

CHECKLIST FOR HIRING A REAL ESTATE AGENT

- Have each agent you are considering do a presentation on why you should hire him or her. Keep the information the agent provides to be sure the agent follows through with promises. Ask questions pertinent to the type of transaction you are considering.
- Ask to see the agent's real estate license and DMV identification. A business card is not enough.
- Check with DRE to determine if the license has a disciplinary history. Consider the type and elapsed time of any discipline carefully. Look for an H number, R number, or D&R number in the public comment section of the license record. Call DRE for clarification on any discipline taken.
- Ask for personal references of clients (names and phone numbers) and contact the clients.
- Ask about specialization in transactions.
- Ask for professional affiliations with real estate or mortgage organizations. If the agent claims professional affiliation, verify with the organization. If they claim to be a specialist, expert, or have certification, ask for proof. See DRE alerts on warnings about false and misleading designations: www.dre.ca.gov/Consumers/ConsumerAlerts.html.
- Talk to friends, neighbors, and people you trust for referrals.
- Check with the real estate boards, the Better Business Bureau, and chambers of commerce. Consider all ratings and complaints.



DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE
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Real Estate MATTERS

Finding the Right
Real Estate Agent



Finding the Right Real Estate Agent: What You Should Do

So, you are going to buy or sell real estate and are looking for an agent. Because a real estate transaction is often your biggest and most important investment, we suggest the following to make it a positive experience and to protect yourself. (If you have difficulty, ask someone you trust for help, or visit us!)

General Advice

Use due diligence—once you have a list of agents, DO YOUR HOMEWORK!

Contact the California Department of Real Estate (DRE) and verify the agent is licensed at www.dre.ca.gov or call (877) 373-4542.

Unlicensed agents are bad news and you should avoid them!

Things to look for on the DRE website:

- Is the agent's license current (not Expired, Surrendered, Revoked, or Licensed NBA)? If not, do not deal with that person.
- If the agent is a salesperson, be sure they work for a broker. If not, do not hire them.
- If a licensed corporation, is there a designated broker?
- Is there a hearing number ("H" number) in the license information? If YES, contact DRE for information on the license discipline.
- If performing residential mortgage loan activities, do they have a National Mortgage Licensing System (NMLS) license number. If not, do not deal with them.

Find more information in our Consumers section at: www.dre.ca.gov/Consumers.

If the information provided by the agent does not match what you find, be cautious. If you have further questions, contact DRE.



Check Out the Licensee

- Check for any news stories about them.
- Are there any pending criminal charges, arrests, or civil actions?
- Are there website postings about them from clients?
- Look up county courts online for pending criminal charges or civil actions.
- When possible, look up their name with the Better Business Bureau (BBB) at www.bbb.org.
- Any complaints? How were they resolved by the agent?
- Are they accredited with BBB?
- What is their BBB rating (A–F)?
- How long have they been in business?
- If the agent claims they are an agent in a current transaction, check with the local real estate board.
- Do they have a business license with the city?
- If a corporation, is it registered with the Secretary of State? Verify at <https://bizfileonline.sos.ca.gov/search/business>
- Are fictitious business names registered with the county and DRE?

Complaint Forms

If you have a complaint against a licensed real estate agent, complaint forms are available at www.dre.ca.gov or you can call (877) 373-4542 for assistance.

Contact DRE

To contact the California Department of Real Estate, call (877) 373-4542 toll-free for assistance in English or Spanish.

Department of Real Estate District Offices

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