ByOurRep

First-Time Homebuyer Checklist

Your honest, plain-English guide to buying a home in the Antelope Valley

This guide is general information to help you understand the process — not legal, tax, or lending advice. Every transaction is different. Your lender, your loan type, and the terms of your specific contract control the details. When in doubt, ask me or your lender.

1 Getting Pre-Approved: What Your Lender Will Need

Before you shop, get pre-approved. It tells you what you can actually afford and makes your offer real to sellers. Have these ready for your lender:

- **Two years of tax returns** (W-2s and/or 1099s — all pages).
- **Two months of bank statements** — all pages, even the blank ones.
- **One month of pay stubs** — typically 30 days' worth. Paid weekly? That's about 4. Every two weeks? About 2. Monthly? 1.
- **Photo ID** and your Social Security number for the credit pull.
- Records for any **other income** (child support, retirement, rental, etc.) if you want it counted.

About "seasoned" funds: Money you plan to use needs to have been sitting in your account for a while (commonly around 60 days) so the lender can source it. You generally can't drop a large sum in at the last minute without explaining and documenting where it came from. *Your lender will confirm the exact requirement for your loan.*

Gift money is allowed — from parents or family, for example — but it can't just appear in your account. The gift has to be **sourced**, which usually means the person giving it provides their own bank statements and signs a gift letter so the lender can verify where the money came from. Plan for that ahead of time.

Whose documents? Only the people **going on the loan** provide income and asset documents. The accounts and paychecks have to belong to whoever is actually on the application — and the money has to be traceable to them.

2 What Money You'll Need — and When

- **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD):** A good-faith deposit that goes in shortly after your offer is accepted — commonly around **1–3% of the price**. It's credited toward your costs at closing, not an extra fee.
- **Down Payment:** Depends entirely on your loan. **USDA and VA can be 0% down.** FHA is often around 3.5%. Conventional can range from roughly 3% to 20%+. Your loan type and credit drive this.
- **Closing Costs:** Lender fees, escrow, title, and prepaids — often roughly **2–5% of the price**. Sometimes a seller credit can help cover part of these (negotiable, deal-dependent).

These are general ranges to set expectations — your lender's Loan Estimate gives you the real numbers for your situation.

3 The Credit Trap That Kills Deals

■ Keep Your Finances Frozen Until You Have the Keys

Once you're pre-approved, your finances need to stay **frozen** until you have the keys. Even a small move can blow up your debt-to-income ratio and sink the loan.

A **$500 purchase on credit** — a couch, tires, a new phone on a payment plan — can shift your numbers just enough that the lender pulls approval. It happens, and it happens late in the process.

4 The Timeline & Staying on Track

Once your offer is accepted, the clock starts. California's standard C.A.R. purchase agreement sets default contingency periods (counted in calendar days from acceptance). These are the typical defaults — they're negotiable, and **your specific contract controls the actual dates**:

Milestone	Typical Default	What Happens
Offer accepted	**Day 0**	Escrow opens; earnest money deposited
Inspection / investigation	**~17 days**	You inspect and decide if you're satisfied
Appraisal contingency	**~17 days**	Protects you if the home appraises low
Loan contingency	**~17 days**	Protects you if financing falls through
Close of escrow	**~30 days (varies)**	Funds, recording, you get the keys

Why punctuality matters: Miss a deadline and the seller can issue a **Notice to Perform** — a short window to act or risk losing the home and your deposit. Even a 2-day delay getting a document to your lender can cascade into a full week and throw off your rate lock and closing. **Respond fast, sign fast, and send what's asked the same day when you can.**

5 The Contingencies That Protect You

Contingencies are your legal off-ramps. While they're active, you can typically cancel and get your earnest money back if something doesn't work out. The three standard ones:

- **Inspection / Investigation:** Time to inspect the home. If you find problems, you can ask for repairs or a credit, renegotiate, or walk away.
- **Appraisal:** If the home appraises below your purchase price, you can renegotiate, cover the gap, or cancel.
- **Loan / Financing:** If your financing falls through within the period, you can cancel without losing your deposit.

Once contingencies are removed, backing out gets risky — your deposit may be on the line. That's why the timeline above matters.

6 Inspections & Home Warranty

- **Termite (pest) inspection:** I'll recommend one when the property or loan calls for it — it's deal-dependent. It checks for wood-destroying pests and damage so there are no surprises.
- **Home warranty:** A one-year warranty on major systems and appliances is **commonly negotiated for the seller to pay**, but it's not automatic — it depends on the deal. I'll push for it where it makes sense.
- **Homeowner's insurance:** You'll need a policy in place before closing — start shopping early so it doesn't hold up your close.

7 The Paperwork (Quick Recap)

There's a lot to sign, and most of it is standard and protective. You'll see, among others:

- The purchase agreement and any counteroffers
- Seller disclosures and reports (review these carefully — you have a few days to act if one comes late)
- Your loan documents and disclosures from the lender
- Escrow instructions and, at the end, your closing/signing package

You don't have to memorize it — that's my job and your escrow officer's. Your job is to **read, ask questions, and sign promptly.**

■ What NOT to Do While You're Under Contract

Lenders re-check your credit and re-verify employment **right before closing** — not just at the start. Until you have the keys, don't do any of these:

- Don't make large purchases on credit (furniture, car, appliances) — even small ones can tip your ratios.
- Don't open or close credit cards or lines of credit.
- Don't finance or co-sign anything.
- Don't change jobs, quit, or go from salaried to self-employed if you can avoid it.
- Don't make large or unexplained deposits — keep your accounts clean and sourced.
- Don't miss any payments on anything.
- Don't move money between accounts without telling your lender.

When in doubt about **anything** financial during escrow — a purchase, a deposit, a job offer — **call me first.** One quick question can save the whole deal.

Questions? That's What I'm Here For.

No pressure, no sales pitch — just straight answers. Call or text me anytime as you think this through.

Brian Watters | **661-400-3990** | ByOurRep.com

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