

## 8 Tips for Protecting Yourself When You Buy a House

- ✦ **Get pre-approved for a loan.** You'll want to be ready to make an offer. With a pre-approved loan, you'll have more clout as the seller considers your offer.
- ✦ **Make sure it's in writing.** Don't settle for verbal agreements. If the seller says he'll replace the carpet or leave his washer and dryer, get it in writing.
- ✦ **Get a good-faith estimate.** Your mortgage lender is required to provide you with a good-faith estimate of closing costs within three days of receiving your application. They need to provide it in writing. You may want to compare lenders and compare closing costs.
- ✦ **Don't settle for the first lender you come across.** Contact at least three lenders and compare rates.
- ✦ **Lock-in your rate.** One of the most stressful parts of the loan process is watching rates inch up and down each day and trying to figure out when to lock in your rate. Once you do lock in, be sure to get a written statement that outlines your interest rate and length of the lock.
- ✦ **Get a home inspection.** A professional home inspector will examine the house's major systems and let you know if there are any problems or defects.
- ✦ **Shop for homeowners' insurance as soon as your offer is accepted.** The National Association of Realtors recently cautioned homebuyers to not take homeowners insurance for granted. You and your spouse may have a clean claims history and a stellar credit history - something insurance companies use to determine whether they will insure you - but it's not just you they're looking at. If the house you're eyeing has had claims, there's a chance they won't insure you, especially if it's a water-related claim.
- ✦ **Read everything!** When you have the closing meeting to sign the mountain of papers, make sure you read through everything carefully and don't hesitate to ask questions if there are something you don't understand. Finally, give yourself enough time between your closing and your move date, just in case there are delays in the closing process.

