

A PRACTICAL DECISION GUIDE

Buy or Sell First?

Choose the order that fits your money, your comfort level, and what happens if the timing does not go perfectly.

PATH ONE

Buy first

You secure your next home before listing or completing the sale of your current one.

- You can qualify and carry both homes if the sale takes longer.
- Your deposit, down payment, and closing costs are available without immediate sale proceeds.
- Finding the right next home matters more than avoiding overlap.

Main pressure: two mortgages, taxes, insurance, utilities, and maintenance may overlap.

PATH TWO

Sell first

You know what your current home sold for before committing to the next purchase.

- You need the equity from your sale for the next down payment.
- You want a clear purchase budget before shopping seriously.
- You would rather manage temporary housing than risk carrying two homes.

Main pressure: you may need a flexible completion date, short-term rental, or two moves.

MAKE THE DECISION IN THIS ORDER

The safer path starts with three answers

There is no universal right answer. The strongest choice is the one that still works if your sale is slow, your purchase closes early, or your plans need to change.

01

Where is the money coming from?

Confirm whether your deposit, down payment, and closing costs depend on selling your current home.

02

Can you carry both homes?

Ask your mortgage professional to test the real monthly cost and qualification, not just the best-case timeline.

03

How flexible can you be?

Consider temporary housing, storage, a longer possession period, or moving twice if dates do not line up.

Trade-offs at a glance

WHAT MATTERS MOST	BUY FIRST	SELL FIRST
Budget clarity	Lower until your sale price is known.	Higher because your net sale proceeds are clearer.
Housing certainty	Higher because the next home is secured.	Lower until you find and complete the next purchase.
Timing pressure	Pressure shifts to selling the current home.	Pressure shifts to finding the next home.
Backup need	A plan for financing and carrying-cost overlap.	A plan for temporary housing, storage, or two moves.

Before you choose, confirm:

- ☐ Your realistic sale range and estimated net proceeds.
- ☐ Your mortgage qualification under both timing scenarios.
- ☐ Your maximum comfortable monthly overlap.
- ☐ Your preferred dates and backup if the timing moves.
- ☐ Your lawyer or notary has reviewed any unusual timing arrangement.

A useful middle path

Build the backup plan before making the offer.

A purchase may be written with a sale-of-property condition, or short-term bridge financing may help when firm sale and purchase dates overlap. Neither option is automatic: contract terms, lender approval, cost, and market conditions all matter.

Plain-English takeaway: Buy first if securing the right home matters most and you can safely handle an overlap. Sell first if budget certainty and lower financial risk matter most. Review the exact plan with your mortgage professional and real estate lawyer or notary before signing.