

Step 2: Hire an Agent.

More than 2 million people in the United States have earned real estate licenses. However, real estate is a tough business with a steep dropout rate, and the result is that only a small percentage of those with licenses actively help buyers and sellers.

Why?

Buying and selling real estate is a complex matter. At first it might seem that by checking local picture books or online sites you could quickly find the right home at the right price.

But a basic rule in real estate is that all properties are unique. No two properties -- even two identical models on the same street -- are precisely and exactly alike. Homes differ and so do contract terms, financing options, inspection requirements and closing costs. Also, no two transactions are alike.

In this maze of forms, financing, inspections, marketing, pricing and negotiating, it makes sense to work with professionals who know the community and much more.

What should you expect? (Working with Brooke Miller and her buyer's agents)

Once you select a REALTOR® you will want to establish a proper business relationship. You likely know that some REALTORS® represent sellers while others represent buyers. Each REALTOR® will explain the options available, describe how he or she typically works with individuals and provide you with complete agency disclosures (the ins and outs of your relationship with the agent) as required in your state.

Once hired for the job, the REALTOR® will provide you with information detailing current market conditions, financing options and negotiating issues that might apply to a given situation. Remember: Because market conditions can change and the strategies that apply in one negotiation may be inappropriate in another, this information should not be set in stone. During your time in the marketplace REALTORS® will keep you updated and alert you to each step in the transaction process.

