

# HOME BUYER'S GUIDE

*Your step-by-step guide to buying a home in California*

KAREN KUIT · REAL ESTATE CONSULTANT · DRE #02145685

*Buying a home is one of the most significant decisions you'll make. This guide walks you through every step — from getting pre-approved to closing day — so you feel confident and informed.*



Your Home-Buying Journey at a Glance

## WHAT'S INSIDE

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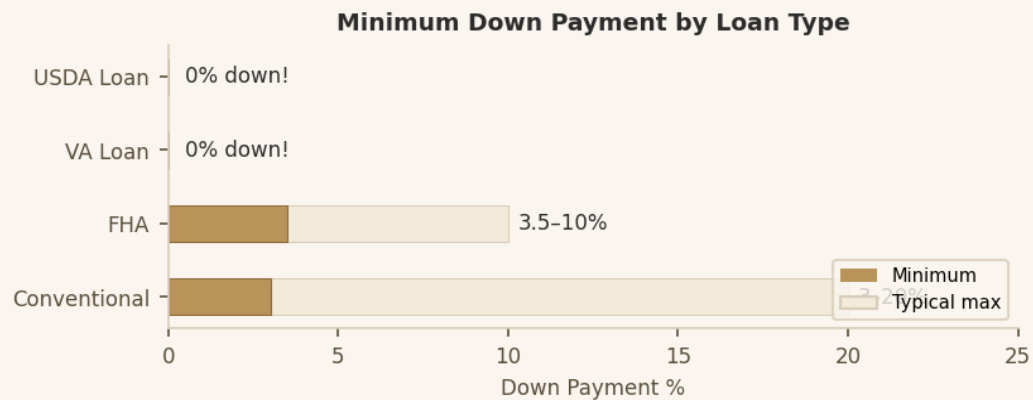
# 01 • Getting Pre-Approved

Before touring homes, get pre-approved. It tells sellers you're serious and clarifies your budget.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Last 2 years of tax returns & W-2s
- Recent pay stubs (last 30 days)
- Bank statements (last 2–3 months)
- List of current debts (car, student loans, credit cards)
- Government-issued ID

## DOWN PAYMENT BY LOAN TYPE



VA and USDA loans require 0% down for qualifying buyers.

Loan	Down Pmt	Credit	Best For
Conventional	3–20%	Good	Lower long-term rates
FHA	3.5%	Fair	First-time buyers
VA	0%	Any	Veterans & military
USDA	0%	Any	Rural / suburban areas

## 02 • Finding the Right Home

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Define your priorities early — it keeps your search focused and saves time.

### **MUST-HAVES TO DEFINE FIRST**

- Minimum bedrooms & bathrooms
- Commute distance / school district
- Garage, yard, or outdoor space
- HOA vs. no HOA
- Move-in ready vs. fixer-upper

### **WORKING WITH YOUR AGENT**

Your buyer's agent represents you — not the seller — at no cost to you. Share your wish list openly so your agent can set up targeted MLS alerts and arrange private showings.

### **HOME TOUR CHECKLIST**

- Check water pressure & drainage in kitchen/baths
- Look for water stains on ceilings and walls
- Test all outlets, switches, and appliances
- Note natural light and noise from the street
- Check the roof, attic access, and HVAC unit age
- Ask about utility costs and HOA fees

## 03 • Making an Offer

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When you find the right home, your agent prepares a written offer using the California Residential Purchase Agreement (RPA).

### KEY OFFER COMPONENTS

Component	What It Means
Purchase Price	The amount you're offering to pay
Earnest Money	Good-faith deposit (typically 1–3%)
Contingencies	Conditions that must be met (inspection, loan, appraisal)
Closing Date	Proposed ownership transfer date (30–45 days is typical)
Inclusions	Appliances or fixtures you want included

### NEGOTIATION TIPS

- Research comparable sales (comps) to anchor your price
- A shorter inspection period strengthens your offer in competitive markets
- An escalation clause automatically beats competing offers up to a cap
- Sellers often value a flexible close date as much as price
- Waive contingencies only if you fully understand the risk

## 04 • Escrow & Inspections

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Once your offer is accepted, escrow opens — a neutral third party that holds funds and documents until all conditions are met.

### WHAT HAPPENS IN ESCROW

- Earnest money wired within 3 business days
- Lender orders an appraisal to confirm home value
- Title company clears liens and verifies ownership
- Buyer completes inspections within the contingency period
- Lender issues final loan approval (clear to close)
- Final walk-through 24–48 hours before closing

### RECOMMENDED INSPECTIONS

Inspection	Why It Matters
General Home	Structure, roof, electrical, plumbing, HVAC
Pest / Termite	Required by most lenders; common in California
Sewer Scope	Underground pipes — costly if missed
Chimney	Safety check if there's a fireplace
Pool / Spa	Equipment condition and safety code compliance

## 05 • Closing Day

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Closing day is when ownership officially transfers to you. Here's what to expect.

### **CLOSING DAY CHECKLIST**

- Bring government-issued ID
- Confirm wire transfer amount with escrow officer (by phone — never email)
- Review & sign the Closing Disclosure (sent at least 3 days prior)
- Sign loan documents at title company or via remote notary
- Escrow records the deed with the county
- Receive your keys!

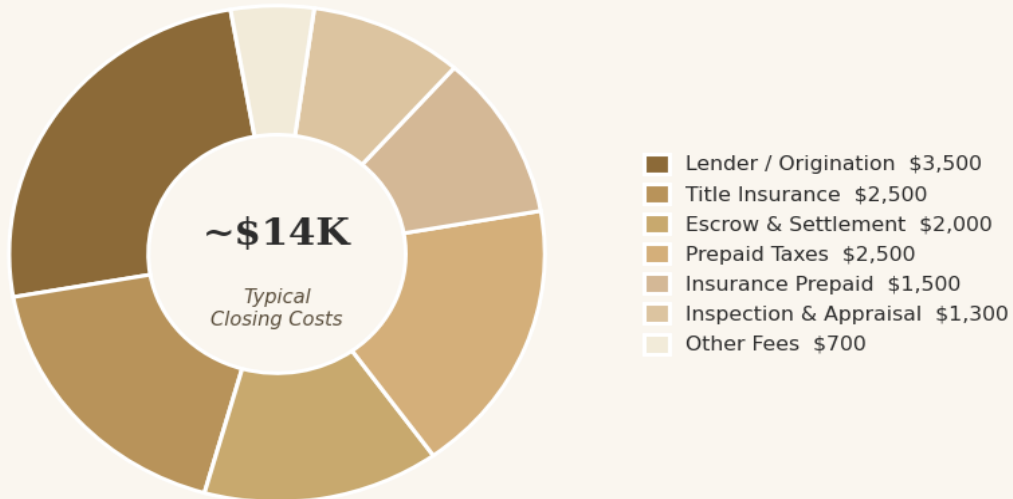
### **WIRE FRAUD WARNING**

Always call your escrow officer using a number you looked up independently — never from an email — before wiring any funds.

## 06 • Understanding Your Costs

Beyond the purchase price, budget for these additional costs.

### Buyer Closing Costs Breakdown (\$600K loan example)



Closing cost components for a typical \$600K California purchase. Total closing costs are separate from your down payment.

Cost	Typical Range	Notes
Down Payment	3–20%	Varies by loan type
Closing Costs	2–3% of loan	Lender, title, escrow fees
Home Inspection	\$400–\$600	Paid at time of inspection
Appraisal	\$500–\$800	Ordered by lender
Moving Costs	\$1,000–\$4,000+	Depends on distance & volume
Property Taxes	1–1.25%/yr	Prorated at close
Homeowner's Insurance	\$1,200–\$2,500/yr	Required by lender

## 07 • Key Terms Glossary

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### **Appraisal**

Independent estimate of the property's market value, ordered by your lender.

### **Contingency**

A condition in the purchase agreement that must be satisfied for the sale to proceed.

### **Closing Disclosure (CD)**

5-page lender document showing final loan terms and closing costs.

### **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)**

Good-faith deposit that shows the seller you're serious.

### **Escrow**

Neutral third party holding funds and documents until all conditions are met.

### **MLS**

Multiple Listing Service — database of homes listed for sale by agents.

### **Pre-Approval**

Written lender commitment to lend up to a specified amount.

### **Title Insurance**

Protects you and your lender against future ownership disputes or liens.

### **Under Contract**

Offer accepted; both parties working toward closing.

# Ready to Find Your Home?

*I'm here to guide you from your first search to the moment you get your keys. Let's start the conversation.*



## **KAREN KUIT**

*Real Estate Consultant · DRE #02145685*

(626) 893-1702

karen@kuithomes.com

karenkuit.com