Move forward with the home as it is.

Request
Ask for specific repairs or credits.

Cancel
End the contract and get your earnest money back.

07

STEP 07 OF 08

Appraisal and loan approval

Your lender confirms the home is worth the loan and gives your file a final review.

WHEN
Weeks 2 to 5

YOU'LL NEED
Quick replies to your lender
Homeowner's insurance

WHO'S INVOLVED
An appraiser, an underwriter

An independent appraiser compares the home with recent nearby sales. At the same time, an underwriter reviews your income, assets and credit and may ask for updated documents. Answer the same day when you can.

If the appraisal comes in low

Renegotiate
Ask the seller to lower the price to the appraised value.

Meet in the middle
Split the difference with the seller.

Cover the gap
Pay the difference in cash at closing.

Cancel
If your contract allows it, within the notice window.

Clear to close

When underwriting signs off, you'll get a Closing Disclosure at least three business days before signing. Compare it with your Loan Estimate and ask about anything that changed.

08

STEP 08 OF 08

Walk-through and closing

One last look at the home, a signing appointment, and then the keys.

WHEN
The last few days before closing

YOU'LL NEED
Photo ID
Verified wiring instructions
Insurance in place

WHO'S INVOLVED
Escrow officer, lender, your agent

At the walk-through, confirm

- Agreed repairs are done, with receipts
- Faucets, toilets and drains work
- No new damage from moving out
- AC, appliances and pool equipment run
- Items in the contract are still there
- Remotes, codes and keys are handed over

FIRST
Sign
At the escrow company, usually a few days before closing.

THEN
Fund
Your lender sends the loan money to escrow.

FINALLY
Record
The deed records with the county. The home is yours.

PROTECT YOUR CLOSING FUNDS
Wire fraud targets home buyers. Before you wire money, call your escrow officer at a number you already know. Never follow wiring changes sent by email or text.

After you move in

Change the locks and garage codes, keep your closing documents together, and schedule AC service before summer.

GLOSSARY

Terms, A to Z

Appraisal
An independent estimate of the home's value, ordered by your lender.

BINSR
Buyer's Inspection Notice and Seller's Response. Your repair requests, or notice to cancel.

CLUE report
A history of insurance claims filed on the property.

Closing Disclosure
Your final loan terms and costs, delivered at least three business days before signing.

COE
Close of escrow. The day the deed records and the home becomes yours.

Earnest money
Your good-faith deposit, held by escrow and credited at closing.

Escrow
A neutral company that holds funds and documents and carries out the contract.

LSU
Loan Status Update. Your lender's report on where your loan stands.

SPDS
Seller's Property Disclosure Statement. What the seller knows about the home.

Title insurance
Protects you and your lender against past ownership claims.

Underwriting
The lender's final review of your finances and the property.

FROM A CLIENT

"AZ Flat Fee did a great job of helping throughout the entire process of buying a home. As a first time home buyer, I had lots of questions and wasn't really sure what to expect. Everyone I worked with was very knowledgeable, helpful, and quick to communicate. They made what was a pretty intimidating process feel smooth and straightforward."

Trevor H.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Let’s find your home.

AZ FLAT FEE

• FLAT FEE, FULL SERVICE, REAL ESTATE •

FULL SERVICE REAL ESTATE

PHOENIX AREA

480-771-1564

TUCSON AREA

520-500-1783

www.azflatfee.com