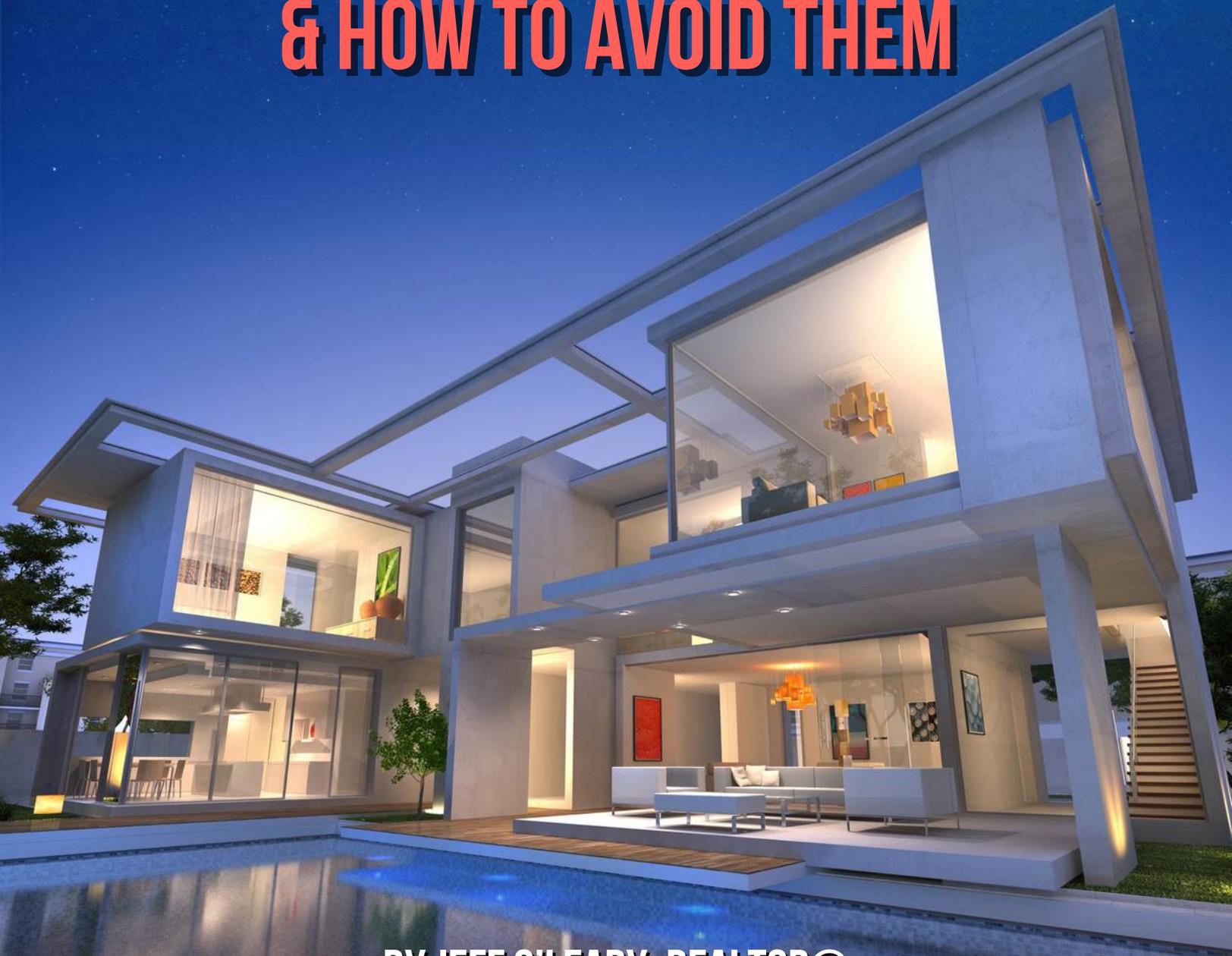


TOP HOME BUYER MISTAKES & HOW TO AVOID THEM



BY JEFF O'LEARY, REALTOR®



ATCHLEY
PROPERTIES

WELCOME!

I Understand that for many of you, the process of buying a home can be daunting. It's not just financial purchase, but an emotional one too, and this decision will greatly impact the lifestyle of you and your family.

If you don't have all of the necessary facts, and experience on your side, the risk of getting it wrong is very real, making the whole buying process a stressful one. Throw in the differing opinions of friends, family, and what you read online, and what should be an exciting time can quickly become more complex than it needs to be.

From the proven exercises in this booklet, to telling you straight-up how it is, everything you'll read on the following pages is based off over 17 years of experience working with hundreds of home buyers.

While it's impossible to cover everything about buying a home in a short book, the 4 mistakes we'll go over in this book are very common to many home buyers.

By highlighting these mistakes ahead of time, our mission is to educate and guide you, so that these mistakes don't affect your home buying experience.

Ultimately, finding the right home is an investment, not only in the physical home itself, but in your lifestyle, happiness, and even family success! Studies show that finding the right community to live in can lead to a higher sense of well-being. At The Village Guru™, we view real estate as a lifestyle choice, and doing so will ensure you get the most satisfaction out of your decision.

If, after reading this booklet, you feel that our guidance and expertise will help you make the right purchase decision, we will be honoured to support you in that role.

Here's to the start of a respectful, informative, supportive and quality home buying experience!

Disclaimers:

- 1. The content of this guide is the sole opinion and writings of Jeffrey O'Leary, and not of any company or association that Jeffrey works for, or is affiliated with. This guide is the property Jeffrey O'Leary and is not to be duplicated or copied, in full or in part, without the express written permission.*
- 2. This information booklet is not intended to solicit buyers or sellers that are under contract with another real estate professional. If you are already represented by another real estate brokerage, this booklet may raise questions for you and we encourage you to ask your current real estate professional these questions.*
- 3. This guide was written to provide general information about real estate. It is not meant to replace the professional advice of a lawyer, real estate professional, home inspector or any other licensed professional.*

MISTAKE #1: FAILING TO DETERMINE YOUR NEEDS OR DO ENOUGH RESEARCH IN ADVANCE

This may seem like common sense for a savvy home buyer like yourself, but you'd be surprised at how many home buyers have purchased a home without knowing anything about the neighborhood, lifestyle factors or even how much similar homes were worth.

I've come across far too many people over the years who bought homes in areas they knew nothing about, with no real guidance, only to be disappointed after moving in. Heck, you'd be surprised at how many of these people weren't even shown past sales data before offering on a home!



Perhaps you've heard of someone who's had this experience: they find a beautiful home online, visit it, get caught up in the excitement, and end up buying it—only to feel disappointed after moving in. When this happens, it's usually because they didn't consider key factors, like whether the neighborhood fits their lifestyle, how the home compares to recent sales, or if it meets their long-term needs. These factors are critical to both their enjoyment and the home's true value.

We often spend weeks researching hotel reviews and prices for a vacation, but when it comes to a home—a purchase worth hundreds of thousands of dollars that will shape the next 5-10 years of our lives—many buyers make the decision in just 15-30 minutes. It's essential to dig deeper and take the time to find not just any home, but the right one—one that fits your unique needs, the right community, and the lifestyle you envision for the years ahead.

“

Pro Tip #1:
The amount of time you spend researching before you start shopping for a home will directly impact the long-term happiness of your purchase decision.

”

SUCCESS STORY

From Out-of-State to At Home

“We moved from out of state and had no idea where to begin — flood zones, neighborhoods, even the buying process felt overwhelming. Jeff’s videos gave us confidence, and once we reached out, he guided us every step of the way. He listened to what we wanted, connected us with the right people, and made the entire process seamless. Now we’re raising our family in the perfect community, and we couldn’t be happier with our decision.”



3 ACTIVITIES EVERY HOME BUYER SHOULD DO

1. Determine how much you are willing and able to spend.

For most buyers, this means getting pre-approved for a mortgage. What's the point of shopping for a home if you don't know what you can afford? Also, save yourself the disappointment of finding the 'right' home only to lose out because you aren't in the position to act decisively. Regardless of the market, a deal in real estate will always sell quickly.

2. Should You Buy or Sell First?

This is a decision that many home buyers don't give enough attention to, instead choosing to focus on finding their dream home and figuring out the details of selling after the fact.

While everyone's situation is different, not having a realistic understanding of the selling process or a realistic value of your current home can lead to a huge amount of stress. Selling a home should be a calculated decision, and just like any successful business, you always need to account for unseen circumstances. If you do need to sell a property, I strongly encourage you to have this conversation ahead of time.

3. Get clear on what you need in your next home versus what you want.

Start by writing down the features you **MUST** have, would **LIKE** to have, and features you **CANNOT** have. This should include not only the home itself but also the neighborhood and lifestyle factors important to you, like proximity to beaches, outdoor activities, amenities, schools, or commute times. I've included The Village Guru's 'Needs and Wants' exercise in this booklet to help guide you through the process.



Pro Tip #2:

If you're buying with a partner, I strongly recommend each buyer do our "Needs and Wants Exercise" separately, and then compare your answers afterwards.



On the following page are 2 exercises that I personally use with my clients to prepare for the home search. I encourage you to do the exercises yourself before you start looking at homes as they will help you bring clarity to your home search. .



EXERCISE #1: WHAT'S YOUR PRIORITY

In this exercise we ask that everyone involved in the purchase decision answer these questions separately and then compare your answers once completed. If after 10 viewings you haven't found a home that could be a fit, we recommend redoing this exercise. .

WHAT I MUST HAVE IN A HOME

WHAT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE

WHAT I CAN'T HAVE

MY PREFERRED SEARCH AREAS

EXERCISE #2: WHAT KIND OF BUYER ARE YOU?

This exercise will help you determine what your expectations are for the home search. When we work with our clients it helps us determine how to best serve them. My advice is not to overthink this, simply select the answer that best describes you. You can always change your answers later. .

I WANT THIS HOME TO BE:

- A) A good first step that will appreciate in 3-5 years when I plan to move up.
- B) My long term plan: I want this home to meet my needs for the next 10-15 years.
- C) My crash pad, I'm tired of paying rent but I'm not looking for much work or maintenance.

I'M INTERESTED IN:

- A) A 'Turn-Key' property that's completely updated, and I'm willing to pay for it.
- B) A well kept home that needs some cosmetic updating like cabinetry, flooring and decor.
- C) A diamond in the rough that I can sink my teeth into! I want to add my own value to the home.

WHEN I'M DECIDING ON A HOME:

- A) I have to "feel it", the home has to scream "BUY ME NOW!"
- B) I have to see it ticks all the boxes for my needs. I can look past bland or dated decor.
- C) I need to know it offers the best value for budget and will appreciate well over time.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU:

- A) Location
- B) Price
- C) Size

I WANT MY REALTOR TO BE:

- A) The Facilitator: Send me the inside info that will help ME find the home I want.
- B) The Negotiator: I'll find the home, I just need your help getting the deal done.
- C) The Advisor: I know I need to make compromises. I need Jeff to keep me on track to reach my end goal.
- D) All of the Above: I want a full service experience where I can rely on Jeff's expertise and knowledge to guide me through the entire process.

MISTAKE #2: NOT SCOUTING OUT YOUR PREFERRED NEIGHBORHOODS BEFORE BUYING

In my younger years, I served in the Navy, where I learned the importance of planning, clear communication, and being prepared for any situation—principles that are just as essential in a home search.

Just like in the military, where solid planning and preparation lead to success, finding the right home requires careful research, understanding your needs, and making informed decisions. By approaching your search with the same diligence, you can avoid costly mistakes and make the best choice for your future.

In the military, one way we ensure success is through reconnaissance—or ‘recon.’ This involves gathering key information, identifying challenges, and forming a solid plan. In real estate, doing your own recon is just as important. Researching neighborhoods, understanding the market, and evaluating how a home fits your needs are all critical steps.

Good recon saves time, money, and stress—and, most importantly, it helps prevent the wrong decision.

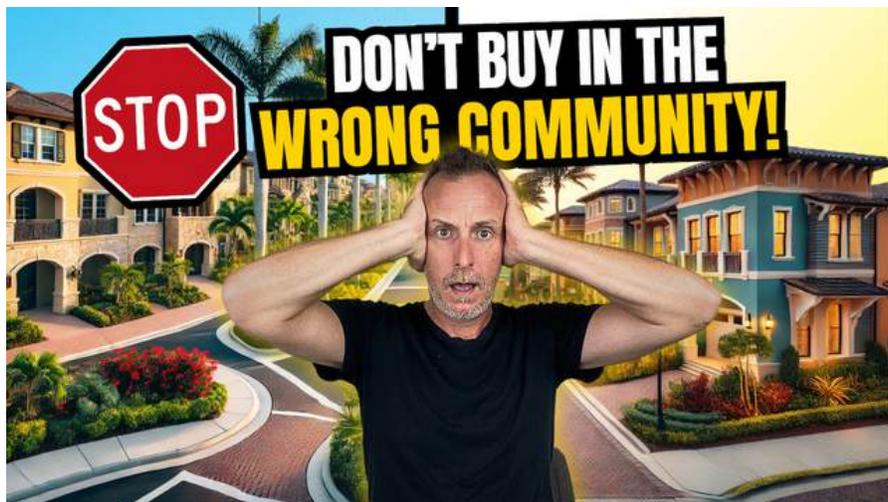
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Pro Tip #3:

Visit the communities you're interested in living in BEFORE you start looking at homes. This will give you a better idea if the community is the right fit for you.

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WATCH THIS RELATED VIDEO



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A COMMUNITY

There are a number of factors that will give you a hint as to the make-up of a community. While online info can be useful, nothing beats seeing a neighborhood with your own eyes. Below are some of my favourite indicators that will give you a good idea of the characteristics of an area you're scouting:

1. What's the condition of the majority of homes in the area?

Are they well kept and updated, or looking a little run down? Are the front lawns well-maintained or overgrown with weeds? I don't care how expensive or new the homes in a neighborhood are—put me in any city, and I can tell you a lot about the community just by the upkeep of the homes and landscaping.

2. What stores are in the local shopping plazas?

Do you see coffee shops, beauty salons, yoga studios, and specialty shops? Or are there mostly payday loan shops and dollar stores? Businesses tend to locate where their ideal customers are concentrated.

3. What type of produce is offered in the local grocery store?

Do you see an abundance of fresh vegetables, high-quality meats, and a well-stocked organic section? Or is the produce section small, with bruised, end-of-life items and mostly boxed or frozen meat? Grocery stores spend millions researching local demographics to tailor their inventory to the people living in the area.

4. What are the nearby schools like?

Even if you don't have children, the quality of schools can be a strong indicator of the community's overall appeal. High-rated schools often attract families who care about education and invest in the neighborhood's long-term value.

When it comes to finding the right neighborhood, you should be well-versed in these aspects. That's why part of our unique buying system focuses on educating our buyers upfront, so they have the knowledge to make informed decisions. While these are only some of the many factors to consider, they can provide valuable insight. If the answers to the questions above don't meet your expectations, it may be worth reconsidering the area.

NEIGHBORHOOD RECONNAISSANCE CHECKLIST

CITY:

NEIGHBORHOOD:

ADDRESS:

SECTION 1: QUALITY OF HOMES, CURB APPEAL AND STREET

Choose 3-4 streets in the area with homes similar to the home you are looking to buy. Drive around those streets and take note of what you see.

STREET APPEARS PEACEFUL

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1
strongly disagree | 2
slightly disagree | 3
neutral | 4
slightly agree | 5
strongly agree |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|

Are there an excessive amount of cars parked on the street? Is it a busy street for vehicle traffic? What's the noise level? Is there anything out of the ordinary?

CURB APPEAL OF HOMES

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1
bad | 2
needs work | 3
decent | 4
very good | 5
excellent |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

Do the majority of homes have: neat, cut lawns? Landscaping? Well maintained driveways? Tidy yards with minimal junk lying around?

HOMES ARE WELL MAINTANED

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1
strongly disagree | 2
slightly disagree | 3
neutral | 4
slightly agree | 5
strongly agree |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|

Do the majority of homes have: Solid windows and doors that are well maintained? No holes in siding or cracks in brickwork? Well maintained roofs? Homes have upgrades such as interlock brick, new stone, new siding...etc.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

SECTION 2: neighborhood BUSINESSES Go on google maps and choose 1-2 local plazas or strip malls in the area that you're looking to investigate. Also find 1-2 grocery stores that you're likely to shop in. These questions will provide demographic clues.

PLAZAS ARE MAINTAINED & VIBRANT

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1
strongly disagree | 2
slightly disagree | 3
neutral | 4
slightly agree | 5
strongly agree |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|

SHOPS SERVE MY LIFESTYLE NEEDS

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1
strongly disagree | 2
slightly disagree | 3
neutral | 4
slightly agree | 5
strongly agree |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|

Quality of produce in the SUPERMARKET

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1
bad | 2
needs work | 3
decent | 4
very good | 5
excellent |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

ADDITIONAL NOTES

NEIGHBORHOOD RECONNAISSANCE CHECKLIST

CITY:

NEIGHBORHOOD:

ADDRESS:

SECTION 3: SERVICES & AMENITIES Choose 3-4 streets in the area with homes similar to the home you are looking to buy. Drive around those streets and take note of what you see.

SCHOOLS

Area Schools:

Notes:

TRANSIT & COMMUTING

Distance to Work:

Notes:

ACCESS TO AMENITIES

List what's important to you:

Notes:

DEMOGRAPHICS

Notes:

MISTAKE #3: BUYING WITH YOUR HEART INSTEAD OF YOUR HEAD

In my line of work, I'm constantly reminded of how much emotion influences buying or selling a home. Most buyers tell me they'll know it's the right home because they'll 'feel it' when they walk in. I understand this emotional need, especially for such a significant investment that shapes your daily life and family memories.

However, the most successful buyers are those who balance emotion with an analytical approach. My job as your real estate professional is to give you the tools to stay focused on your priorities and goals. Balancing both emotion and logic is key to a successful home purchase.

Over the years, I've helped hundreds of buyers, and emotions like excitement, nervousness, and stress always come into play. Combined with differing opinions from partners, friends, or family, it's easy to get pulled in different directions. That's why having the right guidance and knowing what to expect can keep you focused on what really matters.

The following are some of the more common emotional pitfalls of buying a home:

1. The Grass is Always Greener

In my opinion, the "Grass is Always Greener" mindset is the number one cause of marital disputes and arguments during the home buying process. It's the idea that there will always be a better time, or better circumstances, before making the decision.

With such a large purchase such as buying a home, it's completely understandable that you want to make sure you chose the best possible option and due diligence is very important. However, the last thing you want is for this to lead to 'paralysis by analysis' and cause you to miss out on a great home.

- You like a house, but wonder if a better one will get listed next week.
- You question if this is the right time to buy, or if waiting could mean a softer market.
- You wonder if this the best interest rate you will get, or will they go down in 6 month's time?

This type of thinking can drive you (and your partner) crazy. It distracts you from focusing on the home that actually meets your family's needs. The truth is, there will always be another house, and then another after that. That's why having a clear set of priorities from the start helps you avoid second-guessing and move forward with confidence.

2. Valuing the Opinions of Others Equally to Your Own

Over the years I've had a number of clients struggle to choose a home because they sought reassurance from friends, family, or co-workers—only to feel disappointed by well-meaning but often uninformed opinions. These conflicting viewpoints can cast doubt on even the best homes, leaving buyers feeling uncertain.

While it's natural to share your house-hunting journey, it's important not to weigh others' opinions as heavily as your own. You're the one who will live in the home, so it needs to fit your lifestyle. Others may raise points to consider, but ultimately, you know what's best for you. By doing thorough research, you'll be better equipped to evaluate their input from an informed perspective and make the right decision for yourself.

3. Fear of Making the Wrong Choice

The fear of the unknown is a major concern for most buyers, especially first-time buyers and those coming from out of state or out of town. In areas like Lakewood Ranch, Sarasota, and Manatee County, there are many resale and new construction options, each with their own opportunities and challenges.

Buyers often worry about making the wrong choice, missing something important, or facing hidden surprises—all leading to fears of ending up with a 'lemon.'

For out-of-state buyers unfamiliar with Florida real estate, there are additional factors to consider, such as flood zones, insurance requirements, and other regional issues unique to Florida. The key is understanding what should be a red flag and what's normal for the area and the home's type and style.

Our team guides clients through all these specifics so they can make informed decisions with confidence—whether it's a new construction or a resale home. Our approach takes this into account, offering consultations ahead of time to ensure our clients are fully equipped for the home search.

Doing your research, knowing what to expect, and getting a home inspection are the best ways to reduce fear and make informed decisions. If you're navigating this process on your own, be sure to take the time to learn about these important Florida-specific factors.

“

Pro Tip #4:

Your real estate agent's job shouldn't be to "sell" you a home. As your buyer representative, their duty is to protect your interests, guide and advise you, give you the pro's and con's, show you all relevant information, and keep you on track and focused on what you said your goals are.

”



Tips for Staying Grounded and Avoiding Emotional Pitfalls

At some point, you'll likely face challenges in your home-buying process. Here are some key strategies to help you stay prepared and focused:

1. Communicate Openly with Your Partner

If you're buying a home with someone else, don't assume you're on the same page—even if it's a person you've known and loved for decades. Have an open conversation to identify where you agree, differ, and may need to compromise. Use the exercise at the start of this book to clarify what's most important to you, what's most important to them, and where you might need to find middle ground to choose a home that works for both of you.

2. Set Clear Priorities from the Start

Your priorities should focus on the qualities of a home that can't be changed—like location, size, and floor plan. Once you factor in your budget, which is usually somewhat fixed, you'll have clear parameters for your home search. I encourage my buyers to be more flexible on cosmetic details when location and price are the key factors. Unless you're filming for a YouTube cooking channel, a beautiful kitchen shouldn't overshadow the more critical aspects like location and structure.

3. Trust Your Own Judgment

Once you've done your research, had a heart-to-heart with your partner, and are aligned on what you want, trust in that process. Remember, you're buying a home to suit your life, not to please others. Be confident in what you and your family need. Outside opinions may be well-intentioned, but they shouldn't sway you if they don't align with your goals.

MISTAKE #4: NOT UNDERSTANDING THE FLORIDA HOMEBUYING PROCESS BEFORE MAKING AN OFFER

**Disclaimer: This section provides a general overview of common surprises buyers may face. Every home buying situation is unique, and this booklet in no way should be taken for legal advice, advice on contracts, engineering advice or any other professional advice. For any advice you need to contact a lawyer or a real estate professional.*



One of the biggest mistakes buyers make is not fully understanding the home buying process in Florida. Real estate laws, inspections, and requirements vary from state to state, and what works in other markets may not apply here. Failing to grasp these differences can lead to unexpected issues or costly surprises down the road.

How to Avoid Unwanted Surprises:

1. Get a Professional Home Inspection

Hire a certified home inspector to evaluate the condition of the property, from the foundation to the roof. They'll provide a detailed report of any issues that need attention, which can be used during negotiations.

This is crucial in Florida, where weather-related damage can be more common due to hurricanes and heavy rain. For insurance purposes, you will likely also need a 4-point inspection, which assesses the roof, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC systems. Additionally, a wind mitigation inspection can help reduce insurance costs if the home has features that protect against wind damage.

2. Check for HOA Restrictions

In Florida, many communities are governed by Homeowners Associations (HOAs), which have their own rules, fees, and restrictions. It's crucial to review these HOA documents before submitting an offer, as they can affect how you use the property.

The Florida Realtors contract advises buyers not to sign an offer until they've received and reviewed the HOA disclosure. Be sure the home complies with HOA guidelines and that you're comfortable with rules regarding exterior maintenance, landscaping, rental restrictions, and other important factors.

3. Look into Property History and Insurance Liability

Research the home's history, including past repairs, flooding incidents, or insurance claims. In Florida, this is particularly important in flood-prone areas. Be sure to check the flood zone designation, as it can significantly impact insurance costs.

It's a good idea to review the property with an insurance agent early in the process so you have a clear understanding of potential insurance liabilities. This will help you avoid costly surprises later, especially given Florida's unique weather challenges.

4. Take Time for a Thorough Walkthrough

Before making an offer, take the time for a detailed second walkthrough of the home. This step can be invaluable, helping you notice issues you may have missed the first time.

Along with looking for big issues, remember that one of the main purposes of a second walkthrough is to catch the small details you may have overlooked. Minor cosmetic imperfections—like chipped tiles or worn flooring—are common and usually not grounds for renegotiation. However, if cosmetic items are true deal breakers for you, the time to account for them is before submitting an offer—either by addressing them up front or ensuring your offer price reflects the condition.

It's also important to find out the age of major items like the roof, furnace, water heater, and HVAC system. If these are nearing the end of their lifespan, you should budget for replacement, but remember that if they're still in working order at inspection, they may not qualify as points for negotiation.

Critical items such as structural damage, significant roof wear, or outdated windows should always be evaluated thoroughly, since these can affect both the safety of the home and your long-term costs.

5. Understand Property Taxes and Exemptions

When buying a home in Florida, it's essential to understand how property taxes are assessed and how they may change after you purchase the home. Many first-time Florida homeowners are surprised to see their tax bills higher than the previous owner's.

This happens because, when a property changes ownership, Florida law requires the property to be reassessed at its just value, and any exemptions the previous owner had are removed. If the property has increased in value since it was last sold, there's a good chance you'll see an increase in taxes.

Before you buy, it's wise to get a property tax estimate from the local property appraiser's office to understand how taxes might affect your budget. For more information on exemption eligibility or other tax-related questions, contact your local property appraiser's office.



BE SURE TO CHECK OUT THE VILLAGE GURU FLORIDA YOUTUBE CHANNEL



CONCLUSION



I hope you found this book informative and useful. Buying and selling real estate is never just a “transaction” and can never be treated as such. Emotions will undoubtedly come into play when you’re making such a large purchase. By recognizing some of the more common mistakes home buyers can make, you can prepare yourself ahead of time for your home search.

My goal in writing this guide is not to scare anyone, I’m simply trying to tell it as it is, based on my experience in the industry. If you would like to discuss the possibility of working together to either buy or sell a home, I will be happy to do so.

I wish you all the best in your home search, and all of your future real estate endeavors!

Sincerely,

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 **Book a Callback**

5 REASONS WHY HOME BUYERS CHOOSE US



Personalized Guidance and Local Expertise

Buying a home is a major decision, and having the right support is crucial. We offer personalized, step-by-step guidance tailored to your needs, backed by deep knowledge of the local market and communities. From the first viewing to closing, we ensure you feel informed, confident, and in control of your home-buying journey.



We Help You Find You the Right Property

Our proven system is designed to understand your unique needs and preferences, ensuring we find the right property that fits your lifestyle as well as your goals. We believe that a great home isn't just about the property itself—it's about finding a place where you'll truly thrive.



We Handle the Paperwork

We take the guess work out of paperwork. A real estate transaction is complex, and involves a lot of paperwork and regulations. As our clients we handle all of this for you.



Understanding the Process

A common frustration for home buyers is a lack of clarity about the process. We take the time to walk you through every step, ensuring you fully understand what to expect. Our goal is to keep you informed and comfortable, so you can navigate your home-buying journey with confidence.



Negotiation

With deep local knowledge, experience, and the use of objective data analysis, we break down every detail to position you for the best outcome. We leverage insights from comparable properties and current market trends to ensure you're making informed decisions. Whether you're buying a resale home or a new build, we work tirelessly to secure the best price and terms for you.

CALL OR TEXT TODAY TO FIND OUT MORE! 941-259-7747

CONTACT US

