

CONSUMER GUIDE: NEGOTIATING WRITTEN BUYER AGREEMENTS

You've decided it's time to buy a home and want to work with an agent to guide you through the process. The next step is to interview agents and negotiate a written agreement that includes the services the agent will provide and the compensation they will receive. Here's what you need to know about negotiating an agreement with an agent who is a [REALTOR®](#):

When will I be able to negotiate? Written buyer agreements are required for many real estate professionals before you tour a home with them, either in-person or a live virtual tour. These agreements help ensure both you and your agent are clear about roles, responsibilities, and agent compensation. If you are simply visiting an open house on your own or asking a real estate professional about their services, you do not need to sign a written buyer agreement. Learn more about written buyer agreements [here](#), and learn more about open houses and tours [here](#).

What can I negotiate? Agreements with your agent are negotiable, including terms about the services your agent will provide, how much your agent will be paid, how long your agreement will last, and more. You and your agent will work together to reach an acceptable agreement that allows you to get the value and services you need in the homebuying process, while also enabling your agent to pursue fair compensation for their work. Remember: compensation is fully negotiable and not set by law. You should consult an attorney if you have any questions or concerns regarding an agreement.

How is my agent compensated? Agent compensation can take many forms, such as a flat fee, a percentage of the purchase price, or an hourly fee. Agents cannot agree to an open-ended amount or range of compensation such as "the agent's compensation will be whatever amount the seller is offering" or "between X and Y percent." You can also ask the seller to offer compensation to your agent, which can be sought in the purchase agreement. More info can be found in our offers of compensation guide [here](#).

What types of services can my agent provide? Agents may offer many types of services such as finding and showing you homes that meet your criteria, accompanying you to showings, sharing their analysis of available properties, negotiating on your behalf, and more. For more, read about the [179 Ways Agents Who Are REALTORS® Are Worth Every Penny](#).

How do I start the conversation? You may want to talk to a few agents to find the best match to help you on your homebuying journey. Start by asking questions about the options available to you. If you are working with a REALTOR®, they are bound by a Code of Ethics to have open and transparent conversations with you about your options. You can read more about REALTORS'® duty to put client interests above their own [here](#).

What if we can't agree? You don't have to sign an agreement that you don't agree with, and you or the agent can walk away from a negotiation at any time. Keep looking for the right fit—another agent may be able to better meet your needs.

Can we change the terms of the agreement after we make it? Yes. You and your agent can mutually agree to change the terms of your agreement. But your agreement and/or state law may govern when it can be changed or terminated. Read your agreement closely and speak with your agent if you would like to change or exit your agreement.

Practices may vary based on state and local law. Check what the laws are where you are buying a home and/or consult an attorney with questions. Please visit [facts.realtor](#) for more information and resources.