



Tips for Searching for Your Dream Home

In today's market, low inventory dominates the conversation in many areas of the country. It can often be frustrating to be a first-time homebuyer if you aren't prepared. Here are five tips from a *realtor.com* article titled, *"How to Find Your Dream Home—Without Losing Your Mind."*

1. Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage Before You Start Your Search

This will help you show you're serious about buying a home. Even if you're in a market that's not as competitive, understanding your budget will give you the confidence of knowing whether or not your dream home is within your reach, and help you avoid the disappointment of falling in love with one well outside your price range.

2. Know the Difference Between Your 'Must-Haves' and 'Would-Like-To-Haves'

Do you really need that farmhouse sink in the kitchen to be happy with your home choice? Is a two-car garage a convenience or a necessity? Before you start your search, list all the features in a home you'd like. Qualify them as *'must-haves'*, *'should-haves'*, or *'absolute-wish list'* items to help you stay focused on what's most important.

3. Research and Choose a Neighborhood Where You Want to Live

Every neighborhood has its own charm. Before you commit to a home based solely on the house itself, take a test-drive of the area. Make sure it meets your needs for *"amenities, commute, school district, etc. and then spend a weekend exploring before you commit."*

4. Pick a House Style You Love and Stick to It

Evaluate your family's needs and settle on a style of home that will best serve those needs. Just because you've narrowed your search to a zip code doesn't mean you need to tour every listing in that vicinity. An example from the article says, *"if you have several younger kids and don't want your bedroom on a different level, steer clear of Cape Cod-style homes, which typically feature two or more bedrooms on the upper level and the master on the main."*

5. Document Your Home Visits

Once you start touring homes, the features of each one may begin to blur together. Keep your camera handy and make notes on the listing sheets to document what you love and don't love about each property you visit.