



2015 REALTORS® Open House Weekend June 6 – 7, 2015



Buyer's Perspective: How to Approach an Open House

By: Realtor.com Team

As with any big purchase, buying a home should be carefully planned and well thought out before any paperwork is signed. As a buyer, you should use an open house as an opportunity to ask a REALTOR® questions and imagine how the house you are walking through could work as a home for you. You want to learn and know as much as you can about the house so you can make an informed decision when it's time to buy. Here are four things to bring to an open house:

- Tape measure
- Smartphone/camera
- Notebook
- Folder to organize spec sheets and flyers

During the Open House When you attend an open house, start by examining the neighborhood. Check the overall condition of the nearby houses, paying attention to the upkeep in the surrounding area. In addition, keep an eye out for any potential maintenance issues on the exterior of the open house, including peeling paint, cracks or missing roof shingles/tiles. Remember that open houses are designed for the home to look great. Keep a critical eye as you enter the house and walk from room to room. Look for telltale signs of damage or poor construction including:

- Uneven floors
- Water stains on walls, floors, ceilings (especially in the kitchen, bathrooms and basement)
- Mold
- Cracks in the walls or ceilings
- Musty smell
- Condition of the roof

Look out all the windows and check the view, because changing the view is something you can't easily fix. Don't be afraid to open cabinets and drawers. Examine storage areas and closets and consider if the storage is adequate for you and your family. Feel free to turn on the water in the kitchen and bathrooms to make sure everything is running smoothly. Try to look beyond any furnishings and imagine yourself in the bare bones of the home. Many homes have been staged for viewing and appear to be in tip-top shape; it's best if you can





2015 REALTORS® Open House Weekend June 6 – 7, 2015



avoid being dazzled by furniture that will be removed before you move in. Take notes, pictures and video as you move throughout the house. (Make sure you ask before you whip out a camera — politeness still counts.) Documenting your open house tour will serve two purposes: 1) Provide a record of issues that might help you negotiate a better deal, and 2) Help refresh your memory when you are making your decision about which house to buy. Consider asking these questions:

- When was the house built? (Houses built pre-1978 used lead paint.)
- What renovations were made and when?
- When was the home listed? (The longer it's been on the market, the more likely it is to be overpriced.)
- If you have kids, ask about the local school district

Asking questions is key, but you should keep a bit of a poker face – in a competitive market, you want to keep your thoughts to yourself until it's actually time to negotiate a deal. Keep your ears open for what other folks who walk through the home are saying. They may note things about the home or neighborhood that you hadn't yet noticed. **After the Open House** If you are interested in a house you just viewed, set up an appointment to go back. This is one of the most important things you can do when you are shopping for a home. Give yourself some time to think things over and re-examine the pictures that you took. Above all, trust your gut. If something doesn't feel right, don't let the beauty of a perfectly staged home sway you into making a decision that isn't right for you. *David Ng contributed to this article.*

