

10 THINGS TO TAKE THE TRAUMA OUT OF HOMEBUYING

- 1.** Find a real estate agent that's simpatico. Homebuying is not only a big financial commitment, but also an emotional one. It's critical that the agent you chose is both skilled and a good fit with your personality.
- 2.** Remember, there's no "right" time to buy, any more than there's a right time to sell. If you find a home now, don't try to second-guess the interest rates or the housing market by waiting. Changes don't usually occur fast enough to make that much difference in price, and a good home won't stay on the market long.
- 3.** Don't ask for too many opinions. It's natural to want reassurance for such a big decision, but too many ideas will make it much harder to make a decision.
- 4.** Accept that no house is ever perfect. Focus in on the things that are most important to you and let the minor ones go.
- 5.** Don't try to be a killer negotiator. Negotiation is definitely a part of the real estate process, but trying to "win" by getting an extra-low price may lose you the home you love.
- 6.** Remember your home doesn't exist in a vacuum. Don't get so caught up in the physical aspects of the house itself—room size, kitchen—that you forget such issues as amenities, noise level, etc., that have a big impact on what it's like to live in your new home.
- 7.** Don't wait until you've found a home and made an offer to get approved for a mortgage, investigate insurance availability, and consider a schedule for moving. Presenting an offer contingent on a lot of unresolved issues will make your bid much less attractive to sellers.
- 8.** Factor in maintenance and repair costs in your post-home buying budget. Even if you buy a new home, there will be some costs. Don't leave yourself short and let your home deteriorate.
- 9.** Accept that a little buyer's remorse is inevitable and will probably pass. Buying a home, especially for the first time, is a big commitment, but it also yields big benefits.
- 10.** Choose a home first because you love it; then think about appreciation. While U.S. homes have appreciated an average of 5.4 percent annually over the past few years, a home's most important role is as a comfortable, safe place to live.