

# THE *Unconventional* CHECKLIST

Dearest Homebuyer,

If you google “first time homebuyer’s checklist,” you’ll find a variety of checklists all saying essentially the exact same thing. They’re going to talk to you about what to look for in a home, how to choose a realtor, (possibly a mortgage pre approval), neighbourhood research, etc. It isn’t going to be anything earth shattering, and to be honest, it’s not even the right time to be talking about those options.

My “Unconventional Checklist for First Time Homebuyers” is designed to help you dig into the work and actually set some educated goals about your future. This isn’t #blowyourmind stuff, but I’ve presented it with some real life examples and tried to keep the conversation light. Because, you know what? Planning to buy your first home should be super, freaking fun. So let’s enjoy it a little - ok? Here is a outline of my 7 step guide:

- 1.**  
Start a Budget
- 2.**  
Start your Education
- 3.**  
Set Goals
- 4.**  
Gather your Documents
- 5.**  
Meet with a Mortgage Professional
- 6.**  
Ask ALL those Questions
- 7.**  
Start Devising a Plan

Each page of this guide will dig deeper into the steps and really discuss what is entailed. I hope you enjoy it! Feedback is always welcomed!

To your success, **Renée Huse**  
Real Estate Mentor and Mortgage Agent

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# Start a BUDGET

Oh...the dreaded budget. Does it get any worse? Budgeting usually results in some serious debates, (read arguments), at our house. But you know what? It's that budget that allows us to save for the things we want to purchase, take the occasional holiday and put away money for our kids down the road. I have a love/hate relationship with it, that is for sure.

The thing that people forget is that the only way to successfully implement a budget is to track it. For that reason, I've included my super simple budget spreadsheet for you to check out. It walks you through a pretty comprehensive list of expenses that you should consider when you're looking at setting up a realistic budget. Check it out!

In 2009, my husband and I had over-extended ourselves. We went through a time where we REALLY needed to get our savings under control again. We sat down with that dirty, hated thing - a budget. By the time we finished entering all our expenses into the ol' spreadsheet, our computer was smoking. Out of our hard work came some cool, common sense savings tips. I thought I might share them.

## 10 tips for saving your \$\$\$

Following these simple tips might give you the opportunity to inject \$10,000 - \$20,000 back into your budget in a year. This is nearly enough for a 5% down payment on your first home! If you try any of these tips and have any success connect with me and let me know!

### 1. Go Cups Coffee

OHHHHHHH how I love coffee. So much. I'm particularly addicted to Phil and Sebastian's coffee. Previously, I'd buy two or three coffees a day without even thinking. And I'm not alone. Purchasing daily coffees equates to between 8-10 dollars a day. If we simply brought coffee from home, **we'd be looking at saving \$3000/year.**

### 2. Lunch Bags

My husband and I both worked downtown for 10 years. During that time, we both bought our lunches a LOT, to the tune of about \$25/day. \$25 per DAY. Are you crazy? Well - we were. After re-injecting that money into our savings, **we found ourselves with an extra \$6000 that year.**

### 3. Meal Plan

Do you know how much food we waste in North America? It's bananas. (Ouch, bad joke. Sorry.) Anyway, in Canada on average we're wasting about \$1450/year/household on food that just gets thrown out. Making a commitment to meal planning, and eating the foods you buy should inject **about \$1400 back into your budget.**

#### 4. Drive a reasonable car

Do you know how many people I rent homes to, that also pay vehicle lease payments? The answer: All of them. In certain cases, leasing a vehicle might be sensible; but in most cases – it just isn't. Here's the thing: cars are depreciating assets. Find a reliable vehicle and be satisfied that it gets you from A to B; don't waste thousands of dollars a year on a vehicle payments (or worse – a lease). **This could inject \$5000-\$10000/year back into your budget.**

#### 5. Drink at home

Now, let's be clear one one thing – I am a SUCKER for a spendy cocktail. But when we were young and living downtown, we were no strangers to the Rule of Seven. Seven, \$7 cocktails, 7 days a week. Learn how to make some fancy cocktails and have your friends to your place. (Email me for my chili coconut margarita recipe!) **This could easily inject \$2000 back into your budget annually.**

#### 6. Get rid of that high interest debt

OH MY GOD, PEOPLE. Credit cards are bad news! That interest rate is crazy! If you have debt outstanding on a credit card, make sure that you're exploring options for obtaining a lower interest line of credit from your financial institution.

#### 7. Try a staycation

I feel like, these days, when I'm browsing Instagram or Facebook everyone is biking in France, drinking wine in Cali or raving about the latest Broadway show in NYC. I mean, really? Doesn't anyone ever stay home anymore? Well – the truth is – they do. And we're lucky to live in such an amazing part of the world! Try a staycation this year. Ride your mountain bike on the world class trails in Bragg Creek, hike along the Douglas Fir Trail, wander through Heritage Park or check out the National Music Centre, etc., etc. **Calgary has some amazing things to offer – skip that \$5000 vaca and enjoy our city!**

#### 8. Set a budget and stick to it

It's important to track your spending for a month or two, decide where you can make changes, actually make those changes and stick to them! Remember, you've got my simple budget worksheet, open it up!

#### 9. Learn to love winners

Listen, I like Nordstrom's, I LOVE Holt. Like – love it. A lot. But do you know what I can afford? Winners, EBay, Home Sense and the like. Every year I buy a few key pieces, maybe a bag, a pair of shoes or a great pair of jeans, but I don't need to spend thousands of dollars a year on clothing and accessories at this point in my life. I just don't. I've made a commitment to building my real estate portfolio – so (almost) all the time – the budget trumps the jeans!

#### 10. Reward your wins

If you've made a budget, stuck to it and get some positive results when you assess at the end of the month, reward yo' self! (Important: This doesn't mean fly to Vegas and put it all on black.)



# Start your **EDUCATION**

If you're going to make an educated opinion about anything - you need to research and read. Period. A major "TO DO" on your list has to be education about the home buying process. Here are 3 important suggestions to keep in the loop with changing economic, real estate and mortgage trends. Reach out to friends and family members and ask them about where they get their information as well! (Remember - everyone has an opinion on EVERYTHING. Do the research and develop your own, educated opinions).

## **First, follow me on social media.**

"Like" my facebook page, Instagram Profile and connect with me on LinkedIn. My whole job with these Social Media platforms is to put data, information and educational materials out to my followers. Follow along and I'll try to provide as much useful information as I can find!

<https://www.facebook.com/reneehusemortgages>

<https://www.instagram.com/reneehuse/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/renée-huse>

## **Second, check out Genworth's website homeownership.ca.**

Their site has tons of useful information for First Time Home Buyers! If there is anything that isn't quite landing for you, give me a call and I'd be happy to walk you through it.

<http://homeownership.ca>

## **Finally, good old CMHC. Check out their website.**

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been around a long time and they do a pretty good job of putting out some great information for Home Buyers.

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca>



# Set GOALS

Doesn't feel awesome to set some goals...and then crush them? Honestly, there is nothing better than the satisfaction of scratching that goal off your list.

Wikipedia defines a goal as: a desired result or possible outcome that a person or a system envisions, plans and commits to achieve: a personal or organizational desired end-point in some sort of assumed development. Many people endeavor to reach goals within a finite time by setting deadlines.

Essentially, it is deciding what you want and going after it - right? Here is a quick acronym to help you make sure the goals you set have a little grit to them.

**SMART**, goals should be: your own, educated opinions.

**S**pecific. **M**easurable. **A**ttainable. **R**elevant. **T**ime Bound.

When it comes to buying your first home. You might have to set a few serious goals. When my husband and I were saving for our home, we had to get pretty serious about budgeting. It has to become a "goal" or we never would have succeeded. To this day, in January of each year, we do a "review" of what we've added to our networth and some of the big pieces of the "spending pie chart." It doesn't matter how much or how little you have, you still have to know where it's going!

**When you're looking at your budget you want to ask these questions.**

**Is this specific?** Did we consider all the things we want to do with our money?

**Is it measurable?** Did we actually write it down so that we can circle back?

**Is it Attainable?** Did we choose a budget that actually makes sense relative to our income?

**Is it relevant?** Do we even want a home? (oops - if no - this guide is probably useless)

**Is it Time Bound?** On what date are we going to circle back and evaluate?



# Gather DOCUMENTS

Let's make this short, here is what you need. Get it, get a folder, fill it with these documents and put it somewhere safe. These documents are essential for any financial transaction in your life!

## 1. 2 pieces ID

One piece of ID needs to be government issued with a photo, for example: passport, nexus card, drivers license.

The second piece can be your health care card, a major credit card, Social Insurance Card. All ID needs to be valid, nothing expired will be acceptable.

## 2. Last 2 years Notice of Assessment

Your Notice of Assessment is the document that the Government sends back to you after file your taxes.

## 3. First 4 pages of T1 General

Your T1 General is the tax return that you've either had prepared by an accountant, that you've done yourself or possibly used "Quicktax" to prepare.

## 4. Investment Statements

Examples would be, RRSPs, RESPs, Universal Life Insurance, and unregistered investments like GICs, Stocks, Bonds, any Exempt Market investments, any cash or savings that you may have in your bank account.

## 5. Full Application

Any mortgage professional or banker will ask you to fill out a complete application with all of your personal information

## 6. Signed Credit Bureau consent

If anyone is going to pull your "credit bureau" they will need you to sign a consent form to make sure that you're OK with someone pulling up your private information.

## 7. Letter of Employment

Ask your Manager or HR department to provide a Letter of Employment outlining the terms of your position.

## 8. Mortgage statements for all properties owned

## 9. Proof of Down Payment

It is essential that you can prove where your down payment is coming from. Gift Letters or 90 day history of your bank statements are most common.

## Business Owner?

If you own your own business we need a few more details:

1. Last 2 years financial statements for company
2. Last 2 years NOAs for company and proof of taxes paid
3. Any company investment statements
4. Incorporation Documents (if incorporated)



## Work the PLAN

Now that you've considered all of the above it's time to really get into the plan. Start thinking about neighbourhoods and property types.

Start interviewing REALTORS by asking them about the things that are most important to you. Ask them when they'll be available to look at homes (if it's only Monday to Friday and you work a 9-5, it's probably a bad fit). Ask them for some market analysis on the areas that interest you.

Consider what you have for a down payment. Will you be borrowing from your RRSP's?

**Ask your mortgage professional to explain this process.**

Consider what you might need to save for closing and moving costs. Ask your mortgage professional and realtor for referrals and recommendations for movers, lawyers etc. so that you have a plan when you need them.

**Start asking your mortgage professional** about current rates and start learning about variable vs. fixed options.

Make sure that you stand strong in your intentions around budget. If you're working with a Real Estate professional and you feel pressured to buy something out of your budget or transact on a deal that feels wrong - **Break up with them!! This is YOUR deal.**

Lastly, **ENJOY this process.** If you followed my guide, you started with the education around finances and the process and you're armed to take on homeownership!

Thanks for reading!

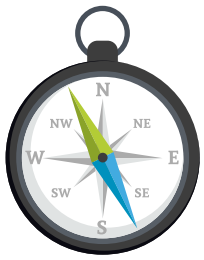


"My passion is to educate, support and advocate for home buyers through the biggest transaction of their lives."

*Renée* mortgage  
agent  
HUSE



**If I can assist you in any way please connect with me**



# Ask for **DIRECTION**

Now that you've got all your documents ready, you're set for that meeting with your mortgage broker.

## Here's what you'll get out of talking to a Mortgage Broker:

You'll know what you can afford. None of this falling in love with a house and then not being able to afford it business!

You'll know what areas of your application need work before you submit an offer and create a five-alarm fire!

You'll be confident that your financing is in order and gain negotiating power. Eliminate the stress, and make your home buying purchase more enjoyable.

## Why would I use a Mortgage Broker over a banker?

*\*If you want a really opinionated answer to this question, check out my blog post at [www.reneehuse.com](http://www.reneehuse.com)*

**Mortgage Brokers shop rates and products from 70 different Institutions.** This includes banks, Credit Unions, Non Bank Lenders (also called Monoline Lenders) and Trust Companies. For example: Toronto Dominion, Scotiabank, First National, MCAP, CMLS, Radius, Merix, Street Capital, National Bank, Canadiana, DLC Mortgage, Equitable Bank, Optimum, Home Trust, ATB, and Bow Valley.

**Multiple Options and Opinions.** If your health were affected, would you settle for just one doctor's opinion? Why get just one option when your financial condition is experiencing the most significant transaction of its life?

**Application process is simple and quick.** You fill out a quick application, produce a few signatures and provide a 30-minute time slot for a goal setting session!

**One Credit Bureau.** Many people inadvertently disqualify themselves from getting the best rate when they are shopping for a mortgage. When multiple banks pull a credit bureau, your Beacon score can drop, sometimes eliminating the chance for the best mortgage, or, in extreme cases, any mortgage at all. A Mortgage Agent pulls your credit bureau once, and can send it to 70 lenders!



**Available on your terms.** Mortgage Brokers work evenings and weekends, and you'll be in touch through their personal cell phone. This definitely isn't a 1-800 answering service. Also, a good Mortgage Agent will offer different mediums for meetings; face to Face, phone, Skype, Zoom or email correspondences are all possible.

**There's a mortgage product available for almost everyone.** When a person's situation isn't ideal, there's usually a story about why. It is a Mortgage Agent's job to tell your story to a lender that will qualify you. (Multiple times if necessary)!

**Mortgage Agents are licensed Experts.** Most bank employees are not certified, and have a working knowledge of their own bank's products and services This makes it impossible for them to advise that you go to another lender who could potentially qualify you.

## The real benefit to you is...

**Mortgage Agents work for you, not the banks. An agent doesn't get paid unless they fund your mortgage with a lender that is giving you the product you need.** Also, a mortgage Agent is incentivized to get you the best rate possible, to maximize your purchasing power!

*So - let's be really clear on this final point:  
**The services of a Mortgage Agent are free to you.***



## Ask away!

Want to know the single most important tip that is SURE to help EVERY SINGLE first time home buyer succeed? Huh? Do you??

Here it is... Ready? It's big...

## THERE. ARE. NO. DUMB. QUESTIONS.

If you needed medical advice, you would go to a doctor and ask questions. If you needed legal advice, you would go to a lawyer and ask questions. If you were building something and needed structural advice, you would call an engineer. When it comes to purchasing Real Estate, you should be asking your Real Estate professionals about absolutely everything and anything!

Recently, while working with first time homebuyers, my colleagues and I heard our first time clients prefacing their concerns with lines like, “well, I’m embarrassed to ask, but…” and, “I know this must sound like a stupid question, but…” Stop right there. You wouldn’t believe it, but I have friends and clients so overwhelmed and intimidated by the home buying process, they abandon it entirely, and just continue to rent.

So. Here is the thing I’m desperately hoping you’ll remember: Our job is to answer any question you can think of when it comes to Real Estate – big or small. Our job is also to tell you “I don’t know” when we don’t know, and follow up with you later after we research the answer.

Buying a home is a big step! A big, very exciting, and potentially ultra-stressful step. Stop trying to take on the world, and give yourself peace of mind by working with a dedicated and experienced Mortgage Agent and Realtor that can get you the best answers quickly.

After all, as a first time homebuyer, this is likely the largest financial transaction that you’ve ever made. You’re making a 25-30 year commitment to repay a loan for a property- you’re entitled to every answer you want!

**OK – so, we’re clear?**

**If there is anything you don’t understand – you’ll ask… Right?**

**Contact me, if you need any assistance with any steps in the process**



“My passion is to educate, support and advocate for home buyers through the biggest transaction of their lives.”

*Renee* mortgage  
agent  
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