

What Not to Overlook on a Final Walk-through

Be sure that:

- Repairs you've requested have been made. Obtain copies of paid bills and any related warranties.
- All items that were included in the sale price—draperies, lighting fixtures—are still there.
- Screens and storm windows are in place or stored.
- All appliances are operating.
- Intercom, doorbell, and alarm are operational.
- Hot water heater is working.
- HVAC is working.
- No plants or shrubs have been removed from the yard.
- Garage door opener and other remotes are available.
- Instruction books and warranties on appliances and fixtures are there.
- All personal items of the sellers and all debris have been removed.

Common Closing Costs for Buyers

The lender must disclose a good faith estimate of all settlement costs. A check to cover your closing costs will probably have to be a cashier's check. The title company or other entity conducting the closing will tell you the required amount for:

- Downpayment
- Loan origination fees
- Points, or loan discount fees, you pay to receive a lower interest rate
- Appraisal fee
- Credit report
- Private mortgage insurance premium
- Insurance escrow for homeowners insurance, if being paid as part of the mortgage
- Property tax escrow, if being paid as part of the mortgage. Lenders keep funds for taxes and insurance in escrow accounts as they are paid with the mortgage, then pay the insurance or taxes for you.
- Deed recording fees
- Title insurance policy premiums
- Survey
- Inspection fees—building inspection, termites, etc.
- Notary fees
- Prorations for your share of costs, such as utility bills and property taxes

A Note About Prorations: Because such costs are usually paid on either a monthly or yearly basis, you might have to pay a bill for services used by the sellers before they moved. Proration is a way for the sellers to pay you back or for you to pay them for bills they may have paid in advance. For example, the gas company usually sends a bill each month for the gas used during the previous month. But assume you buy the home on the 6th of the month. You would owe the gas company for only the days from the 6th to the end for the month. The seller would owe for the first five days. The bill would be prorated for the number of days in the month, and then each person would be responsible for the days of his or her ownership.

What to Keep From Your Closing

- The Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA) statement. This form, sometimes called a HUD 1 statement, itemizes all the costs associated with the closing. You'll need this for income tax purposes and when you sell the home.
- The Truth in Lending Statement summarizes the terms of your mortgage loan.
- The mortgage and the note (two pieces of paper) spell out the legal terms of your mortgage obligation and the agreed-upon repayment terms.
- The deed transfers ownership of the property to you.
- Affidavits swearing to various statements by either party. For example, the sellers will often sign an affidavit stating that they have not incurred any liens on the property.
- Riders are amendments to the sales contract that affect your rights. For example, if you buy a condominium, you may have a rider outline the condo association's rules and restrictions.
- Insurance policies provide a record and proof of your coverage.

Tips for Packing Like a Pro

1. Develop a master “to do” list so you won’t forget something critical.
2. Sort and get rid of things you no longer want or need. Have a garage sale, donate to a charity, or recycle.
3. Don’t throw out everything. If your inclination is to just toss it, ask yourself how frequently you use an item and how you’d feel if you no longer had it.
4. Pack like items together. Put toys with toys, kitchen utensils with kitchen utensils.
5. Decide what if anything you plan to move yourself. Precious items, such as family photos, valuable breakables, or must-haves during the move, should probably stay with you.
6. Use the right box for the item. Loose items encourage breakage.
7. Put heavy items in small boxes so they’re easier to lift. Keep weight under 50 lbs. if possible.
8. Don’t over-pack boxes and increase the chances they will break.
9. Wrap every fragile item separately and pad bottom and sides of boxes.
10. Label every box on all sides. You never know how they’ll be stacked and you don’t want to have to move other boxes aside to find out what’s there.
11. Use color-coded labels to indicate which room each item should go in. Color-code a floor plan for your new house to help movers.
12. Keep your moving documents together, including phone numbers, driver’s name, and van number. Also keep your address book handy.
13. Back up your computer files before moving your computer.
14. Inspect each box and all furniture for damage as soon as it arrives.
15. Remember, most movers won’t take plants.