

# How to Buy a Home in Middle TN (2026 Edition)



Your Complete Guide

# A 12-Step Guide to Finding, Financing & Securing Your Next Home

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# Welcome to Your Homebuying Journey

Whether you're buying your first home, relocating to the Middle TN area, or moving into your next chapter, this guide is designed to help you navigate the process with confidence.

Buying a home can feel overwhelming — especially with changing interest rates, competitive listings, and a flood of online advice. Our role is to simplify the process, explain your options clearly, and help you avoid costly mistakes along the way.

The Middle TN real estate market offers a wide range of opportunities, from established neighborhoods to new construction and rural properties. As your local guides, we'll walk you through each step so you can make informed, confident decisions.

# Are You Ready to Buy a Home?

Before diving into showings and listings, ask yourself these key questions:

## Time Commitment

Do you plan to stay in Middle TN for at least 3–5 years?

## Financial Stability

Do you have steady income and consistent employment?

## Credit Health

Do you know your credit score and understand your debt-to-income ratio?

## Savings

Have you saved for a down payment and closing costs?

## Budget Reality

Are you comfortable with monthly payments, taxes, insurance, and maintenance?

## Emotional Readiness

Are you prepared for the responsibilities of homeownership?

If you answered "yes" to most of these, you're likely ready to move forward.

## The 12 Steps to Buying a Home in 2026

# Step 1: See If You're Financially Ready

## The 28/36 Rule

- Spend no more than 28% of your gross income on housing
- Spend no more than 36% on total monthly debt

## Credit Score Guidelines

- 620+ for most conventional loans
- 580+ for FHA loans

## Debt-to-Income Ratio (DTI)

- Lenders prefer 43% or lower
- Lower DTI often means better interest rates

### **Example:**

A household earning \$60,000 annually should aim to keep housing costs around \$1,400 per month.

## Step 2: Save for a Down Payment & Closing Costs

### Conventional Loans

- Typically 3–20% down
- Some first-time buyers qualify for as little as 3%

### FHA Loans

- 3.5% down with credit scores of 580+
- Popular with first-time buyers

### VA & USDA Loans

- 0% down for qualified buyers
- USDA loans apply to certain rural areas across Middle TN

### Closing Costs

- Usually 3–6% of the purchase price
- Includes lender fees, appraisal, title insurance, and prepaid items

### Local Insight:

Many Middle TN buyers close with under \$3,000 out of pocket using down-payment assistance and seller concessions.



## Step 3: Choose the Right Real Estate Agent

An experienced local agent can save you money, time, and stress.

Look for someone who offers:



### Local Market Knowledge

A deep understanding of Middle TN and surrounding communities



### Strong Professional Network

Trusted lenders, inspectors, and title partners



### Clear Communication & Advocacy

Someone who explains the process clearly and negotiates confidently on your behalf

## Step 4: Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage

A pre-approval shows sellers you're serious and financially qualified.

### **You'll need:**

- Photo ID and Social Security number
- Two years of tax returns and recent pay stubs
- Bank and investment statements

### **Local Tip:**

Get pre-approved with at least two local lenders. If done within a short window, it won't harm your credit and allows you to compare options.

# Step 5: Find the Right Home

Create three priority lists:

01

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## Must-Haves

- Number of bedrooms
- Location or school district
- Budget range

02

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## Nice-to-Haves

- Basement
- Walk-in closets
- Garage size

03

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## Bonus Features

- Acreage
- Pool
- Luxury finishes

## Step 6: Make a Smart Offer

In today's market, price alone isn't everything.

**A strong offer includes:**

- Earnest money
- Clean contract terms
- Flexible timing

### **A Word of Caution:**

Avoid letting emotions push you beyond your comfort zone.  
Your budget matters more than "winning" a bidding war.

## Step 7: Get a Home Inspection

Never skip the inspection — even on new construction.

**Typical cost:** \$300–\$500

### **Inspectors evaluate:**

- Roof, foundation, and structure
- HVAC, electrical, and plumbing
- Drainage, water pressure, and safety items

### **After inspection, you may:**

- Request repairs
- Ask for repair credits
- Walk away if major issues arise

You may also consider additional inspections such as termite, fireplace, well, septic, or radon testing.

## Step 8: Secure Your Loan

During underwriting, lenders verify all financial details.

### **Avoid:**

- Opening new credit
- Making large purchases
- Changing jobs
- Unexplained bank deposits

Most loans in Middle TN close within 30–45 days.

### **Do:**

- Respond quickly to lender requests
- Keep financial records organized
- Ask questions anytime you're unsure

## Step 9: Get a Home Appraisal

The appraisal confirms the home's value supports the loan amount.

**If the appraisal comes in low, you can:**



**Renegotiate the price**



**Pay the difference in cash**



**Meet the seller halfway**



**Walk away with an appraisal contingency**

## Step 10: Final Walk-Through

Usually completed 24–48 hours before closing.

### **Confirm:**

- Repairs were completed
- Included items remain
- No new damage has occurred

**This is your final opportunity to verify everything before closing.**



## Step 11: Closing Day

You'll sign documents, pay closing costs, and receive the keys.

### **Bring:**

- Valid photo ID
- Certified funds or completed wire

Closings typically take 1–2 hours at a local title company.

## Step 12: Move In & Celebrate

- Change locks
- Set up utilities

Day One

1

2

Week One

- Update address
- Deep clean

First Month

3

- Create a maintenance plan
- Locate shut-off valves
- Start making memories

### Homeowner Tip:

Set aside 1–3% of your home's value annually for maintenance.

# Let's Get You Home

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