

MERRIMENT REALTY BUYER'S GUIDE



YOUR PATH TO
HOMEOWNERSHIP IN THE
RALEIGH AREA-
GUIDED WITH CLARITY,
CONFIDENCE AND CARE

Creating Joy.
Building Community.





MERRIMENT

R E A L T Y

CREATING JOY. BUILDING COMMUNITY.

Table of Contents

Your step-by-step guide to buying a home with confidence in the Raleigh area.

Section 1: Getting Ready to Buy p. 4

- Why Work with Merriment Realty p. 5
- Preparing Financially p. 6
- Get Pre-Approved (Not Just Pre-Qualified) p. 7
- Renting vs. Buying: What's Right for You? p. 8
- At the End of This Step, You'll Have p. 9

Section 2: The Home Search p. 10

- The Home Search p. 11
- Wants vs. Needs Checklist p. 12
- Finding Your Neighborhood Fit p. 13
- Touring Like a Pro p. 14
- Search Smarter with the Merriment App p. 15
- Neighborhood Comparison Worksheet p. 16
- At the End of This Step, You'll Have p. 17

Section 3: Making the Offer p. 18

- Making the Offer (intro) p. 19
- Crafting a Strong Offer p. 20
- Offer Terms Quick Reference p. 21
- Due Diligence vs. Earnest Money Deposit p. 22
- Contingencies & Negotiations p. 23
- Offer Summary Checklist p. 24
- New Construction: Understanding the Offer Process..... p. 25
- After You Submit Your Offer p. 26

Section 4: Due Diligence & Preparing to Close p. 28

- Due Diligence & Preparing to Close (intro) p. 29
- Entering the Due Diligence Period p. 30
- Repair Requests & Negotiations p. 31
- Understanding the Appraisal p. 32
- Financing & Closing Costs: What to Expect p. 33
- Final Walkthrough & Buyer Responsibilities p. 34

Section 5: Closing Day p. 36

- Closing Day (intro) p. 37
- Closing Day: What to Expect p. 38
- Closing Day Checklist p. 39
- Life After Closing p. 40

Looking Forward with Merriment Realty p. 41

SECTION 1

Getting Ready to Buy

Section 1. Getting Ready to Buy

Laying the Foundation for a Joyful Home Journey

Buying a home is one of life's most meaningful decisions and at Merriment Realty, we believe it should feel as joyful as it is momentous. Whether you're dreaming of your first place, a bigger nest, or a new chapter, we're here to help you navigate with clarity, confidence, and care.

Why Buy Now?

- Life milestones (career moves, growing families, downsizing)
- Financial readiness
- Market trends: In the Raleigh area, owning often builds more long-term equity than renting, especially as housing demand continues to rise.

DID YOU KNOW?

In many Raleigh area neighborhoods, the monthly cost of a mortgage is comparable to rent except you're investing in yourself.



Preparing Financially

Before we start browsing homes, it helps to know your numbers. Here's where to begin:

- Set a comfortable budget (not just what a lender says you can afford)
- Check your credit score and address any red flags
- Save for your down payment and closing costs
- Estimate monthly expenses (mortgage, taxes, insurance, HOA fees)

START WITH THE NUMBERS

Use our [Mortgage Calculator](#) to see what's possible and click Get Pre-Approved to strengthen your buying power.

Get Pre-Approved



Get Pre-Approved (Not Just Pre-Qualified)

One of the most powerful steps you can take is getting pre-approved through a trusted lender. It tells sellers you're serious and helps us search smarter.

Pre-Approved Benefits:

- Know your buying power
- Strengthen your offer in a competitive market
- Speed up your closing timeline

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LENDER

- What loan programs do you offer that might be a fit for me?
- What is the current interest rate and how could it change before closing?
- What will my estimated monthly payment be, including taxes and insurance?
- What are the total estimated closing costs and fees?
- How long does it typically take to close?
- Is there a prepayment penalty on this loan?
- What is your communication process during the loan approval period?



Renting vs. Buying: What's Right for You?

Every situation is unique, and there are pros and cons to both renting and buying. Here's a side-by-side look to help you decide what makes sense for your lifestyle and goals.

Renting

- Flexibility to move quickly
- Landlord handles repairs
- Monthly cost can rise with rent hikes
- No upfront costs beyond deposit
- Doesn't build long-term wealth

Buying

- Builds equity over time
- You control improvements
- Stable payments (if fixed-rate mortgage)
- Down payment + closing costs required
- Long-term investment potential

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- In the Raleigh area, buying often makes sense long-term as home values continue to rise — but the right choice always depends on your personal timing and goals



At the End of This Step, You'll Have...

- A clear picture of why buying now might make sense for you
- A **budget** outline that feels comfortable
- A stronger understanding of your credit readiness
- Clarity on what **pre-approval** offers and how to get started
- Questions in hand to guide your conversation with a lender
- A sense of whether **renting or buying** is right for your current stage

MERRIMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

- Whether you're leaning toward buying now or later, know that you've already taken the first step, getting informed. That clarity is power, and Merriment will be here whenever you're ready.



SECTION 2

The Home Search

Section 2. The Home Search

Exploring neighborhoods, defining needs, and finding the right fit.

Your home search should be exciting, not overwhelming. At Merriment Realty, we guide you through each step with clarity and care. From prioritizing your needs and wants, to exploring Raleigh area neighborhoods, to touring homes with confidence.

MERRIMENT TIP

Before diving in, jot down the top 3 things your next home must have. This clarity will keep your search focused and joyful.



Wants vs. Needs Checklist

A clear sense of your 'must-haves' versus your 'nice-to-haves' helps us focus your home search. Use this worksheet to guide your thinking before we begin touring.

Needs (Non-Negotiables)

- Specific number of bedrooms/bathrooms
- Location within commute/school boundaries
- Budget fit
- Essential features (ex: accessibility, one-level living, etc.)

Wants (Nice-to-Haves)

- Extra space (home office, bonus room)
- Large yard or outdoor living area
- Upgraded finishes
- Pool or community amenities

MERRIMENT TIP

- Be honest with yourself about what's essential. Prioritizing your needs makes sure we find the right home faster and still leaves room for joy in the extras.



Finding Your Neighborhood Fit

Choosing the right neighborhood is just as important as choosing the right home. From commute times to community amenities, it's about finding a place that feels like home.

Questions:

- What **school districts** or commute times matter most?
- Do you prefer **quiet streets** or a vibrant community feel?
- Is proximity to parks, restaurants, or **shopping** important?
- What **lifestyle** do you want your neighborhood to support?

EXPLORE MERRIMENT NEIGHBORHOODS

- Browse our curated Raleigh area communities to discover neighborhood highlights, amenities, and local flavor.

[Explore Communities](#)



Touring Like a Pro

Touring homes is one of the most exciting parts of the process, but it's also where emotions can run high. Here are some simple strategies to keep your tours focused, joyful, and productive.

Tips to Keep in Mind

- Take notes on each home, they'll blur together after a few tours
- Don't rush, give yourself time to "feel" the space
- Look past décor to the bones of the home
- Test function: open cabinets, check storage, walk the layout
- Snap photos (if permitted) to jog your memory later

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING SHOWINGS

- What do you **like most** about this home?
- Are there any **concerns** or red flags you notice?
- How does this **compare** to other homes we've toured?
- Could you see yourself living here for the **next 5–10 years**?



Search Smarter with the Merriment App

We've partnered with HomeStack to give you a personalized home search experience right at your fingertips. Our app helps you browse Raleigh area listings, save favorites, and get updates in real time. All tailored to you.

WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH THE APP

- Search all Raleigh area listings **in real-time**
- **Save and share** your favorite homes
- **Schedule** showings directly from the app
- Receive **instant alerts** for new or price-reduced properties

GET THE APP

- Start exploring homes today. Download the Merriment Realty app and take your search on the go.

[Download the
Merriment App](#)



Neighborhood Comparison Worksheet

Every neighborhood offers something different, from commute times and schools, to amenities and overall vibe. Use this worksheet to compare your top choices side by side.

Factors to Compare

1. Commute time to work/school

2. Schools / district rating

3. Local amenities (parks, shopping, restaurants)

4. Community feel (quiet, active, family-friendly, etc.)
5. Home prices (average / median)

6. HOA fees (if any)

• Personal notes

Neighborhood 1	Neighborhood 2	Neighborhood 3
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
• _____	• _____	• _____
_____	_____	_____

MERRIMENT TIP

- The best neighborhood isn't just about numbers. It's about how you feel when you're there. Trust your instincts as much as the data.



At the End of This Step, You'll Have...

- A clear **understanding** of your needs vs. wants
- **Insights** into the neighborhoods that fit your lifestyle
- **Notes** comparing your top 2–3 communities side by side
- **Confidence** while touring homes and asking the right questions
- **Personalized home search** set up in the Merriment app

MERRIMENT ENGAGEMENT

- By now, you're not just browsing, you're searching with clarity and purpose. That makes the next step, *making an offer*, even more exciting. We'll guide you every step of the way.



SECTION 3

Making the Offer

Section 3. Making the Offer

From crafting a strong offer to navigating negotiations with confidence.

Making an offer is one of the most exciting and sometimes nerve-wracking parts of buying a home. At Merriment Realty, we'll walk you through each step so you can feel confident, informed, and ready to succeed.

MERRIMENT TIP

Remember: The strongest offer isn't always just about price. It's about terms, timing, and presenting yourself as a serious, prepared buyer.



Crafting a Strong Offer

In a competitive market like the Raleigh area, a strong offer is about more than just the purchase price. It's about presenting yourself as a serious, prepared buyer while protecting your best interests.

Key Elements to Consider

- **Purchase Price:** Competitive but realistic, based on market data
- **Earnest Money Deposit:** Shows seriousness and commitment
- **Due Diligence Fee (NC-specific):** Paid directly to the seller to secure the contract (*non-refundable*)
- **Closing Timeline:** Flexible enough to meet seller's needs
- **Contingencies:** Financing, appraisal, inspections. All balanced to protect you
- **Personal Touch:** Sometimes a letter to the seller helps, though not always necessary

THE MERRIMENT ADVANTAGE

- We use deep knowledge of the Raleigh area market to craft offers that are competitive and protect your best interests. Our guidance ensures your offer is as strong as possible without unnecessary risk.



Offer Terms Quick Reference

When reviewing or preparing an offer, here are the key terms you'll hear most often and what they mean in practice.

Term

- **Purchase Price**
- **Earnest Money Deposit**
- **Due Diligence Fee**
- **Contingencies**
- **Closing Date**
- **Seller Concessions**

Definition

- The amount offered for the home.
- Buyer's deposit held in escrow to show commitment.
- Paid directly to seller, non-refundable.
- Conditions like financing, appraisal, or inspections.
- The day ownership officially transfers.
- Costs the seller may agree to cover on the buyer's behalf.

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- Don't worry about memorizing all these terms. We'll walk you through each one in detail when it matters, so you always feel informed and confident.



Due Diligence vs. Earnest Money Deposit

North Carolina is unique in that buyers often provide two different funds at the time of making an offer: a Due Diligence Fee and an Earnest Money Deposit. Both show commitment, but they serve very different purposes.

Due Diligence Fee

- Paid **directly to the seller** when an offer is accepted
- **Non-refundable** (except in rare circumstances)
- Compensates seller for taking the home off the market
- Credited back to buyer at closing

Earnest Money Deposit

- Paid into an **escrow account** (not directly to seller)
- **Refundable** if contingencies aren't met (financing, appraisal, etc.)
- Protects seller against buyer walking away without cause
- Also credited back to buyer at closing

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- Don't worry about memorizing all these terms. We'll walk you through each one in detail when it matters, so you always feel informed and confident.



Contingencies & Negotiations

Contingencies are the conditions that must be met for your purchase to move forward. Negotiations are how we balance those protections with the seller's needs to create a win-win agreement.

Common Contingencies

- **Financing:** Loan approval secured
- **Appraisal:** Home must appraise at or above purchase price
- **Inspection:** Identifies repair needs before closing
- **Title:** Ensures seller has clear ownership to transfer

Negotiating with Confidence

- We advocate for your best interests at every stage
- Repairs, concessions, and credits can all be part of negotiations
- Timing, flexibility, and communication matter as much as price
- Merriment ensures you're competitive while staying protected

OUR ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS

- You never have to negotiate alone. We bring strategy, clarity, and experience to each step so you can move forward with confidence.



Offer Summary Checklist

When all the moving parts of an offer come together, it's helpful to see everything clearly in one place. Use this checklist as a quick reference to make sure you and your Merriment Realty agent are aligned before submitting your offer.

- **Property address** confirmed and correct
- **Offer price** matches strategy and budget
- **Earnest money deposit** amount set and documented
- **Due diligence fee** amount noted (non-refundable)
- **Financing details** verified (loan type, pre-approval included)
- **Contingencies** reviewed (inspection, appraisal, financing, others)
- **Closing date** requested and realistic
- **Inclusions & exclusions** listed (appliances, fixtures, etc.)
- **Seller concessions** requested, if applicable
- **Signatures** from all required buyers

MERRIMENT TIP

- A clear, well-organized offer communicates more than just numbers. It shows the seller that you're serious, prepared, and working with a professional team who has your best interest at heart.



New Construction: Understanding the Offer Process

Buying new construction in the Raleigh area can feel very different from purchasing a resale home. Here's what to expect:

Negotiating Price & Incentives

- Builders are usually **less flexible on price** (to avoid setting a lower sales precedent).
- **Incentives and upgrades** are common instead: upgrades (appliances, blinds, flooring) or closing cost credits.
- Builders with excess inventory may be more open to negotiation.

Deposits: Due Diligence (DD), Earnest Money (EMD) & Builder Deposits

- Each builder may require different deposits depending on construction stage.
- Builder deposits are often **non-refundable** and applied to closing.
- Terms are usually set by the builder and **not negotiable**.

Builder Contracts vs. Standard Contracts

- If under construction, many builders use their own contracts.
- If complete, the standard NC Offer to Purchase may apply.
- Requests for upgrades/changes vary by builder; Merriment will guide you through costs and expectations.

Due Diligence Period & Inspections

- The typical DD period doesn't apply until the home is nearly complete.
- **Inspections** (home, radon, etc.) are **still essential**. Builders usually address most issues found.
- Radon may need to be tested post-closing, depending on access.

Closing Timeline

- Closing **depends on completion** of the home.
- Target dates are set, but flexibility is often required if construction is ongoing.

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- Even new homes need careful evaluation. With our guidance, you'll know exactly what to expect with deposits, contracts, and inspections so your new construction journey is smooth and supported.
- **Key Takeaway:** New construction follows its own rules. Pricing may be firm, but incentives and repairs are often negotiable. Merriment will ensure you're fully educated every step of the way.

After You Submit Your Offer

Once your offer is in the seller's hands, the waiting begins, but your Merriment Realty team stays actively engaged on your behalf.

Typical Next Steps to Expect

- **Seller review** of your offer (may take hours or a day or two).
- **Possible counteroffer** with adjusted terms.
- **Negotiation process** until both sides reach agreement or part ways.
- **Offer acceptance** = moving forward with inspections and due diligence.
- **Earnest money & due diligence fees** delivered as agreed in the contract.
- **Next milestone**: entering the Due Diligence Period.

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- Stay calm during this stage. Updates may come at unexpected times, but your Merriment Realty agent will track every detail and guide you with confidence, wherever you are.





Offer accepted...

SECTION 4

Due Diligence & Preparing to Close

Section 4. Due Diligence & Preparing to Close

From inspections and appraisals to final walkthroughs, we'll help you move forward with clarity and confidence.

Once your offer is accepted, you move into the Due Diligence Period. The critical stage where you verify the property, confirm your financing, and prepare for closing. At Merriment Realty, we'll guide you step by step to ensure you feel confident and ready for the finish line.

MERRIMENT TIP

Think of this stage as the bridge between offer and ownership. It's where details come together, questions are answered, and your path to the closing table becomes clear.



Entering the Due Diligence Period

Once your offer is accepted, you enter one of the most important stages of buying a home in North Carolina: the Due Diligence Period. This is your window to fully investigate the property and confirm it's the right fit before moving forward to closing.

What the Due Diligence Period Means for You

- **Timeframe:** Negotiated in your contract, usually a few weeks.
- **Buyer's responsibility:** Conduct inspections, appraisals, and loan approval.
- **Seller's commitment:** Keep the home available for inspections and provide requested disclosures.
- **Flexibility:** You can back out during this period for any reason, but the due diligence fee is non-refundable.
- **Goal:** Ensure peace of mind and protect your investment before finalizing.

MERRIMENT TIP

- Think of this period as your “test drive.” It's your opportunity to look under the hood, ask questions, and confirm that the home you've chosen truly supports your goals and lifestyle.



Repair Requests & Negotiations

After inspections, you and your Merriment Realty agent will review the findings and decide how to proceed. Some issues may be quick fixes, while others may lead to negotiations with the seller.

Possible Next Steps

- Ask seller to make **repairs before closing**
- Request financial **concessions or credits**
- **Re-negotiate** purchase price
- Accept property **“as-is”** and continue to closing
- **Walk away** if issues are too significant

Factors to Keep in Mind

- **Safety and health issues** usually take priority
- **Cosmetic** concerns rarely justify renegotiation
- **Essential vs. nice-to-have:** Balance priorities carefully.
- **Consider the market.** In a seller's market, requests may be limited

MERRIMENT RECOMMENDATION

- Think strategically: focus on the most important repairs, not the longest list. A fair and focused approach builds goodwill with the seller and keeps your deal moving forward.



Understanding the Appraisal

If you're financing your purchase, your lender will order an appraisal to confirm the home's market value. This protects both you and the lender from paying more than the property is worth.

Key Points About Appraisals

- **Lender requirement:** Required for nearly all financed purchases.
- **Objective value:** Based on recent comparable sales.
- **Not an inspection:** Focuses on value, not condition.
- **Impact on loan:** A lower value may limit financing.
- **Options if value is low:** Re-negotiate, add funds, or appeal the appraisal.

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- A low appraisal doesn't have to end your journey. With your Merriment Realty agent's guidance, you'll explore all options, from negotiations to appeals, to keep your purchase moving forward.



Financing & Closing Costs: What to Expect

While your lender guides you through the financing process, it's helpful to know how loan approval and closing costs fit into your overall home purchase.

Key Points to Understand

- **Loan approval:** Finalized after appraisal and underwriting.
- **Closing costs:** Typically 2–5% of the purchase price, paid at closing.
- **What's included:** Loan fees, attorney fees, taxes, insurance, and more.
- **Seller contributions:** Sometimes negotiated as part of your offer.
- **Funds required:** Bring certified funds or arrange a wire transfer for closing.

MERRIMENT ADVANTAGE

- Ask your lender for a detailed estimate early on. Knowing your expected closing costs upfront helps you plan with confidence and avoid last-minute surprises.



Final Walkthrough & Buyer Responsibilities

Before closing, you'll complete a final walkthrough of the property. This is your last chance to make sure everything is as agreed before the keys officially change hands.

What to Look For During the Walkthrough

- **Confirm** agreed-upon repairs have been completed
- **Check** that appliances and fixtures remain as promised
- **Ensure** systems (plumbing, HVAC, electrical) are working
- Look for any **new damage** since inspections
- Verify the home is in substantially the **same condition** as when you went under contract

Other Buyer Responsibilities at PRIOR to This Stage

- Secure **homeowner's insurance** before closing
- Schedule **utility transfers** to begin in your name on closing day
- Arrange for **moving logistics** and delivery schedules
- Prepare **certified funds or wire transfer** as required by your attorney

MERRIMENT TIP

- Bring a copy of your contract and inspection summary to your final walkthrough. Having a checklist in hand makes the process smoother and ensures nothing is overlooked.



Almost there...



SECTION 5

Closing Day

Section 5. Closing Day

From signing documents to getting your keys, here's what to expect on the big day.

Closing Day is the finish line of your homebuying journey. The moment when ownership officially transfers to you. In North Carolina, all closings take place at an attorney's office. With Merriment Realty by your side, you'll have the confidence of knowing each detail is handled so you can focus on celebrating your new home.

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

Closing Day can feel like a blur of signatures and steps, but it's also the beginning of your next chapter. We'll help you approach it with clarity and calm so you can enjoy the moment keys are in your hand.



Closing Day: What to Expect

Closing is the final step in your homebuying journey. The day ownership officially transfers and you receive your keys. In North Carolina, all closings take place at an attorney's office.

Steps You'll Complete at Closing

- **Review & sign documents:** Your attorney will explain each legal document before you sign.
- **Deliver funds:** Certified check or wire transfer for closing costs and down payment.
- **Lender disbursement:** Your lender wires funds to complete the purchase.
- **Deed recording:** The attorney records your deed with the county.
- **Keys in hand:** Once funds are cleared and the deed is recorded, you're officially a homeowner!

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- Closing Day may take longer than expected. That's normal. With your Merriment Realty team and closing attorney guiding the process, you can relax knowing every detail is handled with care.



Closing Day Checklist

Here's a simple checklist to help you feel confident and prepared as you head into Closing Day.

Bring With You

- Government-issued photo ID
- Certified check or proof of wire transfer
- Any final documents your lender or attorney requested

Expect To Do

- **Review** and sign legal documents
- **Deliver** your certified funds or wire transfer
- **Confirm** all lender and attorney fees are accurate
- **Receive** copies of signed paperwork
- **Collect** your keys once the deed is recorded

MERRIMENT TIP

- Take a deep breath. You've made it! Closing is a milestone worth celebrating. After all the signatures, you'll walk away as the proud new owner of your home.



Life After Closing

Congratulations! You're officially a homeowner! While Closing Day marks the end of your purchase journey, it's also the beginning of life in your new home. Here are the first steps to help you settle in smoothly.

Your First Priorities After Closing

- **Locks & security:** Consider changing locks or updating codes.
- **Documents:** Keep closing paperwork in a safe place for future reference.
- **HOA or community info:** Make sure you have details on dues, contacts, and rules (if applicable).
- **Move-in prep:** Schedule deliveries and any immediate services needed.

MERRIMENT INSIGHT

- Take time to enjoy your new home. Projects can wait. Start with small things that make it feel comfortable and truly yours.



Looking Forward with Merriment Realty

Buying a home is one of life's most meaningful milestones and the right guide makes all the difference. At Merriment Realty, we believe the process should be clear, supported, and even joyful. When you're ready to begin, our team will walk beside you every step of the way.

What You Can Expect with Merriment Realty

- Clear guidance from first conversation to closing day
- A process tailored to your needs, goals, and lifestyle
- Trusted local insight and resources
- Ongoing support long after the sale

MERRIMENT RECOMMENDATION

- Your home is more than a purchase. It's the place where memories begin. Choose a partner who values your story and is committed to creating a joyful experience from start to finish.





MERRIMENT
R E A L T Y

CREATING JOY. BUILDING COMMUNITY.

Let's start our search together

Download our Merriment Realty app to
explore homes, get real-time updates,
and stay connected with our team



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