BUYERS / FREE DOWNLOAD

First-Time Buyer Handbook

A straightforward starting point for your first purchase.

Get mortgage ready

Review income, spending, existing debt and credit reports. Save documents such as payslips, statements and identification in a secure folder. Check which deposit and affordability assumptions apply to your circumstances.

Understand the property price ceiling

Your lender’s maximum is not necessarily your comfortable maximum. Allow for interest-rate changes, maintenance and the possibility of time out of work. Budget for one-off legal and survey costs.

Check first-time buyer support

First-time buyer relief for SDLT in England and Northern Ireland is available only where the eligibility criteria are met. As of this guide’s date, qualifying purchases up to £500,000 can receive relief on the first £300,000. Other schemes may have separate launch dates or caps.

Ask better viewing questions

Look at heating, damp, drainage, roof, access, service charges if leasehold, future works and the surrounding street. Ask which documents the seller can provide rather than assuming everything has been checked.

Know the transaction stages

Offer, solicitor, checks, searches, survey, mortgage offer, exchange and completion are different steps. Ask your solicitor to explain when money is at risk and how the chain affects timing.

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK

☐ Is my deposit and source of funds evidenced?

☐ Have I checked my actual monthly household budget?

☐ Am I eligible for any current tax relief?

☐ Have I understood leasehold charges?

☐ Do I have a reserve for repairs?

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Stretching to the lender maximum without contingency
- Assuming government schemes have launched because they were announced
- Skipping independent legal advice

TRUSTED SOURCES

https://www.gov.uk/buying-a-home

https://www.gov.uk/stamp-duty-land-tax/residential-property-rates

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2026-document/budget-2026-html

General information, not individual legal, mortgage, financial, valuation or tax advice. Rules and rates may change; check current official guidance before acting.