



SIMPLIFIED STEPS IN THE

Home Buying Process

Hi! I'm Jill Wendling. And, I'm thrilled to connect with you.

I'm proud to be a part of our magnificent community, Effingham, IL. I am all things Effingham County. I love our BIG, LITTLE town! We are a tight-knit community of hard-working folks that have great pride in our city and all of its offerings. As a 25+ year resident of Effingham, I come to you with a wealth of "insider" information. By downloading this guide, you are now part of my Insider Crew. I look forward to growing our relationship. I enjoy partnering with people like you to build mutual respect and rapport. As you get to know me, you will see that I am hard-working and trustworthy. I will listen to your needs and wants so that I can help you find your dream home or sell your home so you can move on to your next big adventure. I realize that buying a home is a BIG deal and selling your home is emotional.

My job, as your hometown REALTOR®, is to prepare, educate, and protect you. I strive to minimize the occasional aches and pains along the way. I will help you develop a strategic plan. I will back you up with strong negotiation skills, unparalleled accessibility, nurtured relationships and local market expertise. I am respected by my colleagues as we are in the business of bringing buyers and sellers together and that can only be achieved by having excellent interpersonal relationships with local agents. I pride myself on being genuine, approachable, available and honest. You should expect me to walk you through tough decisions, provide constant contact and unwavering devotion to help you through all the steps.

I am your hometown girl. I am resourceful. I am well educated...even though I expect to learn something new every day. I consider myself a life-long learner. I am your Effingham expert. And, that's a big deal to me. If you are new to our community, I want you to know what life is like here. I am invested in our community as a member of our school district's board of education. I am involved in plans for our county's movement into the next decade. If you are a seller, be assured that I will not just market your home to local buyers. I will be marketing your home (and the Effingham community) to those looking to relocate from all over the world. Being a community expert, makes a difference when it's time to list your home. I'm dedicated to get you the highest price with the most ideal terms.

Whether you are buying or selling, you can rely on me to negotiate exceptional results.

If you've read this far...THANK YOU! This is just the beginning of our relationship. As an offering to you, here is my FREE guide, *Simplified Steps in the Home Buying Process*. It's an Insider's Guide to making the buying process simple and painless. If you're a first-time home buyer, you've come to perfect place. I'm here to help you EVERY. STEP. of the WAY. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking the time to visit! This is just the beginning of our relationship. I can't wait to prove my value to you!

Best,

Jill

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COMMUNITY+HOMES+CONNECTOR

Thinking about purchasing a home?

Here is your Insider's Guide to avoid obstacles, eliminate some uncertainty, and experience the thrill and excitement of finding your dream home. I'm here for your every step of the way. Be patient. Home ownership can be a long and winding road. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

1 Find a Real Estate Agent

To start your home-buying journey, it's important to hire a real estate agent. You will need one to gain access to the homes listed on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). An agent is your trusted source. They work tirelessly on behalf of you, the client. You have many choices in the Effingham area, so the challenge isn't finding an agent. The challenge is finding the agent that is *right* for you. Take into consideration:

- *Do some investigating!* What kind of exposure do they have in the community? Check their social media accounts. Look at the online reviews. How is their website? Are they involved in their community in other ways?
- *Interview multiple agents before selecting the one.* This allows you to gauge their style, experience and whether or not your personalities work well together. A great agent will not pressure you or make other agents look bad. If an agent is condescending toward their peers and colleagues...that's a big red flag! We all work together to bring buyers and sellers together. There is more behind-the-scenes teamwork than you know. Make sure to ask questions about what to expect during the home-buying process, and find out how often - and via what methods - they'll be available for you to contact.
- *Experience counts, but isn't the end all, be all.* Some of the most experienced agents can take that for granted. Instead, consider how passionate your prospective agent is about their job. They should love what they do! How long has your agent been rooted in the community? It's helpful for them to be connected, rooted, and well-versed in the neighborhoods.
- *Trust your gut.* Once you've researched and interviewed your prospective agents, you'll get a sense of who's the right fit for you. Let your intuition guide you. You should feel comfortable talking to your agent. You should also be open and willing to take advice from your agent. Allow them to be honest with you and be honest with them. You're making one of the biggest financial decisions of your life, and you want that person to be in your corner 100%. Make sure your agent understands what you're looking for and puts your interests first. When searching for the right real estate agent, have fun and be patient.

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Get Pre-Qualified

The next step is to get pre-qualified for a mortgage. Pre-qualification for a loan provides insight into how much house you can afford. Here's why:

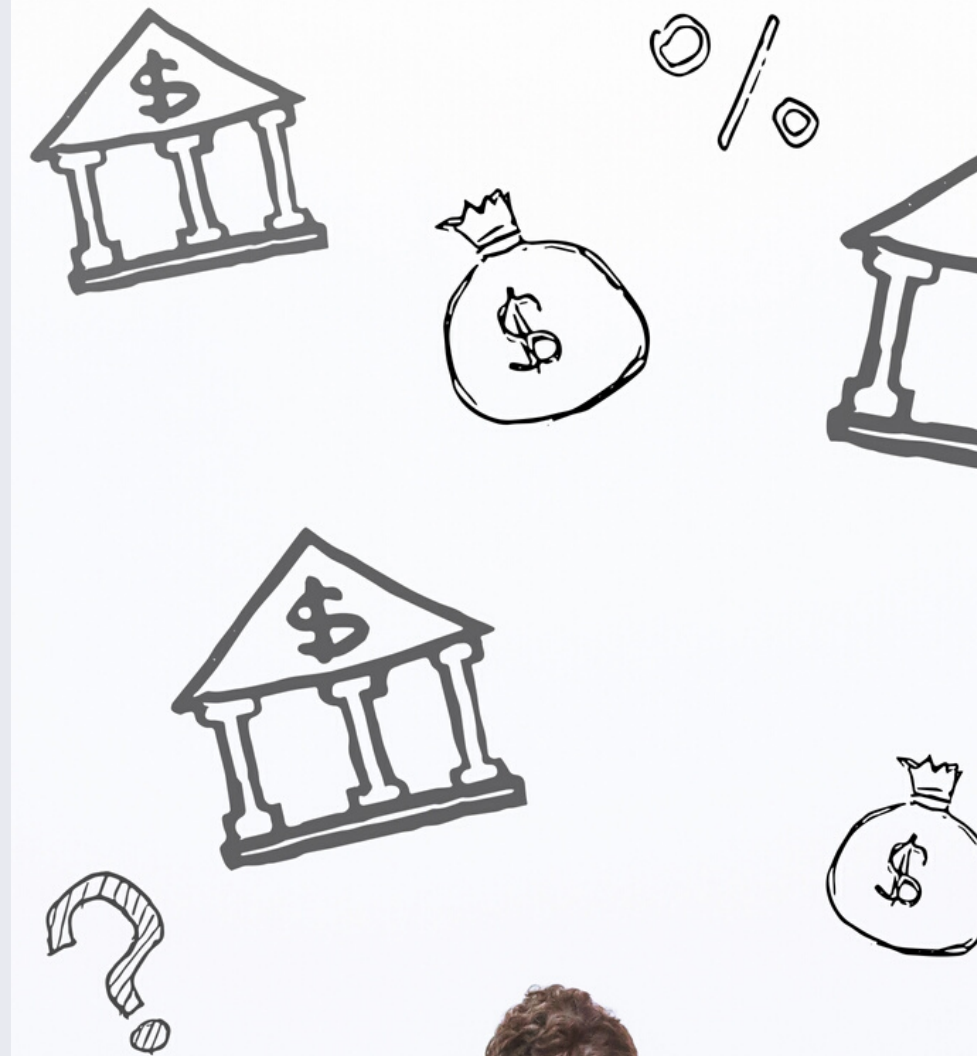
- *It Allows You to Know Your Limits.* Being aware and respectful of a budget saves time and prevents prospective homebuyers from daydreaming about out-of-budget homes. The less ambiguous homebuyers are about what they may be able to afford, the more efficient the home search will be. It's important to have a mortgage professional review your credit, income and other financial liabilities. Your mortgage professional will issue a pre-qualification letter to you. Share this with your agent and arm yourself with proof.
- *It Shows Sellers that You are Serious.* The real estate market can be a competitive space, but getting pre-qualified could give a prospective homebuyer an advantage over fellow potential buyers. If you have a pre-qualification letter in hand, it lets the seller know you mean business.
- *It Helps You Know How Much Money to Save.* A lender will let you know where you stand financially. You will understand how much money you'll need to bring to closing, including down payment and closing costs. This helps you better manage your spending and helps plot a course to help you achieve your goal of homeownership.

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Search for Homes

After determining your budget, it's time to begin searching for homes. Be realistic by identifying your wants versus your needs before beginning your search. Here are some great tips:

- *Define Your Wants vs. Needs.* You have many factors to consider when buying a home. With that in mind, it's important to outline your wants versus needs in order to find the best fit for you. Prioritize the features you wouldn't be able to live without.
- *Act Fast.* With the competitive and fast-paced nature of residential real estate, there's no time for dragging your feet. Having your dream home slip through your fingers sounds like a worst nightmare. As soon as you find a home that interests you, alert your agent to schedule a tour.



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Search for Homes, continued

- *Don't be TOO Picky.* Nitpicking details of every house you see is inevitable, given your purchase will be one of the biggest investments you'll make in your lifetime. Being too picky, however, can leave you unfulfilled in an endless quest for perfection. The perfect house is kind of an idealized dream. Refer back to your list of must-have home features and remember you can make renovations or upgrades down the road. With these house hunting tips, you're more likely to find your dream home.

Make an Offer

Once you find a home you love, your agent will prepare to make an offer based on the price and terms you choose. The offer is written in a purchase agreement contract, which becomes binding when both parties agree. When submitting an offer, you will propose some of the following:

- selling price
- desired inclusions (i.e. appliances, personal property items, furniture, etc.)
- intended date of closing
- contingencies (inspections, closing allowances, buyer home sale, etc.)
- method of payment (type and terms of financing or cash purchase)
- amount of earnest money as a form of "deposit"

Once an offer is made, the seller will have three options: accept, reject or reject with a counteroffer. Congratulations! You've now moved on to negotiations.

Negotiations

Negotiating a price is one of the most crucial aspects of your real estate journey. It's also the point at which your agent's expertise can make the most dramatic difference. Your agent acts as a professional negotiator in four ways:

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Negotiations, continued.

- **Being in the Know.** Your real estate agent is a scholar when it comes to the real estate market. With their niche industry knowledge, they can take lead when it comes to negotiating a reasonable closing agreement based on the appropriate value of the home. Knowing the facts about a neighborhood is what helps to establish the value of a property, allowing an agent to speak intelligently and confidently. This helps the client arrive at a fair and reasonable purchase or sales agreement.
- **Objectivity.** Your agent is trained to resolve conflict and knows how to remain cool, calm and collected during any intense moments of negotiation. Emotion and anticipated enjoyment of a property are huge factors for both buyers and sellers and often lead to overestimates of a home's market value. An agent's role, like that of any trusted advisor, is to acknowledge those emotions while remaining objective. Agents keep a level head so they can protect their client's best interests and keep them grounded in reality.
- **Knowing What to Ask For.** Agents are well-versed in the language that surrounds negotiation. As your advocate, they'll request maintenance, like inspections, concessions and repairs, in a manner that's appealing to the seller.
- **Building Bridges, Not Burning Them.** Negotiation isn't about working against the seller, it's about working with the seller to get the best and most appropriate closing agreement for you. Your agent will work in the best interest of you, the buyer, while remaining cordial and professional with the seller's agent.

Inspections and Appraisal

A professional home inspector will examine the home to identify any damages or fixes that need to be made. Using the inspection report, your agent can negotiate with the seller to get the damages fixed or price compensated in the final sale. Additionally, your lender will order a home appraisal to determine the accurate value of the home. Banks will not lend over the home's value. Be prepared...in case the house does not appraise. Inspections are important for the following reasons:



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Inspections and Appraisal, continued.

- **No Surprises.** The excitement of homeownership can skew perspective – as though you’re seeing through rose-colored glasses. Thankfully, a certified home inspector has no emotional attachment to your soon-to-be residence and can objectively identify structural, electrical and plumbing issues. Home inspections can help prepare you for what might be coming down the road.
- **Bargaining Power.** Since home inspections are typically conducted after an offer is accepted, the inspector’s detailed report can – and should – be used as a negotiating tool with the seller.
- **Save Money Down the Road.** Inspections can help you gain bargaining power, and with this bargaining power you can save hundreds or even thousands of dollars down the road. It would be quite a burden to skip a home inspection only to later find out the entire home needs rewiring.
- **Safety.** You’ve heard it before: “Safety first!” This is especially true for your new home. Home inspections not only uncover minor damages to the house but also life-threatening issues like lead paint, asbestos, radon and mold.

Closing

During the closing, you and the seller will sign all necessary documents to finalize the sale and transfer the ownership of the property. The end of the home-buying process is in sight! It's only a matter of time before S-O-L-D takes over the “For Sale” sign of your future home. But don’t get ahead of yourself and make a careless error that could slow down or even kill the sale. To ensure your closing is smooth and successful, avoid the following all-too-common mistakes:

- **Running Late.** Your home purchase agreement may include deadline-specific obligations, such as a home inspection or securing finances for an appraisal. It’s essential that you stay within the established timeframe as closely as possible. Don’t be afraid to follow up with your home inspector, mortgage loan officer and anyone else responsible for meeting the deadlines outlined in your agreement



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Closing, continued.

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- **Making Big Purchases During Escrow.** Messing with your income-to-debt ratio is a red flag for lenders. The ratio of your monthly income to your debt is one of the main factors a lender considers when qualifying you for a mortgage loan. Before closing on a home, your lender will most likely run your financials two or three more times. You'll want your finances in tip-top condition during this process.
- **Opening New Credit Cards.** While it's tempting to buy new furnishings, dishware and appliances for your future home, be sure to hold off on opening new credit cards until after closing.
- **Changing Jobs.** It's good to help the lender feel confident in you before closing. What makes a lender confident? Stability. Changing jobs right before a closing can slow down the process or scare a lender out of the deal. Lenders typically want physical proof of a two-year work history, so this isn't a wise time to make a big career change.

Move In!

The long-awaited home is officially yours. Have you boxed up all your belongings? To relieve the stress of moving, preparation is key. Here are some helpful tips:

- **Create a Moving Binder.** With the countless expenses, receipts and packing lists that accompany the moving process, it is critical to keep your records organized. Use a binder to store and organize all documents related to the move.
- **Declutter and Purge.** Close your eyes and envision your new space – how do you want it to look and feel? When you start packing up your belongings, be cognizant of what's valuable to you versus what's just clutter. If you're unsure of how to pare down, ask yourself – honestly – if it will enhance your new space. A new home is an opportunity to start fresh and create an environment you love.



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Move In! Continued.

- **Label Boxes.** Labeling your boxes with their corresponding rooms will make unpacking much less complicated. Mark your fragile items clearly to avoid them being damaged during the move.
- **Decide Your Method of Moving.** Do you want to hire a moving company or are you more DIY? Weigh the pros and cons: How much are you willing to spend, and how much time and energy do you have to complete the move yourself? If you're uncomfortable with heavy lifting, consider a professional mover to do the job for you.
- **Change Your Address.** Be sure to forward your mail a few weeks prior to moving (to begin on your move-in date) and update your address on important documents and accounts, including your driver's license, subscriptions, newspaper, credit cards, bank accounts and other online accounts.
- **Transfer Utilities.** Consider what services you need up and running on the day you move into your new home and contact those providers weeks in advance. Make gas and electricity a priority, followed by services like cable and internet.
- **Research Things to Do in Your New Area.** Get familiar with your new neighborhood by researching the best restaurants, cafes and activities in town. It will get you excited about the move and also make the area feel more navigable once there.

Enjoy your new home!

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