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# 8 Questions to Ask When Hiring a Buyer's Agent

BUYER RESOURCE GUIDE

Your buyer's agent is your advocate, negotiator, and guide through one of the largest financial transactions of your life. Not all agents are equal — here are the eight questions that separate great representation from average service.

## Why Your Choice of Agent Matters

In Alberta, all REALTORS are regulated by the Real Estate Council of Alberta (RECA) and must adhere to the Real Estate Act. But regulation ensures a minimum standard — it does not guarantee the expertise, local knowledge, or negotiation skill you need to buy well in Calgary's diverse market.

A dedicated buyer's agent works exclusively in your interest throughout the transaction. They are not split between representing you and the seller, and their sole focus is finding you the right home at the right price with the right terms. Choosing the wrong agent — or no agent at all — can cost you tens of thousands of dollars and months of frustration.

**Important distinction:** A buyer's agent represents you. The listing agent represents the seller. Working directly with the listing agent means no one at the table is advocating specifically for your interests. In Alberta, dual agency (where one agent represents both sides) requires informed consent and limits the advice the agent can provide to either party.

## Question 1: How Long Have You Been Working in This Market?

Experience matters, but context matters more. An agent with 20 years of experience who primarily works in rural Alberta may not serve you well in Calgary's inner-city condo market. What you want to understand is how deeply the agent knows the specific market segments relevant to your search.

Look for an agent who has navigated different market cycles — the post-2014 correction, the pandemic-era boom, and the current conditions. An agent who has only worked in a hot market may not know how to negotiate effectively when conditions shift.

## Question 2: What Neighbourhoods Do You Specialize In?

Calgary has over 200 distinct communities, and each one has its own pricing patterns, development plans, and lifestyle characteristics. An agent who specializes in the areas you are targeting will know things that do not show up on the MLS – which streets flood, where noise from Deerfoot Trail carries, which buildings have reserve fund issues, and where the next wave of development is headed.

- **Ask for specifics:** How many transactions have they completed in your target neighbourhoods in the past 12 months?
- **Test their knowledge:** Ask about recent sales, upcoming developments, or school catchment boundaries in areas you are considering
- **Beware of generalists:** An agent who claims to specialize everywhere specializes nowhere

## Question 3: How Many Buyers Are You Currently Working With?

This question reveals how much time and attention you will actually receive. An agent working with 15 active buyers may struggle to give you the responsiveness you need, especially in a fast-moving market where desirable Calgary homes can receive offers within days of listing.

There is no magic number, but you want an agent who has enough capacity to respond quickly to new listings, schedule showings on your timeline, and be available when you need strategic advice — not one who is constantly juggling too many clients.

## Question 4: What Is Your Communication Style and Availability?

Mismatched communication expectations are one of the most common sources of frustration between buyers and agents. Before you commit, get clear on the practical details:

- **Preferred method:** Do they communicate primarily by phone, text, or email? Does that match your preference?
- **Response time:** What is their typical response time during business hours? What about evenings and weekends?
- **Update frequency:** Will they proactively send you new listings as they come to market, or do you need to ask?
- **Weekend and evening showings:** Most Calgary buyers need to view homes outside of standard business hours — is the agent available then?

**What to look for:** The best buyer's agents set up automated MLS alerts tailored to your criteria so you see new listings within hours of them going live. In Calgary's competitive segments, being first through the door can make the difference between winning and losing a home.

## Question 5: Can You Explain the Offer Process Step by Step?

A great buyer's agent should be able to walk you through the entire offer process in plain language — from drafting the offer to negotiation, conditions, waiver, and closing. If they cannot explain it clearly in a conversation, they are unlikely to guide you effectively when things get complex or stressful.

Key elements they should be able to explain include:

- How offer price is determined using comparable sales data
- The role of conditions (financing, inspection, condo documents) and when they might be modified
- Deposit requirements and how they are held in trust
- Irrevocable dates and what happens if the seller counters
- The timeline from accepted offer to possession day
- Alberta-specific forms and disclosures required under RECA guidelines

## Question 6: How Do You Handle Multiple Offer Situations?

Multiple offers are a reality in many Calgary neighbourhoods, particularly for well-priced detached homes in the spring and early summer market. Your agent's strategy in these situations directly affects whether you win or lose — and how much you pay.

Ask them to describe their approach: How do they gather intelligence about competing offers? How do they help you determine your maximum price without overbidding? Do they have a track record of winning in competitive scenarios?

**Red flag:** An agent who simply tells you to "offer as much as you can" without providing data, strategy, and a clear rationale for the number is not doing their job. You want an agent who balances competitiveness with discipline.

## Question 7: What Happens If I Am Not Happy with Our Working Relationship?

This is an uncomfortable but essential question. In Alberta, the buyer representation agreement outlines the terms of your relationship with your agent, including the duration and any obligations. Before you sign, understand:

- **Agreement duration:** How long are you committed? Can the term be shortened if the relationship is not working?
- **Termination clause:** Under what circumstances can you or the agent end the agreement early?
- **Obligations after termination:** Are there properties you would still owe commission on if you saw them during the agreement period?

A confident, professional agent will not hesitate to discuss this openly. They know that a good working relationship is built on mutual fit, and they would rather part ways amicably than force a client to stay in an arrangement that is not working.

## Question 8: Can You Provide References from Recent Buyers?

Online reviews are useful, but nothing replaces a direct conversation with a recent client. Ask the agent for two or three references — specifically buyers, not sellers — who purchased in the past six to twelve months.

When you speak with references, ask about:

- How responsive and available the agent was throughout the process
- The quality of their market analysis and pricing advice
- How they handled negotiations, especially in competitive situations
- Whether there were any surprises or issues the agent could have anticipated
- Whether they would hire the same agent again without hesitation

## Why a Dedicated Buyer's Agent Matters

Some buyers assume that any licensed REALTOR can help them buy a home — and technically, that is true. But there is a significant difference between an agent who occasionally represents buyers and one who has built their practice around buyer advocacy.

A dedicated buyer's agent brings:

- **Market intelligence:** They know which properties are fairly priced, which are overpriced, and where opportunities exist before other buyers see them
- **Negotiation expertise:** They have experience crafting offers that win without overpaying, and they know how to protect your interests through conditions and terms
- **Network access:** Established agents have relationships with lenders, inspectors, lawyers, and other professionals who contribute to a smooth transaction
- **Emotional buffer:** Buying a home is emotional. Your agent provides objective, data-driven advice when you need it most
- **RECA accountability:** In Alberta, your buyer's agent has a legal and ethical obligation to act in your best interest, maintain confidentiality, and provide competent service

**The bottom line:** The right buyer's agent does not just find you a home — they help you buy the right home, at the right price, with the right terms, while protecting you from risks you may not even know exist. Take the time to interview, ask these questions, and choose someone you trust to represent your interests in one of the biggest decisions of your life.