

MORTGAGE EXPECTATIONS GUIDE

How to navigate a smooth mortgage process from beginning to end.

MORTGAGE PROCESS EXPLAINED

Home buying is an exciting and rewarding experience, but it can also be the most challenging if you don't understand the mortgage process. Preparing for this journey and knowing what to expect will help you make the best decisions about your home purchase. This guide was created to help you navigate through the process and to provide the steps necessary to ensure a smooth closing.

01 APPLICATION

The first step in the mortgage process is to submit an application to your lender. The application form called the Uniform Residential Loan Application or Form 1003 includes information about you, your finances, and the details of your potential mortgage.

02 PRE-APPROVAL

Once the application is complete, your lender will review it and will send it through the organization to obtain approvals. If your loan is pre-approved, you will receive a pre-approval letter, which is the lender's conditional commitment to lend you a specified amount of money for the purchase of your home. (The pre-approval is good for a certain time, typically 60-90 days). With this letter, you will know the maximum amount your lender is willing to lend you. While this is helpful information, you need to decide for yourself if you can live comfortably with the amount of your suggested mortgage and the associated monthly mortgage payment.

03 HOUSE HUNT

Armed with your pre-approval letter, you can now begin the house hunting process. Exciting times! Your real estate agent will present you with a list of properties that match your criteria and housing budget set by you and your lender. Once you identify your dream house, you will put in an offer. Your agent will know how to structure the offer. It may include contingencies or conditions that must be satisfied before the deal is completed. If accepted, you are officially under contract.

04 APPRAISAL

At this point you will submit a copy of the contract to your lender for the appraisal process to begin. The appraiser will inspect the home and will provide a report stating the independent estimate of the home value. Note that the appraiser is 'independent' of the process. Most lenders don't order appraisals directly from any appraiser in particular. They typically use a third party company.

05 PROCESSING

This step in the process is considered behind-the-scenes as it is mostly a waiting period for you. Your loan processor will prepare your file to enter underwriting. During this time, all necessary reports are ordered, such as your title search and tax transcripts, and all information on your application is verified such as bank deposits and payment histories.

06 UNDERWRITING

Once your processor has put together your complete loan package, it is sent to your underwriter. During this step, your underwriter will review your information in great detail. Note that your underwriter may come back with questions. Be sure to respond in a timely manner to ensure a smooth underwriting process.

07 CONDITIONS

After a full review, your underwriter will issue a formal approval. In most cases, there will be conditions attached which must be satisfied before you can close. Once you provide your documents addressing your loan conditions, it will then go back to the underwriter for a review. Note that sometimes a loan file may be reconditioned, meaning once your underwriter reviews the requested items, additional questions may arise prompting additional conditions.

08 CLEAR-TO-CLOSE

Once all conditions are met, your underwriter will review your file a final time and will issue a clear-to-close. Your loan can now be scheduled for closing.

09 CLOSING

What is a closing? A closing is a meeting that involves all the parties signing the final documents and legally transferring the property to you. When you are finished signing the closing documents, you will be given the keys to your new home. Congratulations!



QUALIFYING

Obtaining a mortgage loan is no small step. However, qualifying isn't as difficult as you may think. The basic thresholds or minimum eligibility requirements are no secret and are actually not hard to meet. With a bit of knowledge and preparation, you'll be well-equipped for the qualifying process.

ARE YOU A GOOD CREDIT RISK?

When qualifying for a mortgage loan, lenders start by reviewing your completed loan application and your financial documents. Both sets of information together will paint a picture of your financial position and will provide the information necessary to pre-approve your loan. Lenders will then assess your ability to repay and will determine exactly how much you can afford. They want to know that your loan is a good risk and that your likelihood of default is low. Additionally, they will also ensure that your loan meets its lending policies and program guidelines.

To accomplish this, lenders will evaluate your loan based on four basic criteria. Let's dive into what they are as well as what financial documents lenders will require from you.

CREDIT

One of the first things your lender will look at is your credit - credit score and credit history. A high credit score typically means that you pay your bills on time, don't undertake too much debt and you watch your spending. A low credit score typically means that you fall behind on payments or you have a habit of taking on more debt than you can afford. Credit also affects interest rates. Typically, the higher your credit score, the lower your interest rate will be. Conversely, the lower your credit score, the higher your interest rate.

INCOME

The next thing a lender will look at is your income. There is no minimum amount but your lender does need to know that you have enough income to support your mortgage payment as well as your existing debt obligations.

The income lenders will accept can take various forms. It doesn't have to be a salary. Lenders will consider income as long as it is stable, predictable, and expected to continue. If you are applying with a co-applicant, income (as well as debts) from both may be factored.

Income is considered steady from a lender's perspective if you've received it consistently from the same line of work or the same source over the last two years and if you expect to continue receiving it for the next three years.

Note that a two-year work history will be required. If you have a gap in income during this period, it may be ok but be prepared to explain away the gaps. Lenders will also require documentation to prove income and calculate your debt-to-income ratios.

DEBT-TO-INCOME (DTI)

Your DTI ratio is the amount of debt you have relative to income, including your projected mortgage payment. The maximum DTI ratio allowed depends on the loan program. Your loan officer will help calculate this and provide advice.

If your DTI is too high, you'll either have to buy a cheaper home or pay off debts before you try to borrow for a house.

Common income sources

- Base pay
- Self-employment income
- Retirement
- Rental income

Income from other sources

- Trust
- Alimony
- Child Support
- Disability
- Foster Care
- Social Security

**Talk to your lender if you need to qualify using other income as this is not a complete list. Your lender will provide guidance on your income scenario.*

ASSETS

The next thing a lender will look at is your assets. The reason is two-fold: Do you have enough liquid assets to cover your down payment and closing costs and is it properly sourced? (Unfortunately, mattress money will not be accepted since there is no paper trail). Lenders will need to document where your source of funds are coming from as only verifiable assets are accepted. Be prepared to submit two months of bank / asset statements.

If your down payment will be coming from a donor such as a parent, your lender will also need a gift letter from your donor clearly stating that it is a gift and not a loan that you will have to pay back.



COLLATERAL

Lastly, lenders want to ensure that the home they're financing is in good condition and is worth the purchase price. They will require an appraisal on the home and will determine how much you're allowed to borrow based on the appraised value. Lenders typically do not lend above the home's value (unless it's a specialty loan such as a renovation loan where the value increases upon completion).

If the value comes in at or higher than the offer price, you're in good shape. If it comes in lower than the offer price, you will have to make up the difference or renegotiate the offer price.

Acceptable Source of Funds

- Savings/ Checking account
- IRAs, Thrift savings plans,
- Stocks and bonds
- Savings bonds
- Gift funds
- Sale of personal or real property
- Down payment assistance programs
- Employer assistance programs

HOMEBUYER FACTS

When lenders review your bank statements, they will also look for any large deposits as that may signify recently opened debt or suspicious activity. Try to avoid any large deposits in the months prior to your home purchase. This will eliminate the added loan conditions, any re-conditions, and explanation letters addressing deposits

LOAN DOCUMENTATION

Every mortgage loan may be different, but the documentation lenders will need in order to pre-approve a loan are standard. The common items are listed here. Be ready to submit these along with your application:

- ☀ Acceptable form of ID
- ☀ Social Security card
- ☀ Two year residential address history
- ☀ Two year work history
- ☀ Income verification - Employer info
- ☀ Two recent years of W-2s
- ☀ Two recent pay stubs
- ☀ Two months of bank statements
- ☀ Copies of recent federal tax returns
- ☀ If VA - Certificate of Eligibility
- ☀ List of assets - particularly real estate owned
- ☀ If self-employed - business license, personal and business federal tax returns, business bank statements, and business Profit & Loss Statement

MORTGAGE PAYMENT COMPOSITION

Your mortgage payment is a significant portion of your monthly expenses; therefore, it is important to understand it's composition.

PRINCIPAL

The principal is the part of your payment that goes towards paying the outstanding balance of the loan. This is the amount borrowed.

INTEREST

Interest, on the other hand, is the part of your payment that goes towards the costs of borrowing the principal. It is the money you pay your lender in exchange for giving you the loan. For the first several years, your mortgage payment will be primarily paying interest.



TAXES

This is the portion of your payment that is applied to the property taxes assessed on the property. No matter where you live, you'll have to pay property taxes on your home. These taxes go to your local government to fund things like schools, roads, and fire departments.

INSURANCE

Homeowner's Insurance This is the portion of your payment that is applied to your homeowner's insurance premium. Insurance isn't legally required to own a home, but lenders do require it to protect their interest.

Mortgage Insurance If your down payment is less than 20%, you will be paying private mortgage insurance (PMI) to protect the lender against default. For government loans like FHA, you will be paying mortgage insurance premium, similar to PMI.



CLOSING COSTS

Closing costs are costs incurred to settle a real estate transaction. Some costs are paid to the lender while other costs are paid to third party settlement service providers such as a title company or an appraisal company. You can expect these costs to be between 3-6 percent of the loan amount.

Here is a list of common closing costs. Not all of these may be applicable to your situation.

Origination Fee

An upfront fee paid to lender to process and underwrite the loan.

Discount Points

Prepaid interest; fee to reduce the interest rate over the life of the loan.

Mortgage Insurance (PMI)

Required if down payment is less than 20%. Protects lender against default.

Appraisal Fee

Paid to the appraiser to assess the market value of a home.

Title Search

An examination of public records to determine current ownership and encumbrances.

Title Insurance

Protects the lender and you against title claims.

Termite/Pest Inspection Fee

Required to certify the home is free of termite/pest damage.

Survey Fee

Paid to the survey company to verify property boundaries.

Flood Certification Fee

Cost to determine if the home is in a designated flood zone. If it is, you will be required to purchase flood insurance.

Closing or Settlement Fee

Paid to the title company, attorney or escrow company that conducts the closing.

Recording Fee

Paid to the state to record the transfer of property from one owner to another.

Transfer Tax

Paid to the state, based on the loan amount.

Prepaid Interest

Covers mortgage interest due between the closing date and the first mortgage payment.

Prorated Property Tax

Covers property taxes from the closing date to the tax due date.

Homeowners' Insurance

Covers the first full year's cost upfront.

Homeowners' Association Transfer Fee

Paid on properties governed by associations to transfer ownership documents.