

Questions to Ask When Choosing a REALTOR®

1. How long have you been in residential real estate sales? Is it your full-time job? While experience is no guarantee of skill and real estate, is mostly learned on the job. Get someone who's been in business at least 2 years and is computer savvy. Careful: agents who've been in business a very long time are often too lazy or too busy to help you adequately.
2. What designations do you hold? Designations such as ABR, GRI and CRS, which require that agents take additional, specialized real estate training, are held by only about one-quarter of real estate practitioners.
3. How many buyers are you presently working with? How many sellers? This impacts how much attention they can devote to YOU.
4. Will you represent me exclusively, or will you represent both the buyer and the seller in the transaction? While it's legal to represent both parties in a transaction, it can be a "slippery slope". A good agent will explain the agency relationship to you and describe the rights of each party. It's also possible to insist that the agent represent you exclusively.
5. Can you recommend service providers who can assist me in obtaining a mortgage, getting my inspections, making repairs on my home, and other things I need done? Keep in mind here that agents should generally recommend more than one provider and should tell you if they receive any compensation from any provider.
6. What type of support and supervision does your brokerage office provide to you? Having resources such as in-house support staff, access to a real estate attorney, or assistance with technology can help an agent sell your home.
7. What's your business philosophy? While there's no right answer to this question, the response will help you assess what's important to the agent—fast sales, service, etc.—and determine how closely the agent's goals and business emphasis mesh with your own.
8. How will you keep me informed about the progress of my transaction? How frequently? Using what media? Again, this is not a question with a correct answer, but that one reflects your desires. Do you want updates twice a week or don't want to be bothered unless there's a hot prospect? Do you prefer phone, e-mail, or a personal visit?

9. Could you please give me the names and phone numbers of three of your most recent clients?

10. Ask the agent to recommend one or two people (other than themselves) they consider top-notch agents who can fulfill your needs. It's a question the agent likely won't expect, but if he or she balks or refuses to answer, there are plenty of agents who will. Not only can the question provide you with others to interview, it also tests the agent's honesty and integrity.

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