

BRITISH COLUMBIA · 2026 EDITION

First home. Clear plan.

A practical guide to financing, incentives, offers, due diligence, closing costs and the first year of ownership.





Make three decisions before falling for a listing



ROADMAP LINK Stages 1-3 · Budget, representation and pre-approval.

The safest price range is not the maximum a lender will approve. It is the price that leaves room for closing costs, repairs, rate changes and the life you still want to live.

01

Set a monthly ceiling

Include mortgage principal and interest, property tax, strata fees, utilities, insurance, parking, maintenance and commuting.

02

Verify the financing

Get a written pre-approval, then ask what could still change: appraisal, property type, documents, debts, employment or rate expiry.

03

Protect your cash

Keep the deposit, remaining down payment, closing costs and an emergency reserve in separate mental buckets.

A pre-approval is a strong starting point - not a promise that every property will be financed.

YOUR FIRST TEAM

- ☐ A licensed real estate professional who represents you.
- ☐ A lender or mortgage broker who explains total cost, not only the rate.
- ☐ A lawyer or notary who handles title, funds and registration.
- ☐ A licensed home inspector for resale purchases.
- ☐ An insurance advisor before you remove subjects.

Documents to gather early

- Government identification
- Employment letter and recent pay stubs
- Two years of tax documents if requested
- Bank and investment statements showing the down payment
- Debt statements and proof of gift funds, if applicable

Tip: Avoid new credit, large unexplained transfers or job changes between pre-approval and completion without checking with your lender.



Your down payment is only one part of qualification



ROADMAP LINK Stages 1 + 3 · Safe budget and pre-approval.

5%

Minimum on the first \$500,000

10%

Minimum on the portion from \$500,000 to under \$1.5 million

20%

Minimum at \$1.5 million or more

PURCHASE PRICE	MINIMUM DOWN PAYMENT	BEFORE CLOSING COSTS
\$450,000	$5\% \times \$450,000$	\$22,500
\$800,000	$5\% \times \$500,000 + 10\% \times \$300,000$	\$55,000
\$1,200,000	$5\% \times \$500,000 + 10\% \times \$700,000$	\$95,000
\$1,500,000	$20\% \times \$1,500,000$	\$300,000

Mortgage insurance

With less than 20% down, mortgage default insurance is generally required. It protects the lender, not the buyer. The premium is usually added to the mortgage, which increases both the balance and interest paid.

Stress test

Federally regulated lenders qualify uninsured borrowers at the greater of the contract rate plus 2 percentage points or 5.25%. Insured mortgages are also subject to qualifying rules.

30-year insured amortization: Since December 15, 2024, first-time buyers can access up to a 30-year amortization on insured mortgages, subject to lender and insurer rules. The lower payment can improve cash flow, but the longer schedule usually means more total interest.

QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING THE LENDER

- ☐ What rate and payment am I actually qualified at?
- ☐ Is the rate fixed or variable, and for what term?
- ☐ What is the penalty if I sell or refinance early?
- ☐ Can I make lump-sum or increased payments?
- ☐ How long is the rate hold valid?
- ☐ What property types or strata issues could be declined?

Four programs can reduce the cash and tax burden


ROADMAP LINK Stages 1, 9 + 10 · Budget benefits, claim them and keep records.

“First-time buyer” does not mean the same thing in every program. Confirm each test separately before counting the benefit in your budget.

FEDERAL · SAVINGS

First Home Savings Account

\$8,000 of new participation room begins when you open your first FHSA, up to a **\$40,000 lifetime contribution limit**. Contributions are generally deductible; qualifying withdrawals and growth are tax-free.

Open early even if you cannot contribute the full amount. Room does not begin before the account exists.

FEDERAL · RRSP

Home Buyers' Plan

Withdraw up to **\$60,000** from your Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), if eligible. It can be combined with an FHSA withdrawal for the same home.

For a first withdrawal in 2026-2028, the 15-year repayment period begins in the fifth year after the withdrawal year. Missed required repayments are generally included in taxable income.

FEDERAL · AFTER PURCHASE

Home Buyers' Amount

An eligible buyer may claim a **\$10,000 non-refundable amount**, worth up to **\$1,500** in federal tax savings. Claim it on the tax return for the year the home was acquired.

B.C. · AT CLOSING

First Time Home Buyers' Program

For an eligible home with fair market value up to **\$835,000**, the exemption applies to property transfer tax on the first **\$500,000** of value - a maximum saving of **\$8,000**. A partial exemption applies above \$835,000 and below \$860,000.

The B.C. test is strict. You must meet citizenship or permanent-resident and B.C.-residency rules, never have owned a registered interest in a principal residence anywhere in the world, and never have received this exemption or refund. The home must also meet property and occupancy rules.

Keep the B.C. exemption: for an existing home, move in within 92 days after registration and continue occupying it as your principal residence through the first anniversary, subject to limited exceptions.

A new home can unlock two major tax breaks

 **ROADMAP LINK** Stages 1, 3, 6, 7 + 9 · Budget, finance, protect, review and complete.

B.C. PROPERTY TRANSFER TAX

Newly Built Home Exemption

Eligible principal residences receive a full exemption at fair market value up to **\$1.1 million**. A partial exemption phases out above \$1.1 million and below **\$1.15 million**.

This exemption is not limited to first-time buyers, but citizenship or permanent-resident, property, registration and occupancy conditions apply.

FEDERAL GST

First-Time Home Buyers' Rebate

For an eligible new or substantially renovated primary home, the rebate can recover up to **100% of GST paid, to a \$50,000 maximum**, at values up to \$1 million. It phases out from \$1 million to \$1.5 million; no rebate is available at or above \$1.5 million.

Agreement timing matters. The federal rebate generally applies to qualifying agreements entered into on or after March 20, 2025 and before 2031. Confirm the detailed construction, possession and application deadlines with the builder and tax adviser.

BEFORE SIGNING A PRESALE CONTRACT

- ☐ Have a lawyer review the contract and disclosure statement.
- ☐ Understand every deposit date and whether deposits are protected.
- ☐ Budget for GST, upgrades, assignment fees and closing adjustments.
- ☐ Ask how the final size and finish may vary from marketing plans.
- ☐ Plan for interest-rate and qualification changes before completion.
- ☐ Check whether assignment is allowed and on what terms.
- ☐ Review outside completion dates and developer extension rights.
- ☐ Arrange an inspection or deficiency review when access permits.

Separate rescission rule: development-unit buyers generally have seven days after the later of signing or receiving the disclosure statement to rescind under the Real Estate Development Marketing Act. This is different from B.C.'s three-business-day resale protection period.

Every stage has one job



1. Define the safe budget

Choose the payment you can sustain, estimate all monthly ownership costs, and reserve closing and emergency cash.



2. Choose representation

Understand who represents whom, how your agent is paid, and what services are included before sharing confidential negotiating information.



3. Secure a pre-approval

Compare rate, term, amortization, prepayment privileges and penalties. Ask what documents must be refreshed before closing.



4. Search with a scorecard

Separate must-haves from preferences. Track location, total monthly cost, condition, future resale and property-specific risks.



5. Price the offer

Use recent comparable sales, current competition, property condition and your walk-away number - not the list price alone.



6. Build protection into the contract

Set the price, deposit, dates, included items and appropriate subject clauses. Read every change before signing.



7. Complete due diligence

Confirm financing, inspection, title, documents, insurance and any property-specific issue before waiving subjects.



8. Remove subjects only when satisfied

Once subjects are removed, the contract is normally firm. Do not rely on verbal assurances or unfinished lender work.



9. Prepare for completion

Send funds to your lawyer or notary through verified instructions, sign documents, arrange insurance and complete the final walkthrough.



10. Take possession and keep records

Save the contract, inspection, legal package, rebate documents and improvement receipts. Update identification, utilities and insurance.

Subjects buy time to verify what matters

 **ROADMAP LINK** Stages 5-8 · Price, protect, investigate and become firm.

A clean offer can be attractive, but an unconditional offer transfers risk to the buyer. Choose conditions based on the property, your financing and the information already available.

Financing

Give the lender the accepted contract, listing details and documents. Ask for property-level approval, not only borrower approval.

Strata documents

Review Form B, bylaws, financial statements, budget, insurance, depreciation report, minutes and special levies.

Inspection

Use a licensed inspector and attend if possible. Understand major systems, immediate repairs and what the inspection cannot reveal.

Insurance

Confirm the home is insurable on acceptable terms before subject removal. Older systems, prior losses and strata deductibles can matter.

Title and legal review

Review registered charges, easements, covenants, liens and other interests. Escalate legal questions to your lawyer or notary.

Property-specific conditions

Examples include septic, well, oil tank, permits, tenancy, sale of another property or lawyer review of a presale agreement.

B.C. Home Buyer Rescission Period: for many residential resale contracts, a buyer has three business days to rescind, whether or not subjects were included. Exercising the right generally costs **0.25% of the purchase price**. Certain transactions are exempt, including auctions, court-ordered sales and property on leased land.

Do not treat the rescission period as your financing plan. Three business days can be too short for complete lending, inspection and document work, and rescinding has a cost.



Different homes hide different future costs



ROADMAP LINK Stages 4, 7 + 8 · Score the search, investigate and become firm.

STRATA

Read the building, not only the unit

- Form B and current fees
- Minutes and engineering reports
- Contingency reserve fund
- Special levies and litigation
- Insurance and deductibles
- Bylaws: pets, rentals, age, parking

DETACHED / FREEHOLD

Inspect the land and systems

- Roof, drainage and foundation
- Electrical, plumbing and heating
- Oil tank, septic or well where relevant
- Permits and secondary suites
- Survey, boundaries and easements
- Insurance availability

PRESALE

Underwrite the contract and timeline

- Disclosure statement and amendments
- Deposit schedule
- Completion and extension rights
- GST and rebates
- Assignment restrictions
- Future mortgage qualification

AT EVERY VIEWING

LOOK BEYOND	CHECK INSTEAD
Staging and finishes	Noise, light, storage, ventilation, layout and building condition.
Today's mortgage payment	Total monthly cost plus a higher-rate and repair scenario.
Fresh paint or renovation	Permits, workmanship, disclosure and evidence of what changed.
Low strata fee	Reserve funding, deferred work, insurance and upcoming projects.
Rental income potential	Zoning, bylaws, tenancy law, lender treatment and tax advice.

A useful rule: if a cost, promise or right matters to your decision, make sure it is documented and reviewed by the right professional before you become firm.

The deposit is not an extra cost - but it arrives early

 **ROADMAP LINK** Stages 1, 6 + 9 · Reserve cash, set the deposit and prepare funds.

The contract deposit is credited toward your down payment on completion. Its amount and deadline are negotiated. Make sure the money is liquid and traceable before writing the offer.

TYPICAL UPFRONT ITEMS

- ☐ Deposit and remaining down payment
- ☐ Property transfer tax, after any exemption
- ☐ Legal or notary fees and disbursements
- ☐ Inspection and appraisal, if required
- ☐ Title insurance or survey-related costs
- ☐ Property tax, utility and strata adjustments
- ☐ Home insurance
- ☐ Moving, immediate repairs and setup

Planning range: FCAC recommends preparing for closing costs of roughly **1.5% to 4%** of the purchase price. In B.C., property transfer tax can be a major part of that total.

WORKED EXAMPLE · \$800,000 RESALE

Eligible B.C. first-time buyer

\$55,000

Minimum down payment

5% of first \$500,000 + 10% of next \$300,000

\$14,000

Gross property transfer tax

1% of first \$200,000 + 2% of next \$600,000

-\$8,000

First-time buyer exemption

Maximum exemption on the first \$500,000

\$6,000

Estimated net transfer tax

Assumes full personal and property eligibility

If the negotiated deposit were \$40,000, it would normally leave \$15,000 of the minimum down payment due at completion. Closing costs and reserve cash remain separate.

Illustration only. It excludes mortgage insurance premium, interest adjustments and property-specific charges. Your legal professional and lender calculate final amounts.

The accepted offer is the middle, not the finish

 **ROADMAP LINK** Stages 8-10 · Become firm, complete, take possession and keep records.

BEFORE SUBJECT REMOVAL

- ☐ Written lender confirmation for this property
- ☐ Inspection and specialist follow-up complete
- ☐ Title and documents reviewed
- ☐ Insurance confirmed
- ☐ Cash and closing timeline confirmed

BEFORE COMPLETION

- ☐ Lawyer or notary retained and instructed
- ☐ Down payment and costs ready in the required form
- ☐ Insurance effective by the required date
- ☐ Utilities and moving arranged
- ☐ Wire instructions verified by a trusted phone number

AT POSSESSION

- ☐ Complete the agreed final walkthrough
- ☐ Confirm included items remain
- ☐ Collect keys, fobs and access details
- ☐ Photograph meter readings and any new issue
- ☐ Change locks or access codes where appropriate

IN THE FIRST YEAR

- ☐ Meet occupancy conditions for any B.C. exemption
- ☐ Claim the federal Home Buyers' Amount if eligible
- ☐ Track FHSA/HBP records and future HBP repayments
- ☐ Apply annually for the B.C. home owner grant
- ☐ Build a repair reserve and review insurance

2026 B.C. home owner grant: the full-grant assessed-value threshold is **\$2.075 million**. The grant is not automatic; eligible owners must apply for their principal residence each year.

YOUR 30-DAY ACTION PLAN

Week 1

Set your monthly ceiling, pull your credit reports, list debts, and open an FHSA if it fits your plan.

Week 2

Interview lenders or brokers, compare full mortgage terms, and obtain a written pre-approval.

Week 3

Choose representation, define must-haves, and review the purchase contract before pressure arrives.

Week 4

Tour homes inside the safe range, score them consistently, and prepare your offer and due-diligence plan.

Your purchase plan on one page



ROADMAP LINK Stages 1-4 + 9 · Record the budget, team, search and completion plan.

Monthly comfort zone

Must-haves

Maximum purchase price

Down payment available

Nice-to-haves

Closing-cost reserve

Emergency reserve after closing

Walk-away issues

Rate-hold expiry

PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS

ROLE	NAME	PHONE / EMAIL
Real estate professional		
Lender / mortgage broker		
Lawyer / notary		
Home inspector		
Insurance advisor		

KEEP THE DECISION SIMPLE

The right first home fits the budget, survives due diligence and still feels good after the excitement settles.

BUDGET

FINANCING

DOCUMENTS

INSPECTION

INSURANCE

LEGAL REVIEW

Official sources

1. **Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC), Buying a home.** Closing-cost range and purchase-cost categories. canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/services/buying-home.html
2. **FCAC, How much you need for a down payment.** Minimum down payment structure and mortgage insurance. canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/services/mortgages/down-payment.html
3. **Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, Minimum qualifying rate.** osfi-bsif.gc.ca/en/supervision/.../minimum-qualifying-rate-uninsured-mortgages
4. **Department of Finance Canada, mortgage reforms.** Insured-mortgage price cap and 30-year amortization eligibility. canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2024/10/...mortgage-reforms...
5. **Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Make the most of your FHSA.** canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/.../make-most-your-first-home-savings-account.html
6. **CRA, The Home Buyers' Plan.** \$60,000 withdrawal limit, FHSA combination and 2026-2028 repayment relief. canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/.../what-home-buyers-plan.html
7. **CRA, First-Time Home Buyers' Tax Credit.** canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/.../first-time-home-buyers-tax-credit.html
8. **Province of B.C., First time home buyers' program.** Eligibility, thresholds and occupancy rules. gov.bc.ca/.../property-transfer-tax/exemptions/first-time-home-buyers
9. **Province of B.C., Property transfer tax.** General rates. gov.bc.ca/.../property-transfer-tax
10. **Province of B.C., Newly built home exemption.** gov.bc.ca/.../exemptions/newly-built-home-exemption
11. **CRA, First-time home buyers' GST/HST rebate.** canada.ca/.../first-time-home-buyers-gst-hst-rebate/what-rebate.html
12. **Department of Finance Canada, Royal Assent announcement.** Federal rebate agreement window. canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2026/03/...royal-assent.html
13. **B.C. Home Buyer Rescission Period Regulation.** bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/175_2022
14. **BCFSA, Policy Statement #3.** Presale disclosure and seven-day rescission. bcfsa.ca/media/2326/download
15. **Province of B.C., Home owner grant.** 2026 threshold and application rules. gov.bc.ca/.../home-owner-grant

Important: This guide is general information, not legal, tax, mortgage or insurance advice. Program rules, lender policies and tax treatment can change. Confirm eligibility, calculations and deadlines with the relevant professional and official program before removing subjects or committing funds.