

What to look for when buying a house

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factors to consider as you

You'll want to start by making a list of the things that you need and want in a home. Everyone's list will be different. Young families may be looking for a starter home they can grow into, while empty nesters might prefer smaller homes with less upkeep.

The reality is that you probably won't get everything on your list. You'll need to make some trade-offs to find a house that meets your needs and fits in your budget.



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"As you go through the process, it ends up being more of a process of elimination than selection, once you start going into houses and you'll see what your priorities are," says Andi DeFelice, an associate broker with Exclusive Buyer's Realty in Savannah, Georgia, and president of the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents.

Still, knowing what to look for is key to making the most of your search. Here's a guide on what to look for when buying a house.

What to look for when buying a house: Deal breakers

The cost

There's no reason to waste your time looking at properties that you can't afford. Use Bankrate's [calculator](#) to get a sense of how much house you can afford and estimate the mortgage amount that best fits into your budget. Be sure to also factor in additional costs, such as taxes, insurance and maintenance. The higher the price of the house you want to buy, the more you'll pay on a monthly basis.

The location

There's a reason that the Realtors joke that the three most important things in real estate are "location, location and location." No amount of remodeling can change the location of your house.

A too-long commute or underperforming schools for your children could leave you with buyer's remorse, even if the house has everything else you're looking for. The location also includes the neighborhood and the neighbors, so pay

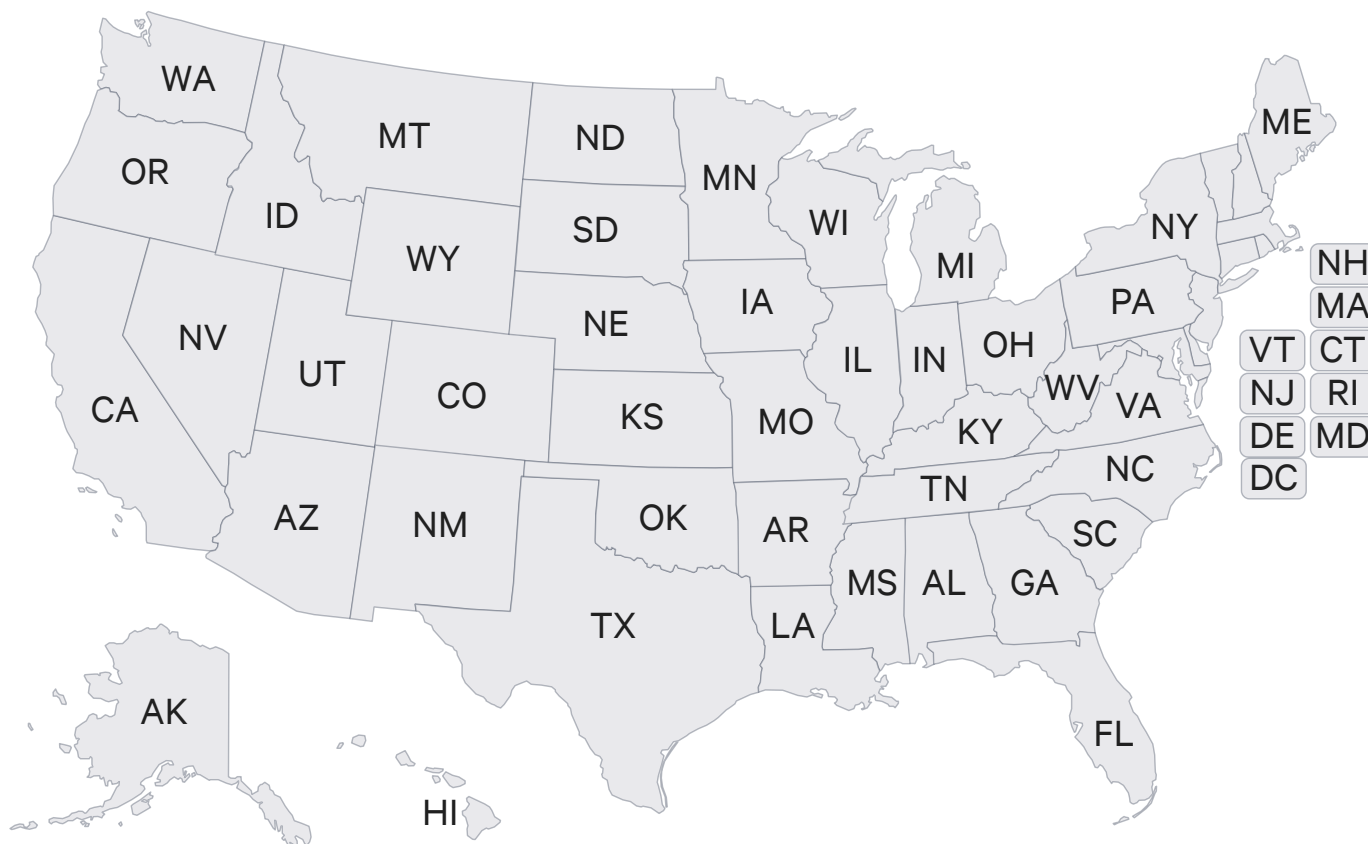
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and looks like then," DeFelice says. "Is there something going on in that area that wouldn't make you happy to walk out your door every day?"

Issues with the home inspection

The home inspection will let you know if there are any potential problems with the structure or systems of the house. If the inspection turns up potentially expensive issues, you can ask the seller to fix them or negotiate a lower price to account for the problems. If the sellers aren't interested in either option, you have the option to walk away from the deal, as long as you have a home inspection contingency in your contract.

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Needs vs. wants

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While you may prefer a house with a recently remodeled kitchen and bathrooms, you shouldn't automatically write off a home that needs a facelift. Instead, consider making an offer that factors in the cost of such renovations.

If they're planned out well, the projects may cost less than you think, and you'll get the bonus of being able to choose designs that meet your taste. Before you go this route, though, bring a contractor in to provide an estimate and

timeline for renovations. And be honest with yourself about whether you want to deal with the extra time and stress of large-scale renovations.

Lifestyle features on your list

Just because a home doesn't check every box on your dream-home list that doesn't mean it's not the right one for you. Ultimately, you might decide that some factors are more important than others. A great room for entertaining, for example, may trump your desire for a waterfall shower, if you can't find a home that has both.

Stuff not to stress over

Ugly décor

Sometimes all [the home staging](#) in the world isn't enough to distract you from dated fixtures, poor lighting and hideous wallpaper. Sure, these are cosmetic eyesores but you can change all of these items after you move in. Instead of getting distracted by aesthetics, use it as an opportunity to imagine the ways that you'll make the seller's house your home.

Breathtaking décor

When you think about what to look for when buying a house, it can be overwhelming just to pinpoint the features and amenities you want. Just as you shouldn't let unsightly decor keep you from seeing the hidden potential in a home, don't be swayed by a house that's decorated like it could be in a magazine. Staging is designed to pull you in but, in reality, all of the furniture and eye-catching decor isn't part of the package.

"Think about what's behind the glitz and the glam," says Herman Chan, an associate broker with Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty in Berkeley, California. "You're not buying the furniture; you have to understand that. You're buying the system and the structure."

Bottom line

It can be hard to know what to look for when buying a house. Homes with more features that have been renovated and start seeing homes in re, but you can't change a

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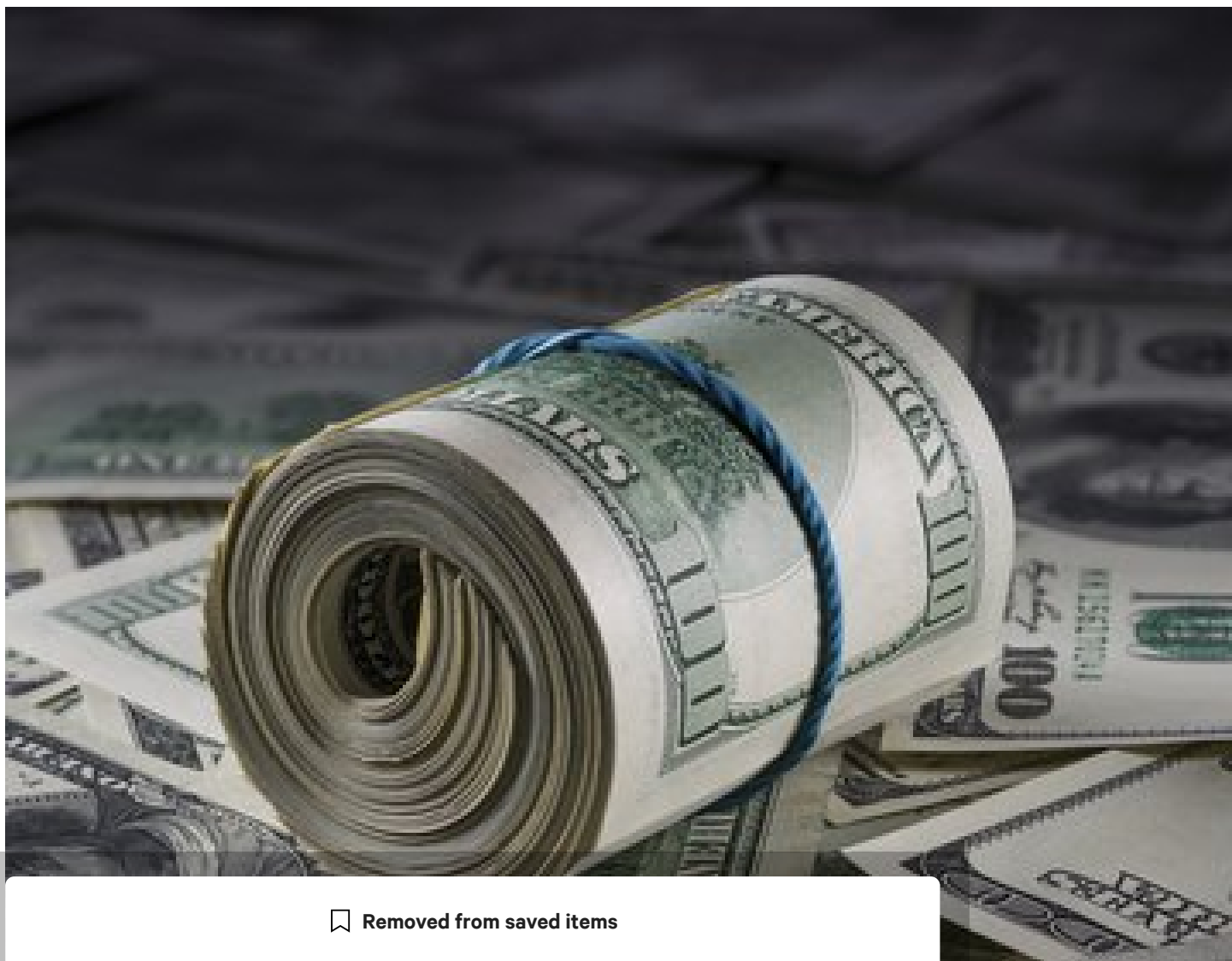


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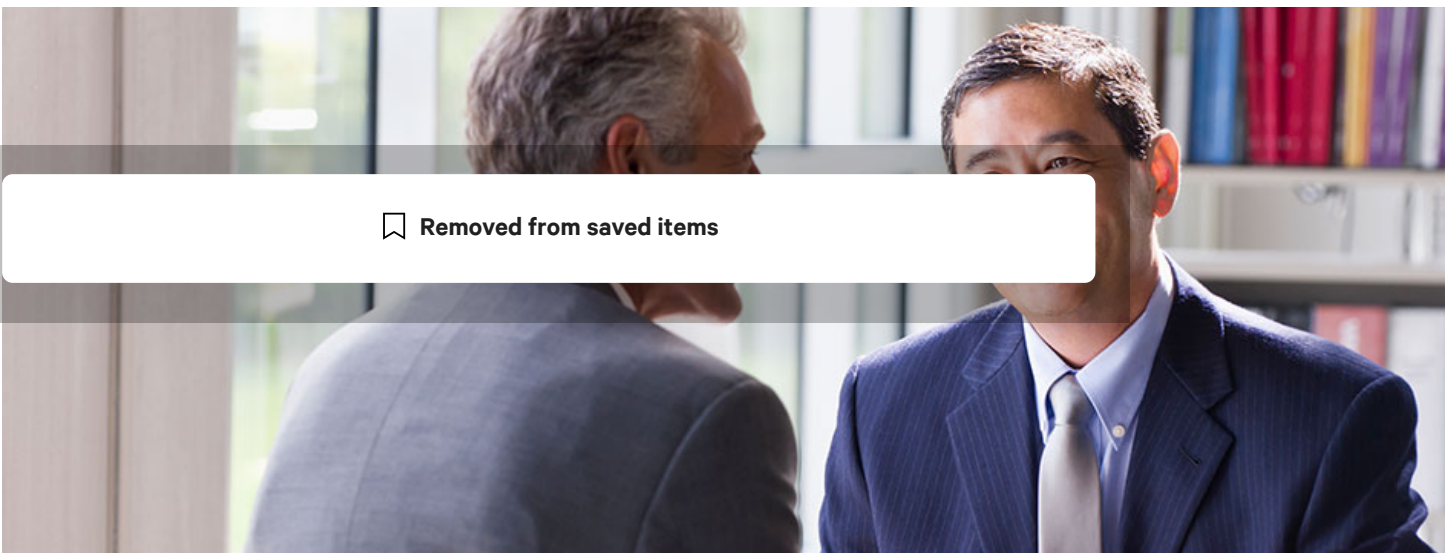
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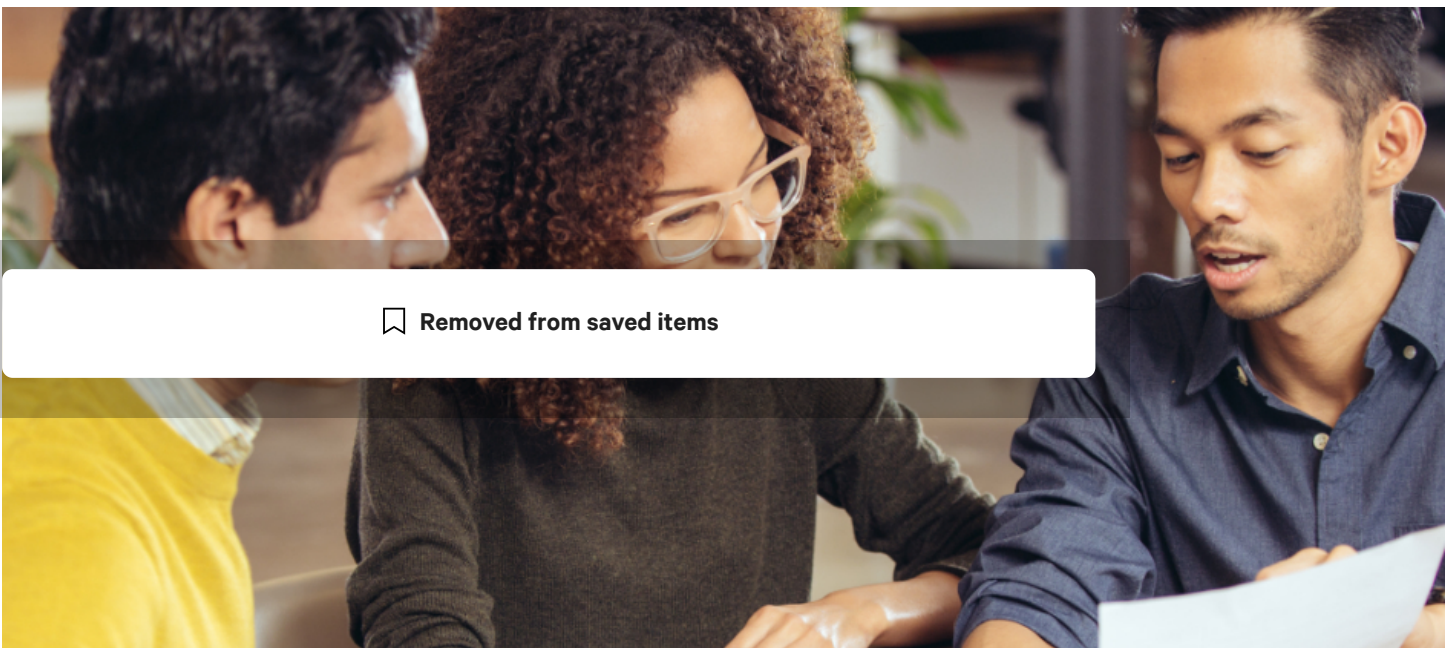




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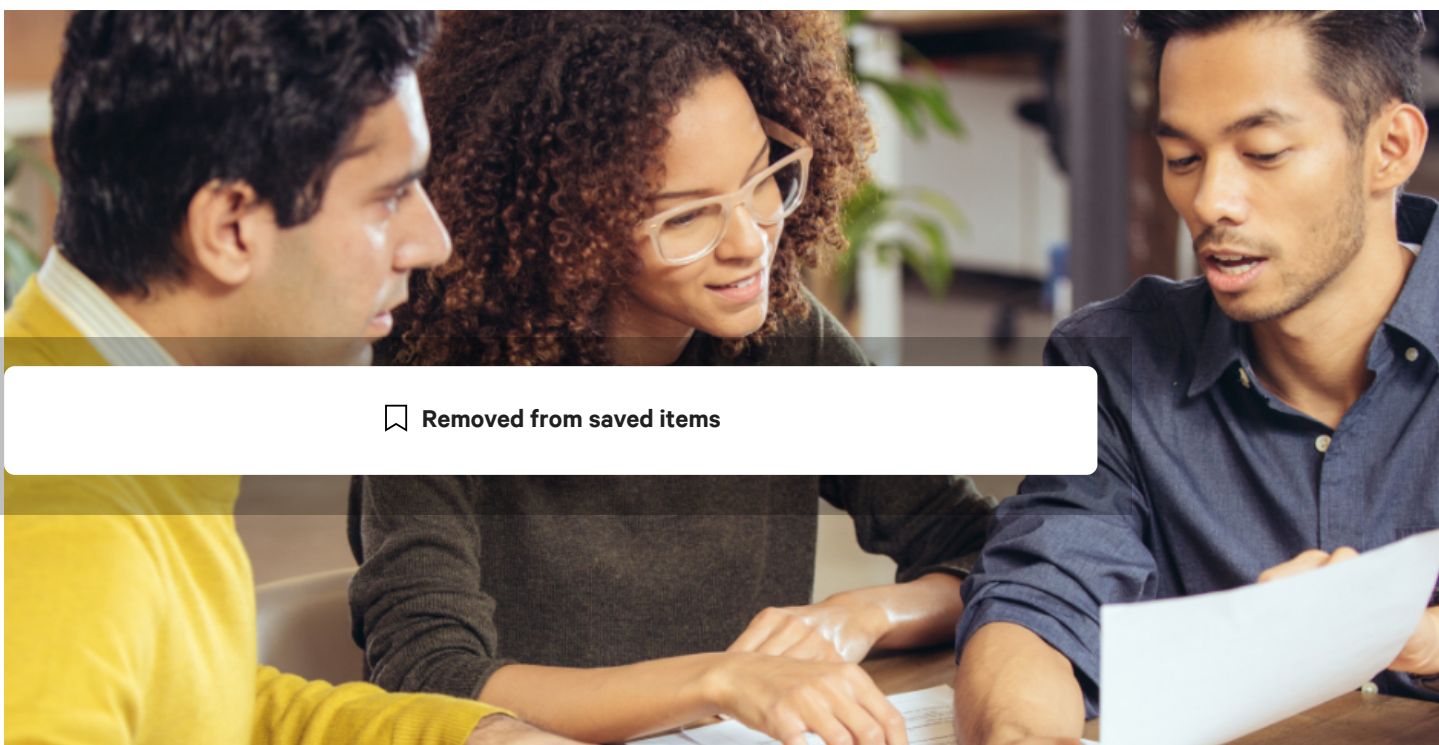
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