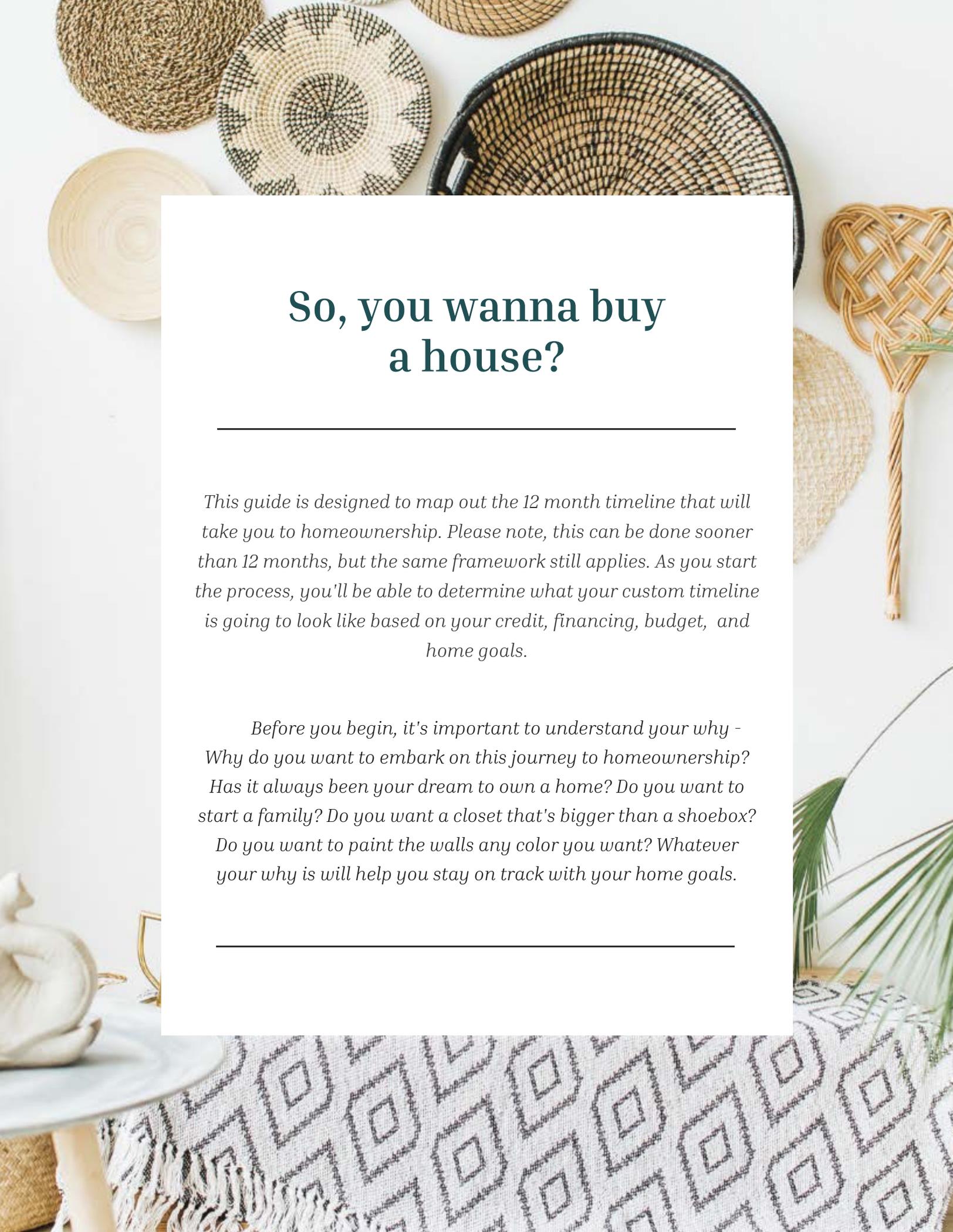




The (future) Homeowner Club

A 12 Month Game Plan for Buying Your First House

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Hopkins, Realtor®
SARA HOPKINS REAL ESTATE TEAM

The background of the page is a collage of home decor items. At the top, there are several circular woven baskets in various patterns and colors, including natural fiber and dark-toned ones. On the right side, there is a long, thin, woven object that looks like a decorative fan or a piece of art. At the bottom, a portion of a patterned rug with a geometric, square-based design is visible. The overall aesthetic is warm and bohemian.

So, you wanna buy a house?

This guide is designed to map out the 12 month timeline that will take you to homeownership. Please note, this can be done sooner than 12 months, but the same framework still applies. As you start the process, you'll be able to determine what your custom timeline is going to look like based on your credit, financing, budget, and home goals.

Before you begin, it's important to understand your why - Why do you want to embark on this journey to homeownership? Has it always been your dream to own a home? Do you want to start a family? Do you want a closet that's bigger than a shoebox? Do you want to paint the walls any color you want? Whatever your why is will help you stay on track with your home goals.



12 months out

This guide is designed to map out the 12 month timeline that will take you to homeownership. Please note, this can be done sooner but the same framework still applies.

01 Check your credit score

Get a copy of your credit report. The 3 credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) are required to give you a free credit report every year. You want to not only learn what your credit score is, but make sure there aren't any errors that need to be disputed. I recommend the app Credit Karma to keep an eye on your credit and your accounts!

02 Figure out your home buying budget

This is important to do at the beginning so that you can create a savings plan for a down payment and other home buying expenses.

03 Get your finances in order

Whether you need to raise your credit score or create a down payment savings plan, you'll want to figure this all out about a year in advance from when you're wanting to buy your first house.

04 Research different loan programs

MYTH: YOU NEED 20% DOWN TO BUY A HOME - You can actually put down as low as 3.5% (sometimes even less). Talk to a lender and do some research to figure out what options you have. Homeownership may be closer than you think.

6-9 months out...

Do your research

Start thinking about the home features that are most important to you. What are your absolute must haves vs your deal breakers? What is important to you? A specific location? Being close to work? Having a big backyard? What is important that can't be changed?



01

02

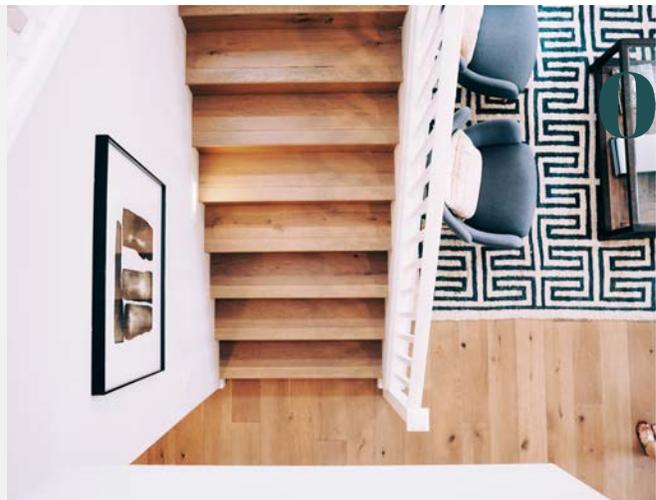


Take a tour

Start checking out different neighborhoods and see what you like or don't like about different locations. What area do you hope to purchase a home in? Drive by at different times of day. Go hangout in a local restaurant or park to get a feel for the neighborhood.

Budget for home buying expenses

You'll need to think about more than the down payment amount. You'll be responsible for paying for a home inspection, an appraisal, closing costs and other misc. expenses. Make sure you budget for this in advance.



03

Your Home Wishlist Worksheet

MUST HAVE FEATURES

		<input type="checkbox"/>

DEAL BREAKERS

		<input type="checkbox"/>

BONUS FEATURES

		<input type="checkbox"/>

Start Gathering Paperwork

It's important to know that the bank is going to want to see a lot of paperwork. Preparing for this in advance will make the process so much smoother when you're going through it. Here are a few things to start getting together:

01

Personal tax returns for the past 2 years

02

Your most recent pay stubs

03

Bank statements

04

Credit card and other loan statements

05

w2 forms and previous addresses

3 months out

Get pre-approved

By this point, you should be ready to get pre-approved! Hopefully you've worked out any credit repair issues and have found a reputable lender to work with. They will run a credit check and determine the amount you're approved for.



01

02



Your pre-approval amount

Make sure you take into account other expenses like taxes, homeowners insurance and are budgeting for future home maintenance costs. You may not want to spend the max amount you're approved for depending on the rest of your budget.

Meet with your Realtor and start the home search

You should have researched and found a Realtor by this point so now that you have your pre-approval in hand, you can officially start house hunting! Your Realtor will act as your guide for the entire process.



03

Your Homeownership Checklist

Check credit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine how much you can afford	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a down payment savings plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research different loan programs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make your home wishlist (must haves, deal breakers, location)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget for other home buying expenses before starting the process	<input type="checkbox"/>
Start gathering paperwork	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research a lender you want to work with	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research and find a Realtor you want to guide you through the process	<input type="checkbox"/>
Start touring different areas to see where you want to focus your search	<input type="checkbox"/>
GET READY TO START HOUSE HUNTING!	<input type="checkbox"/>

Print off this checklist to stay on track with the pre-house hunting activities!



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

The final 3 months

01

MEET WITH YOUR REALTOR & ESTABLISH YOUR PLAN

Let's either zoom, facetime or meet for coffee so we can meet and establish your specific game plan. This includes getting your pre-approval, talking about your goals, timelines, home search criteria, deal breakers, must haves, all the things.

02

DIGITAL HOME SEARCH AND HOME TOURS

I'll set you up on a digital home search based on the criteria discussed at your initial consult. From there, we'll coordinate in person or virtual showings based on listings you're interested in that match your criteria. *24 hour notice required for showings.

03

YOU FOUND THE ONE - LET'S WRITE AN OFFER

First, we need to talk strategy. Are there other offers on the table, how long has the home been on the market, how does the list price compare to other homes in the area, what can we do to accommodate the sellers, what is the assessed value, etc. How do these compare to the goals we discussed in our initial consultation and what contingencies do we need to include? We'll use digital signatures to sign offer docs.

04

POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS

Be prepared to negotiate with the sellers. They may counter our offer on price, closing date, inclusions, etc. From here we'll determine our next steps and proceed accordingly. *It's important not to let your emotions get involved here. We need to look at this logically so you can make smart real estate decisions.

05

YOUR OFFER IS ACCEPTED - YAY! HERE'S WHAT'S NEXT

All offer documentation will be forwarded to your lender. You will submit your earnest money to the sellers, start your loan application and schedule your home inspection. I'll be sending you a timeline of dates and deadlines along with weekly updates to keep you on track and in the loop.

The Home Buying Process Continued..

06

SCHEDULE YOUR HOME INSPECTION

I will share my list of Home Inspector recommendations but feel free to choose anyone who is licensed in the state of Wisconsin. They will coordinate a date and time to do your in person home inspection and share a digital report following the inspection. I encourage you to attend the inspection and learn as much as you can about the house.

07

COMPLETE LOAN APPLICATION AND APPRAISAL

You will start the loan application process with your lender and submit all required documentation. They will then order an Appraisal to be done by an independent 3rd party Appraiser to verify the market value of the home.

08

SATISFY ANY REMAINING CONTINGENCIES

Between now and closing is when we'll need to make sure all contingencies in the offer have been satisfied. If there were repairs required from the home inspection, a home sale contingency on your end, other inspections being done, etc. Once these are completed we're almost there!

09

LOAN COMMITMENT AND FINAL WALK THROUGH

Once your contingencies have been satisfied and your financing has been approved, you'll receive your final loan commitment and clear to close from the lender. Our final step prior to closing is to schedule a final walk through of the property. We'll want to go through and make sure everything is as agreed upon with the sellers.

10

CLOSING DAY, KEYS AND CELEBRATION

It's finally closing day! Time to sign all the official paperwork and get the keys to your new home! Plan to arrive to our scheduled place of closing on time and with a check in the amount determined with your lender. Bring Photo IDs and plan to be here for about 45 minutes. Once everything has cleared, you'll receive your keys and are off to celebrate!

Meet your Realtor



I am honored to be a top-producing Realtor in the Greater Des Moines area. I started my career in real estate in 2010 and have worked tirelessly to grow my business through hard work and clear communication. I have an in-depth understanding of the real estate industry, which helps me educate clients on the steps needed for the home-buying and home-selling process. With over 100 transactions each year, I have the best systems and processes in place to help each one run smoothly and with minimal inconvenience to my clients. I dedicate myself to each and every client, putting their needs first. This is my passion and I am so grateful to get the opportunity to help so many people during their journey of home ownership.