HOW TO BUY A HOME IN CALIFORNIA

Jake Leslie

Luxury Collective

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Luxury Collective

Hello!
I'm Jake Leslie

A native of Cape Town, Jake Leslie grew up surrounded by exceptional architecture and natural beauty, experiences that sparked a lifelong passion for design, construction, and real estate. Jake began his career in Cape Town, working under one of the region's premier contractors, where he developed expertise in project management, construction, and coordinating multiple teams.

In 1990, he moved to the United States and settled in the creative hub of Venice, California, establishing himself in a live/work studio on Abbot Kinney Boulevard. Immersed in the city's vibrant artistic culture, Jake built a successful career in the entertainment industry, serving as an Art Director and later a Production Designer for more than two decades.

As Venice emerged into one of Southern California's most sought-after neighborhoods, Jake recognized its potential early. Leveraging his construction background, design expertise, market knowledge, and entrepreneurial instincts, he became one of the area's early successful home renovators and investors. Following a series of profitable projects, he expanded into residential design and renovation, leading several multimillion-dollar transformations of homes in some of Los Angeles' most iconic neighborhoods.

Throughout these projects, clients increasingly sought Jake's guidance not only for design and construction but also during the home-buying process. His ability to identify value, envision potential, and navigate complex transactions naturally led him to pursue a career in real estate. Today, Jake is known for his unwavering commitment to his clients. Many have become repeat clients and lifelong friends, a testament to the trust and relationships he builds throughout the process.

Jake is dedicated to helping each client find the right property by combining attentive listening, strategic negotiation, market insight, and straightforward advice. His extensive experience in design and construction provides clients with a unique advantage, offering valuable perspective on property condition, renovation potential, construction costs, and investment opportunities while touring homes. This expertise enables buyers to make informed decisions with confidence and clarity.

By bringing together deep market knowledge, design and construction expertise, and a proven ability to negotiate successful outcomes, Jake offers a comprehensive approach to real estate that helps clients maximize value and achieve their goals with confidence.

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Buyer's Roadmap

1. Finding and choosing to work with an agent you're comfortable with will set you up for success from the start

2. PREAPPROVAL

The process of a lender evaluating your financial information and credit history to determine loan eligibility and the maximum amount you can borrow, before you start shopping for a home.

3. HOME SEARCH

Based on your wants and needs, I'll be able to search and curate a tailored list of properties for you to review. Then, we'll schedule showings to visit the ones that catch your eye, giving you an in-person look at your potential future home.

4. OFFERS & NEGOTIATIONS

We will put together an offer and negotiate all terms.

5. UNDER CONTRACT

We now have a legal and binding contract. The first few days you will typically:

- Deposit earnest money
- Order home inspection
- Follow Further Instruction

6. INSPECTIONS

In the purchase contract we have a time period to inspect the property. Once this is complete we will negotiate the requested repairs

7. FINAL DETAILS

If there is a loan involved, you will need to satisfy loan obligations such as the appraisal and purchasing homeowners insurance

8. CLOSING

We will conduct thefinal walk through in the 24 hours prior to closing. Make sure funds are wired, and let's go to the closing table to complete signing and get keys!

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Getting To Know You

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM ME? AND TODAY

TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU

Who will be living with you?
What scares you about buying a house?
What are you excited about in your new house?
What don't you like about where you are living now?

REAL ESTATE EXPERIENCE

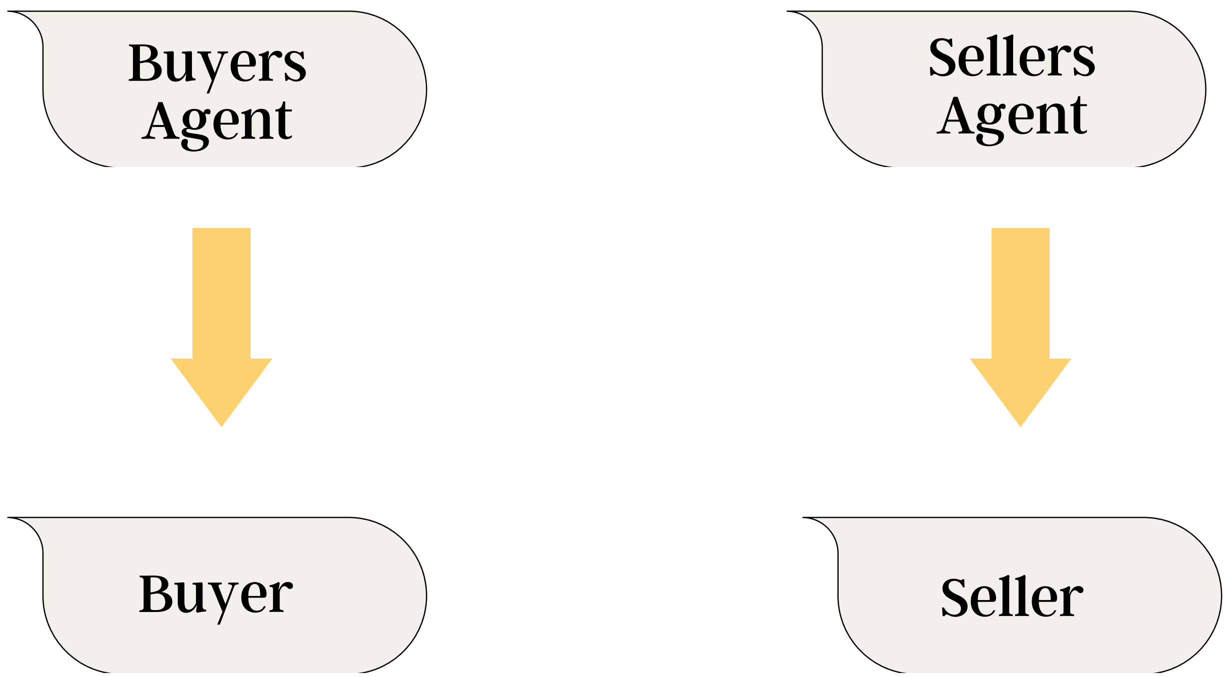
When is the last time you rented?
When is the last time you bought a car?
Who do you know that recently bought a house?
What have you learned from the internet about buying a home?
When is the last time you bought or sold a home and how did you like that process?

MAKING DECISIONS

Is there anyone else helping you make a decision?
Significant other, family member, friend, etc?
(So that I can include them in conversation)

Buyer Representation
Vs.
Seller Representation

You have the right to be represented in a real estate transaction



IN EITHER SITUATION

- REALTOR® Duty to his client: Obedience, Loyalty, Disclosure, Confidentiality,Accountability and Reasonable Care/Diligence.
- May not disclose to buyer that the seller will accept a price less than the asking price unless otherwise instructed in separate writing by the seller.
- May not disclose to buyer that the seller will accept a price less than the asking price unless otherwise instructed in separate writing by the seller.
- May not disclose to the seller that the buyer will pay a price greater than the price submitted in a written offer to the seller unless otherwise instructed in a separate writing by the buyer.
- May not disclose any confidential information, unless otherwise instructed in writing by the respective party or required to disclose by the Real Estate License Act or a court order.
- Shall treat all parties to the transaction honestly.
- Shall comply with the Real Estate License Act.

2. PRE-APPROVAL

OUR WORK BEGINS ***BEFORE*** WE PREVIEW HOMES

Securing pre-approval for a mortgage is ***the first and most critical*** step in the home buying process. It is a straightforward process that will give you peace of mind and a competitive edge when shopping for your dream home.

A mortgage pre-approval is an official document that confirms your ability to obtain a mortgage loan. It is not a final approval, but it does give you the assurance that you are eligible to borrow and for how much, and the ability to move quickly on homes for your search.

If you're ready to take the next step towards homeownership, let's go through the process of getting pre-approved for a mortgage.

PRE-APPROVED VS PRE-QUALIFIED

PRE-QUALIFED

A pre-qualification is a preliminary evaluation by a mortgage lender to determine your estimated home loan affordability. It gives you a rough idea of the loan amount you may be approved for when the time comes time to search.

Prequalifications are based on self-reported financial information, rather than a credit report or financial document review, resulting in a general estimate.

VS.

PRE-APPROVED

A mortgage preapproval takes the process to the next level. A pre-approval is a more comprehensive evaluation of your financial information and stability by a lender. The lender will verify your information using documents such as pay stubs,
tax returns, and a summary of your assets.

This results in a stronger indication of your affordability and adds credibility to your offer compared to a prequalification.

NECESSARY INFORMATION

Personal Information

- Full legal name
- Copy of Drivers License
- Social Security number(s) and copy of Social Security Card
- Residence address for the past two years.
- Phone number

Employment

- Name, addresses and phone numbers of current employer(s) for the last 2 years Accurate gross in come information - pay stubs for the last two months
- W-2 forms and tax return forms for the past two years

Finances

- Addresses, account numbers, current balances for all checking
- Addresses, account numbers, current balances for all checking, savings, and other deposit accounts
- Copy of last months bank statements for all accounts
- Addresses, account numbers, current unpaid balances, and monthly payment amounts for all debts

If Applicable

- Information about all real estate owned and existing mortgages – 1 year lease agreement
- Divorce decree(s)
- Proof of child support income or obligation
- Social security and/or other benefit award letters Veterans- certificate of eligibility and DD214 (discharge paper) – DD1747 (off post housing card)
- If self employed or commissioned – tax returns for previous two years/ YTD profit and loss statement
- Proof of home owner's insurance

GETTING APPROVED

This process allows your lender or loan officer to get a complete understanding of your finances. To make sure everything goes smoothly, it's a good idea to gather some information ahead of time. Here's what you can expect to provide:

Proof of Income

Income and employment documents, such as tax returns, W-2s, and 1099s.

Verification of Assets

Asset statements on bank, retirement, and brokerage accounts.

List of Debts

Monthly payment obligations to calculate your debt-to-income ratio/Credit Pull

Identification

Driver's license or Social Security Card

Other

Records of rent payments, divorce, bankruptcy, telling the lender ANYTHING having to do with your finances (good and bad) and foreclosure.

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FINANCES

A lender will be able to answer all of your questions regarding financing and give you a clear understanding of:

1. Your maximum allowable purchase price
2. Your anticipated mortgage interest rate
3. Your probable monthly housing payment
4. The appropriate loan program for you

Mortgage Loans Are Not One Size Fits All

While conventional mortgages are the most popular, this type only scratches the surface of the market, one of which might be better for your situation. Ask as many questions as necessary to feel comfortable moving forward.

Here are some questions to ask potential lenders:

What is the best loan program for me? Why?

Do I qualify for any special discounts or programs?

How much of a down payment do I need to make?

What interest rate can you offer when I find the house I want?

What fees do you charge, is there an origination fee?

What will my closing costs be? (They tend to be 3% of the purchase price on top of the average 3.5% down payment.

Do you have a program for people that claim too many deductions?

Top DON'Ts during the buying process

* DO NOT make any career moves like changing or quitting jobs.

* DO NOT purchase anything on credit, apply for new credit in any form, or apply for credit to consolidate.

* DO NOT close credit card accounts; it may increase your debt to income ratio.

* DO NOT withdraw or deposit large sums into your checking or savings accounts.

* DO NOT transfer money between accounts, unless receiving complete documentation from your bank itemizing all transfers.

* DO NOT allow your bank accounts to go into the negative, even if you have overdraft protection.

* DO NOT send any wire transfers throughout the loan process to anyone, without speaking directly to your loan officer or REALTOR® on the phone first.

* DO NOT keep cash in a safe or an overseas accounts if you plan to use these funds as down payment. Inquire about how and when would be the best time to put funds into your U.S. bank account if needed.

* DO NOT have a friend or relative pay for anything related to the purchase of the home (appraisal, earnest money, down payment, etc.) since gifts are only allowed under certain guidelines.

* DO NOT give your personal information to anyone else who might run your credit report as credit inquiries may hurt your score.

* IF YOU NEED TO DO ONE OF THESE ASK ME FIRST

3. HOME SEARCH

Let's get down to business!

Before embarking on your home search journey, we have to set some groundwork.

Here are 4 ways to prepare yourself so the buying journey is as smooth and stress-free as possible!

1. ***Know your must-haves***: Clearly define what you want in your future home. It's extremely difficult to find the right home if you don't know what you're looking for.

2. ***Know your deal breakers***: Knowing what you don't want will help narrow your search to more promising homes.

3. ***Have patience***: The market has shifted but we are still overall in a seller's market with occasional multiple offers and inventory challenges. Being patient is key so you can make an informed decision that best fits your needs.

4. Watch for email alerts: I will set up a personalized search that will alert you the moment a listing goes live (sometimes even before it will hit the market). If one catches your eye, simply reach out to me, and we'll schedule a viewing asap.

5. You should start looking at homes once you get pre-approved and you can get approved as much as 3 months in advance. So what is the perfect MOVE-IN month?

6. You will search for homes through my emails, website, Zillow, FSBO's, and possible off markets I or you find. We we view homes in bulk as much as possible. If you do not like the house then WALK OUT.

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4. OFFERS & NEGOTIATIONS

Before we begin to write an offer, we will discuss some important details needed to submit:

- Offer price
- Earnest money (Deposit you get back)
  Option Money (Fee you do not get back)
- Closing date
- Closing costs
- Inclusions/Exclusions (Furniture)
- Title Policy/Survey
- Leaseback

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CRAFTING AN OFFER

Home Condition + Comparable Sales + Demand & Interest + Do You Love It?

When it comes to making an offer, I will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the current real estate market, including any trends or context on what is required to make a strong offer. This will give you a well-rounded perspective, so you can make an informed decision that aligns with your unique needs and goals.

OFFERS AND NEGOTIATIONS

The“best offer” can vary based on your needs,the terms of your financing,the right timing, and of course,the right price.Understanding the different components of an offer will help you create ornegotiate the offerthat makes the most sense for you.

CONTINGENCIES

Contingencies are benchmarks buyers set that need to be met for the transaction to continue moving forward. From a seller’s point of view, the fewer contingencies required for the transaction to close, the better.

EARNEST MONEY DEPOST

A earnest money deposit, also known as a good-faith deposit is paid by the buyer to prove they are serious about purchasing the home. A sizable earnest money amount can carry weight in an a competitive market.

CLOSING TIMELINE

The closing date is typically 30-45 days after a purchase agreement has been executed, but can vary depending on the method you choose to finance the home purchase. Make sure you choose or negotiate a closing date that fits your needs.

CLOSING COSTS

Seller closing costs are often deducted from the proceeds of the home sale. Buyers typically pay their costs out of pocket. Sellers can help pay a percentage but they are not obligated to as the seller has their own closing costs.

INSPECTION TIME PERIODS

An inspection (or due diligence contingency) gives the buyer the right to have the home inspected by a set date or in a time period. You may back out during this inspection period for whatever reason.

OFFER PRICE

In making a competitive offer, remember the offer price is just the starting point. A high offer price might outweigh the other variables, or it might not. It’s important to evaluate the impact of all contingencies and get context on the sellers motivation.

FINANCING - LOAN TYPE

There are multiple types of mortgages, and some are easier to satisfy obligations than others. Appraisal contingencies also come with financing, lenders want to be sure the amount their lending is in line with the value of the home.

CASH

Cash offers for homes can be appealing to sellers because they eliminate the potential for financing contingencies and can often close the deal more quickly, providing the seller with a quick and efficient transaction.

5. YOU'RE UNDER CONTRACT!

Congratulations, your offer has been accepted!

I will carefully review important dates and information you will need to know to ensure a successful closing and send you a helpful checklist. The next steps of your unique home purchase may vary some but here's an overview of what will happen next:

1. Earnest money must be deposited in less than 3 days before 5 pm
2. The Inspector must be hired and scheduled
3. Negotiate repairs
4. Submit additional documents to lender and order appraisal

Closing will be here before you know it!

6. INSPECTIONS & REPAIRS

The home inspection is one of the most crucial stages of the process, an done of the most likely to end the deal after the offer has been accepted. A home inspection is not required, but highly recommended to uncover any issues in the home that would have otherwise been unknown

Typical home inspection timeframe:

7-14 Days

What you need to do as a buyer:

Order the appropriate inspections to get a full scope of the condition of the home and to address any concerns.

- Standard inspection
- Wood destroying insects
- Mold & air quality
- Radon
- Lead-based paint
- Pool Inspection
- Plumbing Inspection

After your complete the inspection, your options are:

1. Accept the property as-is

2. Terminate the contract and we'll go back to previewing other homes

3. End a repair proposal to negotiate defective items to be repaired or addressed

There are many strategies to help negotiate with the seller after a home inspection, like getting repair quotes, knowing the market, or prioritizing certain repairs.

What is an reasonable repair request?

- Major health and safety concerns (like mold, water damage, or fire hazards)
- Structural issues (like foundation or roof problems)
- Some building code violations (like improperly functioning electrical or HVAC systems)

What is a unreasonable repair request?

- Cosmetic repairs (like paint colors, landscaping, or trim work)
- Normal wear and tear (like driveway issues or floor scuffs)
- Inexpensive repairs (like holes in walls from pictures or loose fixtures) (It depends on every house)

7. FINAL DETAILS

....So close to closing now!

These are some of the details that are happening as we're leading up to the closing!

Appraisal

If a mortgage is involved, an appraisal will be required to assess whether the value of the home is in line with the agreed-upon purchase price.

Obtain Mortgage

Loan processors will carefully review your mortgage applications and verify all required information, after which the underwriter assesses any inconsistencies. This is why it’s essential to have your credit report and property details ready, and to avoid making any major changes to your employment or finances during this time.

Title Search

Title companies conduct a thorough title search to verify ownership and the seller's ability to transfer the home. This crucial step protects the interests of both the buyer and the seller, safeguarding the buyer's future ownership rights and ensuring a smooth transfer of ownership.

8. CLOSING

Closing Disclosures

You will receive a closing disclosure that outlines the exact terms and costs of the loan. This document requires your review and final approval to complete the loan process.

Final Walk Through

It is recommended to complete a final walk-through of the home within the 24 hours leading up to closing to ensure repairs have been made (unless you hired a re-inspection) and the home is in the same or better condition.

Closing Table

You and the seller will sign the final paperwork, transfer the necessary funds, and you'll get the keys to your new home the next day. Make sure to bring your IDs that are NOT expired and if you are legally married bring your spouse even if they are not on the loan.

BEST PRACTICES FOR BUYING IN 2026

The housing market was largely drivenby the rapid increase in mortgage rates last year. However, as we move into 2023, we're seeing some positive shifts in the market. Home price appreciation is slowing from the recent frenzy, mortgage rates are becoming more favorable, inflation is stabilizing, and overall market activity is starting to increase. These are all positive indicators for a healthier housing market for buyers in 2023. However, we are still in a sellers market.

ASK FOR HELP.

Referred to as “buying points” or a “rate buydown,” these allow the seller to buy down a buyer’s rate for the first few years of your loan or the whole loan as a seller concession. The ability to secure a lower mortgage rate increases affordability and reduces your monthly mortgage.

MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS DURING THE PROCESS

For some home buyers, it's difficult to manage high expectations for finding and buying a home in a complicated market. Take a deep breath and know I am by your side to help you so you can make the best decisions for your family during the process.

LEAN ON A PROFESSIONAL, NOT NATIONAL HEADLINES

Media misinformation can cause fear and uncertainty in the housing market. I have the expertise and knowledge to provide accurate information and context on the local market. Allow me to separate fact from fiction and give you the confidence to make informed decisions.

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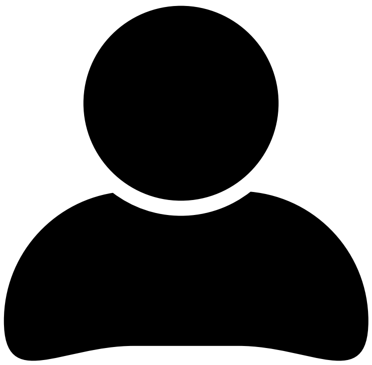
CLIENT TESTIMONIALS



Jake found me my dream home, and I truly don't think I would have it without him. I was living in Venice and casually looking for more space and nature, but nothing in my budget felt right. Out of nowhere, Jake sent me a listing in Topanga and told me we had to see it that day. The moment I walked in, I knew it was the one.

What made it even more incredible was the competition. There were six all cash offers on the table, plus multiple other buyers. Somehow, Jake got my offer accepted. I still don't know how he pulled it off.

From there, he didn't miss a beat. He lined up great inspectors, guided me through every detail, and made sure I was protected every step of the way. His background in design and construction really showed. He knew exactly what to look for and gave me total confidence in the purchase.
The closing wasn't easy, but Jake stayed calm, strategic, and pushed everything through when it mattered most.

Today, I'm raising my kids in a home I absolutely love. Jake is knowledgeable, responsive, and truly fights for his clients. I can't recommend him enough.

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CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

My name is Jared, and I'm writing to highly recommend Jake Leslie.
Jake helped us find our dream home. We were extremely selective, looked at more than 35 homes over the course of three months, and still couldn't find the right fit. At one point, we were ready to write an offer on a property, but Jake advised against it and told us he would not let us move forward because he genuinely believed it was not a good property. That level of honesty and protection is rare and showed us immediately that he had our best interests at heart.

What truly sets Jake apart is his level of dedication and responsiveness. He was always available, he picked up the phone or called back almost immediately every single time. That kind of reliability gave us total confidence, especially in such a competitive market.

Even during moments when we thought we had found "the one"including a time when a seller was willing to meet our price—but ultimately decided the home wasn't right for us, Jake remained completely patient and supportive. He never showed frustration, only professionalism and a genuine commitment to making sure we made the right decision. A true professional.

When we finally found the right home, there were over 10 offers on the property. Jake not only positioned us competitively, but got us to the front of the line and secured our offer. He even went as far as picking me up and driving to San Diego on short notice to make sure we didn't miss the opportunity, something that ultimately made all the difference. Without that level of commitment, we likely would have never gotten the house
.
I can't recommend Jake highly enough. If you'd like to speak with me directly, feel free to ask Jake for my number, I'd be more than happy to share my experience.

Jared

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LOOKING FORWARD TO HELPING YOU WITH YOUR HOME BUYING JOURNEY!

JAKE LESLIE

REAL ESTATE ADVISOR

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LuxuryCollective.

lets connect on social media!

Put my passion and knowledge to work for you!