

12 Questions to Hiring the Right Agent

1) Is the agent part-time or full-time?

While all agents have to start somewhere, working with a part-time agent may not be in your best interests. Part time agents have other commitments that can get in the way of giving you full-time attention. In addition, agents that are part time may simply not be successful enough to have developed business adequate to support a full time commitment.

2) What awards has the agent won?

Most full time realtors worth their salts have some meaningful awards. Ask what they are.

3) How accessible is the agent?

Do they maintain office hours? Can you call them at home? By beeper? Buying real estate can be a traumatic experience. With lots of surprises along the way, you'll want an agent that's easily accessible if you need to reach them.

4) What is Your Track Record?

A good buyer's agent should be able to negotiate a sales price that is lower than list price for buyers. A competent listing agent should hold a track record for negotiating sales prices that are very close to list prices. As a buyer, you will need to know:

- How will you search for my new home?
- How many homes will I likely see before I find a home I want to buy?
- Will I be competing against other buyers?
- How do you handle multiple offers?
- Do you present offers yourself?

As a seller, you will need to know:

- Specifically, how will you sell my home?
- What is your direct mail campaign?
- Where and how often do you advertise?
- Will you show me a sample flyer?
- How do you [market](#) online?
- How will you provide feedback as people see my home?

5) Will You Please Provide References?

Everybody has references. Even new agents have references from previous employers.

- Ask to see references.
- Ask if any of the individuals providing references are related to the agent.
- Ask if you can call the references with additional questions.
- To really get a good Idea of how honest an agent is ask if you can speak with there last three clients. Buyer or Sellers.....

6) What Are the Top Three Things That Separate You From Your Competition?

A good agent won't hesitate to answer this question and will be ready to fire off why she is best suited for the job. Everyone has their own standards, but most consumers say they are [looking for agents](#) who say they are:

- Honest and trustworthy
- Assertive
- Excellent negotiators
- Available by phone or e-mail
- Good communicators
- Friendly
- Analytical
- Able to maintain a good sense of humor under trying circumstances

7) May I Review Documents Beforehand That I Will Be Asked to Sign?

A sign of a [good real estate agent](#) is a professional who makes forms available to you for preview before you are required to sign them. If at all possible, ask for these documents upfront.

As a buyer, ask for copies of the following:

- [Buyer's Broker Agreement](#) (is it exclusive or non-exclusive?)
- Agency Disclosures
- Purchase Agreement
- Buyer Disclosures

As a seller, ask to see:

- Agency Disclosure

- Listing Agreement
- Seller Disclosures

8) How Will You Help Me Find Other Professionals?

Let the real estate agent explain to you who they work with and why they choose these professionals. Your agent should be able to supply you with a written list of referring vendors such as [mortgage brokers](#), home inspectors and [title companies](#). Ask for an explanation if you see the term "affiliated" because it could mean that the agent and her broker are receiving compensation from one or all of vendors.

9) How Much Do You Charge?

Typically, real estate agents charge a percentage, from 1% to 4% to represent one side of a transaction: a seller or a buyer. A listing agent may charge, for example, 3.5% for herself and another 3.5% for the buyer's agent, for a total of 7%.

10) What Kind of Guarantee Do You Offer?

If you sign a listing or buying agreement with the agent and later find that you are unhappy with the arrangement, will the agent let you cancel the agreement? Will the agent stand behind her service to you? What is her company's policy about canceled agreements? Has anybody ever [canceled an agreement](#) with her before?

11) Will you help Stage the Home?

An experienced agent will have seen and sold enough homes to help you stage yours to receive maximum sales price and the quickest sale.

12) What Haven't I Asked You That I Need to Know?

Pay close attention to how the real estate agent answers this question because there is always something you need to know, always. You want an agent to take her time with you -- to make sure you feel comfortable and secure with his/her knowledge and experience. He or she should know how to listen and how to counsel you, how to ask the right questions to find out what he/she needs to know to better serve you.