

Let the professionals at *Penn Homes* help make your experience with the purchase of your new home a great one. We will help guide you through this easy process and get you into your new home in before you know it.

Finding the Right Builder

Finding the Right Home

Getting a Loan

Designing Your Home

Planning to move

Closing on My Home

Living in My Home

# 1. Finding the Right Builder

## What should you look for?

The right builder is just as important to your new home as the perfect floor plan or perfect community.

## Things to expect from the right builder:

### Experience and Recognition

An experienced builder has built a reputation for quality homes constructed to strict standards. Years of building experience means that the builder can be counted on in the future for customer service and stability.

An experienced builder usually has won industry and community awards and recognition. That's a sure sign they are serious about building the perfect home for their customers.

To find an experienced builder, do some research and ask questions.

### Quality and Professionalism

You have to trust and respect your builder, because you'll work closely with them throughout the entire building process. Knowing that your builder provides a quality home can bring you years of peaceful living.

A professional builder will show you organization, teamwork and quality, because they take pride in their work.

Professional builders deliver quality, trouble-free homes that are fun to build, fun to move into and fun to live in.

Visit some of your builder's communities to see how they build as well as their finished products.

### Reliability

A reliable builder is someone you can count on to live up to their word, and will be there whenever you need them. Find out if you can count on your builder to follow up on your questions, deliver on their promises, and be available when you need them and provide quality service.

A reliable builder will provide a complete home with the fewest possible defects. But since every new home will require some maintenance, a reliable builder will guide and educate you on the maintenance of your new home, even after you have moved in.

### Customer Satisfaction

You want a builder who truly cares about you. If your builder promotes a positive environment within its organization, from sales counselors to construction managers, that good attitude will most likely reflect in customer satisfaction.

Don't be afraid to get personal testimonies from homeowners in the builder's communities. Most homeowners will have no problem telling you exactly how they feel about their home and their builder.

### Quality Assurance

What can you expect in addition to a great floor plan and price? Make sure the builder applies good building practices that have your long-term interests in mind. Your home should be built to save you money and to avoid future problems.

Does your builder do more than just meet building code requirements? What extra measures are taken to ensure your builder's home are the best quality and value?

Will the builder be there for you once you are living in your new home? What exactly can they offer you after you move in? Look for the type of warranty program the builder offers to be sure it is right for you and your new home.

How quickly does the builder respond to customer problems or warranty issues? Is an effort made to visually review all of your concerns, or do they simply tell you it is not under warranty? A quality builder will address all of your warranty concerns in a timely manner and do some research before giving you an answer.

### Variety

Options allow you to put your personal touch on your new home, whether it is product or material upgrades or differences in the actual floor plan.

The right builder will provide you with the options that will best suit your needs and has the knowledge, experience and expertise to help you make appropriate choices to personalize your home design.

### Value

Smart buyers don't just measure quality by square footage and price alone. Smart buyers' value:

The quality of service they get from the builder.

The quality of the material and craftsmanship in their home, the floor plan, the value of their long-term investment.

And most important, smart buyers measure quality in the peace of mind they have when they move into their new home.

## 2. Finding the Right Home

What makes a house the “right home”?

Selecting the right home is a very exciting process, but what makes a house the “perfect home?” Before you begin your search, ask yourself these questions:

Where do I want to live?

What can I afford?

What are my Needs vs. Wants?

Once you have the answers to these questions, you will know how to find the right home-the home that fits.

Where do I want to live?

Deciding where you want to live can be a matter of your lifestyle, so you have to decide what your priorities are.

Community conveniences

The community you choose should accommodate your lifestyle priorities.

Do you enjoy dining out, or going to the movies, shopping or nightlife? If so, then you will want to live near a variety of entertainment and shopping options where everything is just around the corner.

Perhaps you like peace and quiet and most of your activities are centered around your home. You may consider living in the suburbs, or even in a more rural setting.

How close do you need to be to your job? Is it a commute that you can tolerate?

And if you have children, how close are you to their school? What schools would they attend?

Community Amenities

To most people, amenities in the community can be considered wants, but for some they are needs. Community amenities can include things like a recreation center or clubhouse, swimming pools, tennis and basketball courts. Some communities are gated; others feature lakes, parks, sidewalks or hiking and biking trails. If there are certain amenities you require in a community, be sure to keep them in mind when searching for your new home.

What can I afford?

It is important to know what price range you can afford in order to realistically narrow your search. You want a home that will fit comfortably into your budget, taking into account your expenses and anything extra.

To get an estimate of what you can afford, use our [Mortgage Calculator](#)

For a more accurate estimate, get pre-approved for a loan. This will give you a more precise idea of what your monthly house payments will be.

What are my Needs vs. Wants?

Once you know how much you can afford, find out what you need in a home, what you want, and what you can or can't live without. Your lifestyle will help determine what your needs and wants are. It is important that your new home have everything you need before you get everything you want.

Here are some examples to help you to define your Needs and Wants when looking for a new home.

You will *need*:

A floor plan with comfortable amount of square footage and lot size

Enough bedrooms and bathrooms to accommodate your family

Adequate amount of storage space

A home with appropriate living accommodations when selecting a one- or two-story home (You may want a two-story home with the master bedroom downstairs, or you might prefer all living quarters on the same level.)

Be sure to take your future plans into account when determining your Needs and Wants. For example, if you are planning to start a family, then you will need to plan for the appropriate accommodations and space.

You may *want*:

Certain types of flooring (i.e. Special carpeting, wood floors, tile etc.)

Specific colors of paint for interior and exterior, carpet color, cabinets and counter tops

Track-lighting or other special light fixtures

Certain brand or types of appliances

Extra rooms for recreation, study, or entertaining (i.e. formal dining room, game room, guest bedroom, etc.)

Some Wants can be easily incorporated into your home later on. If your budget is an issue, make sure you get what you need, and save for what you want. Whatever your budget allows, choose your wants wisely and keep future plans in mind.

Make a list

So when it comes time to find the right home, make a list of your needs vs. wants so you can find the right home! And once you [Find the Right Builder](#) and you know what to look for when finding the Right Home, you can start your search!

***Penn Homes*** has something for everyone, and we build in communities all over the Shreveport/Bossier and surrounding areas.

### 3. Getting a Loan

Make it easy on yourself. Let us help!

Learn about the loan process and get started!

#### Understand Your Credit

Why is it important to have good credit?

Financial history is a major factor when being considered for a home loan. It's important to know just what shape your credit is in before you apply for your loan.

What exactly is a credit score?

Why is it important to have good credit?

How can I check my credit?

How is my score determined?

What can I do to improve my credit?

What exactly is a Credit Score?

Lenders use a credit score to assess the level of risk of a borrower. It helps them to determine whether or not the borrower can repay a loan on time. To a lender, a high credit score means a lower risk.

There are several different scoring systems used, but the most common is the FICO score. FICO scores are based strictly on consumer credit reports. We suggest you check these scores before applying for your home loan.

Why use credit scores?

Your credit score allows the lender to evaluate your credit situation quickly, which speeds up the loan process.

Everyone is treated equally. All scores are based upon the same criteria for consistency.

Your score can change. The better you manage your credit, the more likely your score is to improve. With an improved credit score, you may not be held accountable for bad scores in your past.

More people can get credit. Credit scores help the lender to easily recognize the risk involved; as a result, more people are offered credit.

Credit scores can help lower rates. Overall, lenders are able to lower their rates, because more people are allowed to borrow.

Why is it important to have a good credit score?

Your score determines your credit risk level. This may greatly influence what your available credit will be as well as the terms and conditions (interest rates, etc.) that are offered to you by your lender.

Good credit scores generally help you get

Better credit offers

Lower interest rates

Quicker processing with credit approvals.

Though a higher credit score can be helpful, there is more to obtaining credit than your credit score.

How can I check my credit?

There are three main credit-reporting agencies where lenders obtain your report and scores:

Equifax (800) 685-1111

Experian (formerly TRW) (888) 397-3742

TransUnion (800) 888-4213

You can also request a copy of your report from these agencies. It is recommended to do that at least once a year, or six months before making a major purchase (like a new home). That way you have time to check for mistakes and make corrections, or improve your credit if necessary.

What if I find a mistake?

If a mistake should appear on your credit report, contact the agency for an investigation. If there truly is a mistake, proper steps will be taken to making such corrections. Be sure to that your lender is aware of any incorrect information on your report in case you are in the process of getting a loan. While incorrect or incomplete information might not drastically affect your credit score, it is better to be safe than sorry.

What can I find on my credit report?

Your credit report contains all the details of your credit history. This is what FICO scores are based on. Besides your identification information, you can find both negative and positive facts concerning:

The types of credit that you have

The length of your credit history

The amount of used credit (how much you owe)

Your payments history (were your payments on time)

Requests for new credit

Credit report inquiries (how many times your report has been checked and who asked for the report)

Public records and collection items (information about bankruptcies, foreclosures, court records, debt from collection agencies, etc.)

How is my score determined?

The actual credit score is calculated by an equation that evaluates the information gathered from your credit report. For a lender, the credit score number represents your future credit risk level, which may influence their decision.

What does it mean?

Once your credit score is calculated; that number represents the health of your credit. The higher your score, the better your credit is. Along with the credit score number, you are given as many as four reasons (the top four reasons) explaining why the score is not higher. This will help explain why a lender may have denied a request, or did not offer you better loan terms. These reasons can also be helpful when searching for mistakes on the report, or looking for ways to improve your credit health.

What can I do to improve my credit?

Credit scores can change, but it doesn't happen overnight. Keep in mind that making improvements will take time before your score actually increases.

Things that help to improve credit scores:

Pay off as much debt as soon as you can. The less you owe, the better your credit.

Try to keep your credit and balances as low as possible.

Make your payments on time! If nothing else, make sure your house payments or rent are ALWAYS on time. This can directly determine the conditions of your home loan.

Always be responsible when opening new accounts, especially if you've had trouble in the past. This will help re-establish your credit history.

Don't open a lot of new credit cards, especially if you haven't had credit for very long. A lot of credit cards with a short credit history could have a negative effect on your score.

Don't close unused credit cards immediately, just keep the balance at \$0 until your score has improved.

If you are rate shopping among various lenders, do all your credit inquiries within a short period of time. This will let the credit agencies know that you are rate shopping, and not opening a lot of new accounts.

Check your credit report for mistakes either once a year, or at least six months before you make a major purchase, like a house or a car.

Always request your credit report and credit scores directly from the credit agencies or an organization with permission to provide credit reports to their customers. This will not affect your score.

Don't check your credit unless you need to. Too many unnecessary inquiries may have a negative affect on your score.

Only apply for and open new accounts when necessary and then manage them responsibly.

### What Can I Afford?

Get an idea of how much you can spend on your new home.

It helps to know how your new home will fit into your budget. There are two ways to find out:

Use the Mortgage Calculator to get a rough estimate of what you can afford.

For a more accurate estimate, Get Pre-approved for a loan with *Any Financial Intuition*.

I have found the right house, but I am not sure I can afford it.

If credit is an issue, what can I do to improve my credit?

What can I live with and what can I live without? (Needs v. Wants)

### **Should I wait and save Money?**

Wait...No! Save...Sure! Saving money is always a good idea, but if you wait, you may miss out on great opportunities.

The problems with waiting to buy your dream home:

Someone else *will*.

It may not be offered anywhere else. Sometimes floor plans are community specific.

Interest rates will increase.

The overall market can change; the way lenders view loan criteria, what they will or will not accept, etc...

If you continue to rent, you may never see that money again, while owning your own home is a solid investment.

## **Get Pre-approved**

Get a more accurate estimate of what you can afford.

The best way to get an accurate estimate of your monthly payments is

By filling out a loan application with *Any Financial Intuition* for pre-approval:

You will get a FREE Credit Check.

You won't have to re-apply for a loan in the future.

To prepare for your applications, you'll need the following information:

Your home addresses for the past 2 years

Your landlords' addresses and phone numbers for the past 2 years

The name and addresses of your employers for the past 2 years

Your W-2 forms for the last 2 years

Pay stubs for the last month that show your gross monthly salary and all deductions

The last three statements for all of your checking, savings, investments and IRA, accounts

The names, addresses, account numbers, balances and monthly payments on all open revolving and installment loans

For a VA loan, Certificate of Eligibility, and/or a DD 214, and/or Statement of Service

This may seem like a bit of work to gather this information, but we promise it will save you time and be more efficient no matter how you fill out your application.

## **Apply for a loan**

You have chosen a home that suits you best; filling out the loan application is the easy part!

If you haven't already, choose a lender, and contact them to find out what your options are.

## 4. Designing My Home

Choices! Choices! Choices! How will you personalize your home?

You get to make your design selections with our Decorator after signing the sales agreement. Choosing the exterior brick and paint color, the interior wall color, cabinets, and flooring are some of the decisions that will allow you to add your own personal style and to create a unique environment that you can call "home."

Homebuyers who start from the ground up have more control over their design choices. The team at Penn Homes has put together a wide variety of popular and attractive color combinations to help you choose the right combination for the interior and exterior of your new home.

For homebuyers purchasing Display Homes that are ready for immediate move-in, Penn Homes design team has already selected the stylish interior and exterior combinations specifically for that house.

### A Home with Personality

Some builders may encourage you to visit a design center to seek guidance from a highly qualified professional. At ***Penn Homes***, we have a Professional Decorator, equipped with the appropriate skills and tools necessary to help you with design selections.

***Penn Homes*** will provide all the convenient and appropriate resources you need to design a home with personality.

What are my ***Penn Homes*** Design Choices?

***Penn Homes*** is here to help you design the home that fits your lifestyle.

This is a list of features typically available to select from:

(Feature selections and available options may vary between communities and among each Penn Homes product line.)

Exterior brick/siding and paint color	Interior lighting
Interior wall paint	Exterior lighting
Flooring to include carpet, tile, laminate or wood	Cabinets
Hardware to include door knobs and faucets	Countertop
Interior and exterior doors	Bath tile
	Appliance color/style

***Penn Homes*** offers homebuyers one of the largest selections of quality features available. Quality brand products and materials are used in all ***Penn Homes***. Whether you choose standard, or upgraded features, ***Penn Homes*** helps you design the home that fits your budget, style and personality.

## 5. Planning My Move

Organization is the key to a successful transition.

You probably already have a good idea of the many different things you need to do before the move, but you wouldn't want to leave out any important steps. We've put together a list of things and a timetable that will help you to prepare for a smooth and successful move into your new home:

### Moving Checklist

### What to Pack

### Packing Materials

### Know the New Community

Planning your move could be an ongoing process while your home is being built, or it could be something that happens very quickly when getting into a home immediately. Either way, take the time to prepare and get organized. The more you plan your move, the smoother the transition will be.

## 6. Closing on My Home

You are almost home! **Closing is the last step before you become a new homeowner.**

This process can be broken down into 4 sections:

**Before Closing**

**What to Bring**

**At the Closing Table**

**Post-Closing**

Do not hesitate to ask questions. Remember, your Sales Professional is there to help guide and prepare you for this meeting.

Your Sales Professional is also responsible for scheduling your closing appointment. This estimated date is determined on the day your contract is signed and subject to change depending on the timeliness of your loan approval, the construction of your home, etc.

**Before Closing**

You should start preparing to close as soon as you sign the contract with your Sales Professional. Be sure to carefully read through your contract and to ask questions. Before closing, there are certain things you will need to take care of to ensure that you will be ready to close on your home at the scheduled time.

**Begin working on meeting your Conditional Approval Requirements.** You may need to allow extra time in order to fulfill certain criteria. Closing CANNOT take place until these requirements have been met.

**Understand the sales contract and lender documents before closing.** Your Sales Professional and your lender are there to lead you through this process. Please direct any questions to your Sales Professional or your lender prior to closing. They are knowledgeable and trained to answer your questions. It is important that you have a clear understanding of the documents you will be signing before you meet with the title company. The Closing Agent from the title company is simply there to present and to notarize your signed documents. Closing Agents are not allowed to explain any documents that have not been produced by the title company.

**Start looking for Homeowners Insurance.** You MUST have insurance on the home before closing. Talk to a number of insurance companies to get the best rate. Normally, the first insurance payment is collected on your settlement statement at closing.

**Get a head start and plan your move.** Schedule time to get your belongings sorted and packed for the move. This can be a large project for some people.

**Each person on the loan must be present at time of closing.** This means if you have a co-signer, both parties must attend. The state of Texas requires both spouses be present at closing, even if the loan is only for one spouse. If for some reason one or all parties cannot be present at the time of closing, a person must be appointed the Power of Attorney to sign for the missing party.

If you or another party will be absent, please be prepared to appoint a Power of Attorney before closing.

To appoint a Power of Attorney, a property-specific Power of Attorney document must be signed by all parties (you, your spouse or co-signer and the person appointed) and notarized. This document must be submitted to the lender and Title Company prior to closing, along with a copy of a valid government-issued photo identification card of the appointed person. The person who is appointed the original Power of Attorney must be present at closing and verified. The absent person(s) will be asked to verify over the phone that the person who has been appointed the original Power of Attorney is present and has approval to sign for them at closing.

**Before you can close on your home, the home MUST be complete. *Penn Homes* requires that the home is 100% complete before the homeowner gets their keys. A *Penn Homes* consultant checks almost 300 items at four different intervals during the construction process to ensure that each detail is perfect and that the home meets all standard codes and regulations before closing. You will then be invited to the final walk-through with our warranty service team. Because we believe in delivering quality product and service, you will not be allowed to close on your home until it satisfies *both* you and *Penn Homes*.**

#### What to Bring

In addition to meeting all the pre-closing requirements, there are certain items that you will need to bring with you in order for a smooth closing. Without these items, your closing may be delayed. Your Sales Professional will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

You will need:

All parties must be present to sign (You, your spouse, co-signer or person appointed the original Power of Attorney)

All parties must have valid government-issued picture identification. (Driver's License or Identification Card)

Your Homeowners insurance must be in place. The payment for the first year insurance coverage will be collected on your settlement statement.

A cashier's check made payable to the title company for the amount of your closing cost. The amount of closing may be based on your Good Faith Estimate. In this case, if your cashier's check exceeds the required amount for closing, you will get a refund. However, if your check doesn't quite meet the required amount, you may pay the difference with a personal check.

Your personal checkbook in case you have to pay the difference at the time of closing.

**Failure to bring any one of the listed items could result in delay of your closing.**

#### At the Closing Table

The date has arrived. You are organized and prepared. You have fulfilled all of the requirements and brought all the items needed to close on your new home.

Closing is when the sale is finalized. Your Sales Professional will not be present; however, they will help you to prepare for your meeting with the title company. At this closing meeting you will sit down with a Closing Agent from the title company of our choice and review your closing documents that are supplied by the lender.

## 7. Living in My Home

**Finally, you are home and all the hard work is done.**

Now it's time for the fun—making your new house into your dream home. You don't have to be a professional decorator to create an environment that is stylish and unique to your personality. Nor do you have to be a professional handyman to keep your new home in great condition. You just need to know the basics.

First, make sure you know what to do before decorating. Then move on to the basics of *Decorating My Home*, from *Walls to Furniture Arrangement*. Also, check out the *Common Maintenance Tips for all seasons*. Let us help you keep your home looking great!