

# 11 Questions to Ask When Interviewing a Real Estate Agent

A real estate agent's value is their ability to guide you through the process, help position your goals, set expectations and protect your interests - whether buying or selling a home. So when interviewing, how do you ask the right questions to find the right person?

The good news is that these questions are designed to prompt the agent to demonstrate their expertise. After all, that's why you're hiring an agent in first place!

## **#1 - What areas do you serve and why?**

You obviously want to ensure the agent you choose works in the right area. But it's more than just proximity. An agent should know their market backward and forward: the best school districts, and pricing throughout the macro-markets and more.

A passion about the area also speaks volumes. We love to talk about Northwest Montana because there is a lifestyle we want to share with others to help make their decision the right one.

## **#2 - What makes you different from other agents in the area?**

While sales numbers are always a great gauge for an agent's success, it's so much more than just that. Ask about their experience and strategy, the systems and processes they have in place, how they communicate and educate you throughout the process. Ask for references and testimonials – an important this to consider is an agent who takes the time and energy to nurture your relationship and execute on your goals.

## **#3 - What is your transaction volume over the past 12-18 months?**

You may think that the higher the number, the better the agent. But that's not always the case. You want someone who is actively selling real estate so they are current on market trends, but not so busy that their response time is lagging. Through this question, you want to make sure the agent will be able to give you the attention, time and level of detail required.

## **#4 - How do you plan to educate me about the process?**

Buying or selling a home is a very personal decision, so you need to understand the process well enough to prioritize the aspects that are most important to you.

We do an initial consultation to understand their needs, goals, Nice to Haves and Need to Haves. For buyers, we make sure their lender is solid and they have a complete lender preapproval with credit and income verified. For sellers, we visit their home, do a Pre List Property Condition Inspection and discuss market activity in their neighborhood. Lastly, we go over financing, title and other details to prepare for the transaction. Not only does this begin to develop trust relationship early on, but us and our client have clear expectations of one another.

## **#5 - What can I expect in the form of communication throughout the process?**

A clear communication schedule and preferred method of communication should be established. Weekly market updates, showing updates and feedback are a great way for agents to keep you up to date on everything you need to know, watch for or take care of on your end.

### **#7 - What's your comfort level with and how do you approach negotiations?**

Negotiating is the single most important skill an agent should have in their arsenal because it requires a nuanced understanding that most home buyers and sellers simply don't have. If an agent can demonstrate their strategic approach to negotiation and contract knowledge, you can be sure they will be equipped to do everything they can when the time comes. And don't hesitate to ask for examples of their negotiation wins for a better glimpse of how they operate.

Note: While speaking with a potential agent about negotiation, be sure to also share your own personal level of comfort. This will help an agent tailor their approach to you and your needs.

### **#6 - Can you advise me on my financial situation and the value of my investment?**

Agents are not CPA's or Financial Advisors and cannot give that type of guidance but an experienced agent should have deep transactional knowledge to guide you toward a home or price point that fits your needs. If you have a unique situation or want to go into more detail, they should also be able to introduce you to their network of financial advisors, estate planners or attorneys.

### **#8 - What lessons have you learned and how have you recovered from your mistakes?**

The best agent is one who can recover from a misstep or missed opportunity with concrete next steps to ensure it doesn't happen again. Asking them for an example can help you determine not only their working style but their personality. If they are unwilling to admit to mistakes or don't come across as humble and transparent, it could be a red flag.

### **#9 - Do you have relationships with other vendors?**

Both buyers and sellers will often need or want to do repairs and remodels - whether it's preparing a home for market or making their new home the best it can be. Agents who can recommend vendors and inspectors have an added leg up. It also speaks to their reputation within the community that they have a strong network of service providers.

### **#10 - For Sellers: What is your plan to generate offers and stick to the timeline?**

This question covers a wide scope, so a strong agent should have a comprehensive and tiered approach. Ask about strategy and timing of price reductions. Ask about their marketing plan. Having those conversations proactively will better position strategy and expectations.

### **# 11 - For Buyers: How will you help me prioritize my needs and determine whether to write an offer or walk away?**

Initially, a good agent will ask you about your Need to Haves and Nice to Haves for your new home. But as your relationship grows and search continues, the agent will recognize how the priorities may need to change. This skill will help them determine how well a home fits your needs. It will also equip them to ask the right questions of the seller's agent and gather key information - like the competitiveness of your offer, timing and more - that will inform next steps.

When hiring a real estate agent, your first goal is a successful transaction. But it's just as important to feel secure in your partnership so that you minimize stress and stay excited about your latest life change.