

# 5 Tips on Staying Focused, Organized While House Hunting

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While you are house hunting, it's helpful to keep track of what you've seen. After walking through more than a half-dozen homes, the features and foibles of each house can begin to blur together.

You need to recall the amenities each home offers to determine which place would suit your needs best. These five tips can help you stay focused and organized.

## 1. Set priorities

Before you start your house search, make a master list of all the things you need and all the things you like. List the items in order of importance. For example, home office space might be more important than a Jacuzzi tub in the master bathroom or a walk-in closet. Make sure your list includes the following:

- Maximum price
- Overall square footage
- Number of bedrooms
- Number of bathrooms
- Size of yard
- Style of home (e.g., condo or single-family)

### You could also add these other features:

- Large master bathroom
- Walk-in closet
- Large kitchen with lots of storage space
- Single floor or multiple stories
- Formal dining room
- Laundry room
- Fireplace
- Pool
- Garage

## 2. Factor in travel time

In addition to your priorities list, create a list of the places you visit regularly, also in order of importance. For example, your work commute will likely be more critical than the distance to a gym you visit twice a week. Add schools, parks and other places that are regular pit stops. When you buy a home, you're committing to any travel arrangement permanently, so be sure that the distance will suit you into the future.

## 3. Take notes

Once you've finalized your lists, create a checklist system that you can take with you as you look at homes. Some people prefer a spreadsheet, while others may prefer to take separate notes for each home.

You'll want to be able to make comments that correspond with any photos you take. In your notes, be sure to identify homes by their address, so you can cross-reference them with notes from a REALTOR®.

## 4. Start touring

With your system in place, you're ready to start visiting homes. Walk through each home and record items on your list, as well as your emotional response.

Snap pictures of anything special you'd like to remember later. Don't dwell on items that are easy fixes. You can always swap a refrigerator or paint over a fuchsia wall in the guest bathroom after you move in.

Focus on the permanent features that would be costly to change. Is the roof in good shape? Is there enough space for your family?

If you walk into a home and dislike it immediately, it is probably best to heed your gut reaction. Don't force yourself to like a home because it looks good on paper. However, if you walk in the front door and immediately feel at home, note that. It shouldn't be the only factor you consider, but it is significant.

## 5. Review your notes

After you have seen several homes, review your summaries. Certain homes will jump out, and you can easily compare them. House A may be \$10,000 more than house B, but it offers an extra bedroom. House C may have a pool but only one bathroom. Revisit your narrowed-down choices again for a second look.

Finding and buying the right home for you and your family will take time. By following these five tips to help you stay focused and organized, you won't have to worry about forgetting the features of the homes you visit—and you can be confident in your home choice.

*Updated from an earlier version by Laura Sherman*