First Home Faster

The First Home Buyer's Insider Guide

20 questions every first-home buyer asks — answered simply and honestly.

Real answers to the questions first-home buyers ask every day..

First Home
Faster

The First Home Buyer's Insider Guide

Hi, I'm Nicola.

I'm a mortgage adviser who specialises in helping first-home buyers.
After helping more than 100 first-home buyers purchase their first home, I've noticed something interesting...

No matter where people are in their journey, they tend to ask the same questions.

"Do I have enough deposit?"
"How much can I borrow?"
"Should I pay off my debt first?"
"When should I talk to a mortgage adviser?"
"Am I actually ready to buy?"

The truth is, buying your first home can feel overwhelming when you don't know what you don't know.

That's exactly why I created this guide.

Inside you'll find straightforward answers to the questions I hear almost every day. My goal is to help you understand how the process works, avoid common mistakes, and feel more confident about your next step.
You don't need to know everything before you begin.

You just need clear answers you can trust.

I hope this guide gives you the confidence to move forward—whether that's buying your first home this year or simply putting a plan in place for the future.

Happy reading,

Created by:
Nicola Petersen
Mortgage Adviser

Nic's Mortgage Magic

Helping first-home buyers buy sooner.

NIC'S MORTGAGE MAGIC

Welcome

Buying your first home can feel like trying to solve a puzzle without the picture on the box.

You may know some of the pieces already. Your deposit. Your KiwiSaver balance. Your income. Your debts. The suburb you would love to live in. The repayments you think you could manage.

But the hard part is understanding how those pieces fit together - and what to do first.

That is why this guide exists.

It is not a bank brochure. It is not a list of technical answers. It is an insider guide to the questions first home buyers are actually asking, and the questions they often should be asking instead.

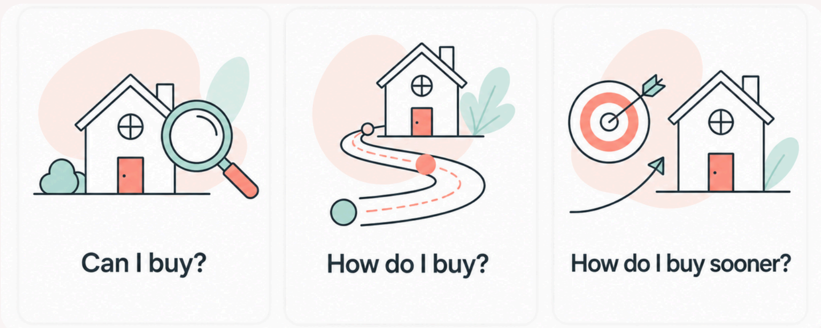
Because the real issue is rarely just, "Can I buy?"

It is usually:
- What is possible from where I am today?
- What is holding me back?
- Which changes would make the biggest difference?
- How do I avoid wasting months working on the wrong things?
- How do I move from guessing to a clear buying plan?

Most people do not need a perfect financial position before they start. They need to understand their position properly. Once you know where you stand, it becomes much easier to make calm, practical decisions.

This guide is organised into three parts:
- Can I buy? - understanding deposit, income, debt, affordability and lender confidence.
- How do I buy? - understanding the process from pre-approval to settlement.
- How do I buy sooner? - identifying the mistakes, myths and strategies that can change your timeline.

Every chapter is designed to leave you with more clarity than you had before. Not hype. Not pressure. Just a better understanding of what matters, what does not, and what your next move could be.



A quick note before you begin:
This guide is general information for New Zealand first home buyers. Lending criteria, government settings, deposit options and bank policies can change. Your own position should always be assessed before you rely on any general rule of thumb.

The purpose here is to help you ask better questions and understand the strategy behind the process.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

You do not need to know everything before you ask for advice.

Often, the first step is simply finding out which parts of your situation matter most.

CONTENTS

PART ONE – CAN I BUY?

PART TWO – HOW DO I BUY?

PART THREE – HOW DO I BUY SOONER?

PART ONE – CAN I BUY?

This section helps you understand whether buying may already be possible, what the bank is likely to care about, and which parts of your situation could be improved before you apply.

1. CAN I BUY NOW?

The better question: What would need to be true for me to buy now - and if I cannot, what would need to change?

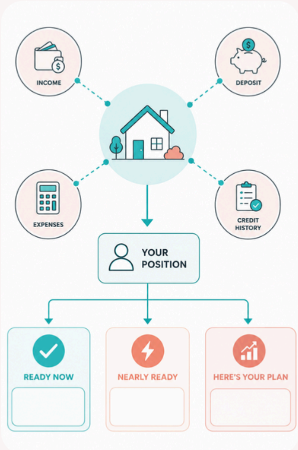
Possibly. Many first home buyers assume they are further away than they really are because they are judging themselves against a vague idea of what banks want.

Banks do not assess you on one number. They look at your full position: income, deposit, KiwiSaver, debts, expenses, credit history, employment and the property you want to buy.

That means the answer is rarely a simple yes or no. A better answer is one of three things: yes, you may be ready to explore pre-approval; not yet, but here is the plan; or not with this lender or structure, but another option may fit better.

The most useful first step is not guessing. It is getting your position assessed properly so you know whether the gap is real or just assumed.

·Your available deposit, including KiwiSaver and any savings/gifted funds.
·Your income and how banks consider this.
·Your existing debts and monthly commitments.
·Your spending patterns and savings behaviour.
·Which lender policies may suit your situation.



What to do next
·Find out your deposit position.
·Understand your borrowing capacity.
·Identify the one or two changes most likely to move you closer.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Do not decide you are not ready until you know what a lender would actually assess.

Guessing can cost months.

2. HOW MUCH DEPOSIT DO I REALLY NEED?

The better question: Which deposit option fits my situation, and am I waiting for more than I actually need?

Depending on your situation, most first home buyers may be able to purchase with less than 20%. The right deposit level depends on the lender, the property, your income, your overall affordability and whether you meet any low-deposit criteria.

A 20% deposit can be helpful, but it is not always the starting line.

The mistake is not having a smaller deposit. The mistake is assuming a smaller deposit automatically means you cannot buy.

Your deposit may also be made up of more than cash savings. For many buyers, it is a combination of KiwiSaver, savings, perhaps a gift and sometimes other eligible assets.

·Options from 5% are possible in specific circumstances, including through the Kainga Ora First Home Loan.
·10% can provide more flexibility and lender options than a minimum deposit.
·20% may offer the broadest lender options and can reduce some costs, but it is not always required to start the conversation.

That difference is why it is worth checking your options before spending years chasing a number you may not need.

EXAMPLE	5%	10%	20%
	$850,000	$850,000	$850,000
DEPOSIT	$42,500	$85,000	$170,000
LOAN	$807,500	$765,000	$680,000

What to do next
·Check your KiwiSaver balance.
·Add your cash savings and any family support.
·Ask what options may be available at your actual deposit level.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

A deposit target should come from your strategy, not from a myth you heard years ago.

Not sure if your deposit is enough?
Scan to find out what's possible.

3. CAN I USE KIWISAVER TO BUY MY FIRST HOME?

The better question: How does KiwiSaver fit into my deposit strategy, and what should I check before I rely on it?

For many first home buyers, KiwiSaver is a major part of the deposit. It can quietly build in the background for years, and many people are surprised by how much is available once they check.

In general, eligible members may be able to withdraw most of their KiwiSaver savings for a first home purchase, but you usually need to leave $1,000 in the account and have been a member of KiwiSaver for at least 3 years.

The important point is that KiwiSaver is not just a balance on a statement. It needs to be available at the right time and handled properly through the purchase process.

Your solicitor and KiwiSaver provider will usually be involved when it is time to apply for the withdrawal. Timing matters, especially if you are making an offer and working through finance conditions.

·Check whether you meet the first-home withdrawal criteria.
·Confirm your current balance and how much may be available.
·Understand the application timeframe before you need the funds.
·Do not assume every dollar shown on screen can automatically be used.

What to do next
Get an updated KiwiSaver statement early. It helps clarify your deposit and can prevent last-minute surprises.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

KiwiSaver often changes the conversation from "I am nowhere near ready" to "I might be closer than I thought."

Not sure where to start?
Let’s have a chat

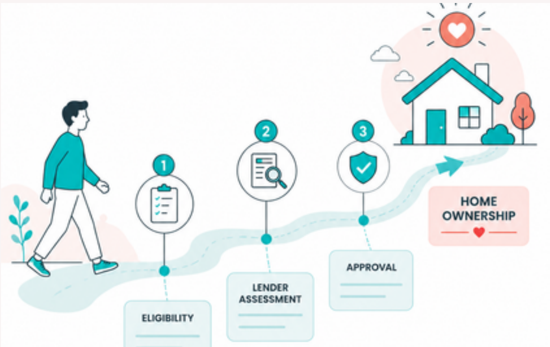
4. AM I ELIGIBLE FOR THE KAINGA ORA FIRST HOME LOAN?

The better question: Could a low-deposit option help me buy sooner, and what other lending criteria still need to be met?

The Kainga Ora First Home Loan can be useful for eligible buyers because it may reduce the deposit required to buy a first home. It is not automatic, and it is not suitable for everyone, but it can be an important pathway for some buyers.

Kāinga Ora sets eligibility criteria for the First Home Loan, while participating banks and lenders still complete their own lending assessment. That means you may need to satisfy both the programme criteria and the lender's normal affordability, credit and policy requirements.

This is where people can get caught out. Meeting a deposit threshold is not the same as being approved. The lender will still look at your income, expenses, debt, credit history and ability to manage repayments.



·You will need to meet income, buyer-status and deposit criteria.
·You will still need lender approval.
·A participating lender may apply additional requirements.
·Your credit history, debt and affordability still matter.

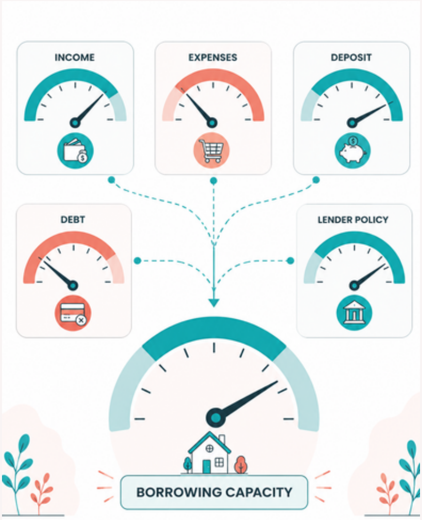
What to do next
·Check whether the Kainga Ora First Home Loan is relevant to your situation.
·Assess your borrowing position alongside the programme criteria.
·Avoid assuming eligibility equals approval.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Low-deposit options can help, but they work best when they are part of a full lending strategy.

5. HOW MUCH CAN I ACTUALLY BORROW?

The better question: How do the banks calculate my borrowing power, and what can I do to improve it?



Borrowing capacity is not a fixed number that every bank will agree on. Different lenders can assess the same household differently because they use different policies, servicing calculations and assumptions.

Online calculators can be useful for a rough starting point, but they cannot see the full picture. They do not always understand your income type, your debt structure, your actual spending, your deposit source or whether one lender may be more suitable than another.

The best borrowing conversation is not just, "How much can I get?" It is, "What is realistic, what is comfortable, and what would improve the outcome?"

·Income and how reliable it is.
·Debts and credit limits.
·Living expenses and dependents.
·Deposit size and source.
·Loan term and repayment assumptions.
·Lender policy.

Two people earning the same income can have very different borrowing outcomes. One may have clean account conduct, low debt and consistent savings. The other may have credit card limits, buy now pay later accounts, a car loan and irregular spending. The income may be the same, but the application is not.

What to do next
·Treat calculators as a guide only.
·Get your actual position assessed.
·Ask which changes would create the biggest improvement.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Borrowing power can often be improved before you apply.

The key is knowing which lever to pull first.

6. CAN I BUY WITH DEBT?

The better question: How does my debt affect borrowing capacity, and what is the quickest strategy to improve my position?

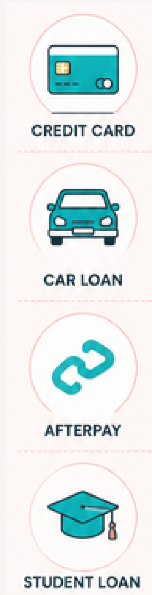
Yes, it can be possible to buy with debt. The better question is what type of debt you have, how much it costs you each month, and how the bank will treat it in your application.

Debt affects borrowing because it uses income that could otherwise go toward mortgage repayments. Even unused credit card limits can reduce your borrowing power because a lender may assess the limit as potential debt, not just the amount currently owing.

Not all debt has the same impact. A small credit card, a student loan, a car loan, a personal loan and buy now pay later account can each be assessed differently. The strategy is not always to clear everything. Sometimes it is to clear the right thing first.

This is where advice can save time. A buyer may spend months saving an extra $5,000 when paying off or closing the right facility could have made a bigger difference to borrowing capacity.

·Credit cards, including unused limits.
·Car loans and personal loans.
·Buy now pay later accounts.
·Student loan deductions.
·Collections, defaults or poor account conduct.



What to do next
List every debt, limit and monthly repayment.
·Do not take on new debt once you are planning to buy.
·Ask which debt is most limiting your borrowing capacity.
·Close unused credit facilities if they are hurting affordability and no longer needed.
·Review your credit check.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The fastest path is not always "save more." Sometimes it is "remove the right obstacle”.

7. WHAT IF MY INCOME IS NOT STRAIGHTFORWARD?

The better question: How can I present my income clearly so a lender can understand whether it is reliable?

Not every first home buyer has a simple permanent salary. You may be self-employed, contracting, working casually, earning seasonal income, receiving overtime, on parental leave, receiving ACC or benefit income, or considering boarder income to support affordability.

That does not automatically mean you cannot buy. It usually means the income needs to be understood and evidenced properly.

Lenders care about reliability. They want to know whether the income is ongoing, how long it has been received, whether it can be verified, and whether it is likely to continue after you take on a mortgage.

The answer depends heavily on the type of income and the lender. Some lenders are more flexible with certain income types than others. That is why the right policy match matters.

·Casual or seasonal income may require a longer history and averaging.
·Self-employed income will require financial statements, tax summaries or other evidence.
·ACC or benefit income may be considered differently depending on type, duration and lender policy.
·Boarder income may help in some cases, but it needs to be realistic and acceptable to the lender.
·Parental leave usually needs careful planning around return-to-work dates, reduced income periods and childcare costs.

What to do next
·Gather evidence of how long the income has been received.
·Confirm whether it is ongoing or temporary.
·Avoid assuming one bank policy represents every lender.
·Get advice before ruling yourself out.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Non-standard income is not always a problem.
Unexplained income is the problem.

The clearer the story, the stronger the application can become.

8. AM I TOO LATE TO BUY?

The better question: What does my timeline mean for loan term, affordability and the right structure?

There is no single age where it is automatically too late to buy a first home. But timing can affect the strategy.

As you get closer to retirement age, lenders may look more closely at the loan term, expected retirement income, exit strategy and whether repayments are affordable over the proposed term.

This does not mean the door is closed. It means the application needs to be structured carefully and realistically. Sometimes a shorter loan term, a stronger deposit, a clear repayment or exit strategy or evidence of ongoing income can help.

The same principle applies if you feel emotionally late rather than technically late. Property prices may feel intimidating. Friends may have bought years ago. But your plan should be based on your current position, not comparison.

.

What to do next
Find out what loan term may be available.
·Understand repayments at a realistic term, not just the longest possible term.
·Consider whether your deposit, income and future plans support the application.
·Start with the numbers rather than the fear.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The right question is not "Have I missed my chance?"

It is "What is the most practical path from here?"

PART TWO – HOW DO I BUY?

This section explains the process. The goal is to help you move through each stage with less confusion, fewer delays and better decisions.

9. WHEN SHOULD I GET PRE-APPROVAL?

The better question: When will pre-approval help me make better decisions, and what should be sorted before I apply?

Ideally, you should understand your borrowing position before you fall in love with a property.

Pre-approval gives you a clearer idea of your budget and the conditions a lender may require before you buy. It can help you search within a realistic price range and make offers with more confidence.

The mistake many buyers make is waiting until they have found a house. By then, the process can become rushed. The agent may want quick answers, the agreement may include deadlines, and your documents may not be ready.

Pre-approval is not a guarantee of final approval. The property still needs to be acceptable, your position must remain stable, and any conditions must be satisfied. But it is a very useful step in moving from "thinking about buying" to "ready to act."

What to do next
·Get assessed before serious house hunting.
·Do not change jobs, take on debt or make major financial changes without advice once pre-approved.
·Keep your adviser updated before making an offer.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Pre-approval is not just permission to shop.

It is a planning tool that helps you search, offer and negotiate with more confidence.

10. HOW LONG DOES APPROVAL TAKE?

The better question: What can I do early so approval does not become the thing that slows me down?

Approval timeframes vary. A straightforward pre-approval may move reasonably quickly, while a more complex application can take longer.

The timeframe depends on the lender, application quality, document completeness, income type, deposit source, credit history and whether the bank needs more information.

The part you can control is preparation. The cleaner and more complete the application is upfront, the easier it is to assess. Missing documents, unexplained transactions or unclear income can all slow things down.

When you are already under contract on a property, delays feel much more stressful. That is why getting ready early matters.

·Pre-approval can range from a few days to longer, depending on lender capacity and complexity.
·Full approval after an accepted offer may require property details, insurance, valuation or updated documents.
·Conditional deadlines should allow enough time for finance and due diligence.

What to do next
··Prepare documents early.
·Be upfront about anything unusual.
·Avoid submitting a half-complete application just to "get it in."

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Speed usually comes from preparation.

A strong application is easier for a lender to understand.

11. WHAT DOCUMENTS DO BANKS WANT?

The better question: What evidence will help tell the clearest story about my financial position?

Banks ask for documents because they need to verify your position. They are not just ticking boxes. They are checking income, deposit, debts, spending, identity and whether the application makes sense.

The exact list depends on your situation, but most buyers should expect to provide identity, income evidence, bank statements, deposit evidence and details of any debts.

If your situation is more complex, extra documents are not a bad sign. They may simply be needed to explain your income or strengthen your application.

A common mistake is treating paperwork as an annoying admin step. In reality, the documents are what allow your adviser to spot opportunities, identify issues early and present the application properly.

·Photo ID, such as a passport or driver licence.
·Privacy and authority to act forms.
·Recent payslips, employment agreement or income evidence.
·Bank statements.
·KiwiSaver statement and deposit evidence.
·Credit card, loan and buy now pay later information.
·Additional evidence for self-employed, contract, seasonal, ACC, benefit or boarder income.

What to do next
·Create a simple application folder.
·Save updated statements as you receive them.
·Tell your adviser about anything unusual rather than hoping it will not matter.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Documents do not just support the application.

They help reveal the strategy.

12. WHAT DO BANKS ACTUALLY LOOK AT?

The better question: What gives a lender confidence that I can manage a mortgage?

Many buyers think banks are looking for one magic number: a certain income, a certain deposit or a perfect credit score.

In reality, lenders are trying to answer a simpler question: can this person or household manage the mortgage comfortably?

They look at the full pattern. Income reliability, savings behaviour, account conduct, debt levels, expenses, credit history and deposit source all contribute to the story.

One expensive weekend is unlikely to ruin an otherwise strong application. But repeated dishonours, constant overdrafts, reliance on short-term debt or unexplained spending can create concern.

Banks are not looking for a perfect life. They are looking for confidence.

·Reliable income.
·Genuine deposit.
·Manageable debts.
·Reasonable spending patterns.
·Clean or explainable account conduct.
·Ability to afford repayments under lender testing.

What to do next
··Review your last three months of bank statements.
·Look for patterns that may concern a lender.
·Fix what you can before applying and explain what needs context.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

A good application does not pretend everything is perfect.

It makes the lender comfortable with the full picture.

13. SHOULD I USE A MORTGAGE ADVISER OR GO DIRECTLY TO A BANK?

The better question: Who is best placed to help me find the right path, not just submit an application?

You can go directly to a bank. Many people do. But the bank can only assess you against its own policies and appetite.

A mortgage adviser looks across lender options and helps match your situation to the lender most likely to suit it. That can matter a lot for first home buyers, especially if you have a smaller deposit, non-standard income, debt, gifted funds, boarder income or anything that does not fit neatly into a standard box.

The value is not just in getting an approval. The value is in the strategy before the application: what to tidy up, what to leave alone, which lender to approach, how to structure the loan and how to avoid delays.

A good adviser should explain the process in plain English and help you understand why a particular path is recommended.

What to do next
·Ask how the adviser will assess your position before applying.
·Ask which options may suit you and why.
·Make sure you understand any fees, commissions or lender limitations.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The goal is not simply to find a bank that says yes.

The goal is to build the strongest path to home ownership from where you are today.

14. WHICH BANK IS BEST FOR FIRST HOME BUYERS?

The better question: Which lender is best for my situation, not just who has the sharpest advertised rate?

The best bank is not always the one with the lowest headline rate. Rates matter, but they are only one part of the decision.

For first home buyers, lender policy can be just as important. One lender may be more suitable for low-deposit lending. Another may treat self-employed income more favourably. Another may be better for boarder income, smaller debts, gifted deposits or certain property types.

This is why asking "Which bank is best?" can lead you in the wrong direction. The better question is, "Which lender best fits my position and my goals?"

Once the lender fit is right, rate, cashback, structure and repayment options can be considered as part of the overall recommendation.

·Policy fit.
·Borrowing capacity.
·Deposit requirements.
·Income treatment.
·Property requirements.
·Cashback and incentives.
·Loan structure and repayment flexibility.
·Interest rates.

What to do next
Start with lender fit, then compare pricing and structure. A cheap rate is not helpful if the lender is not right for your application.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The right lender can change the outcome.

The lowest rate is only valuable once the approval and structure are right.

Not sure which bank suits you best?
Scan to get in touch.

15. HOW DO I CHOOSE A LAWYER?

The better question: Who will protect me legally through the purchase, and when should I involve them?

A lawyer or conveyancer is a key part of your buying team. Their role is different from your mortgage adviser and different from the real estate agent. They help protect your legal position.

Your lawyer can review the sale and purchase agreement, title, LIM, conditions and settlement requirements. They also help with KiwiSaver withdrawal paperwork and coordinate legal settlement with the lender.

First home buyers sometimes wait too long to choose a lawyer. It is better to have one ready before you make an offer, especially if you want advice on conditions or wording in the agreement.

Choose someone who explains things clearly, responds within the timeframes you need and has experience with residential property transactions.

What to do next
·Ask for an estimate of fees and what is included.
·Choose a lawyer before you make an offer.
·Send the agreement for review before signing where possible.
·Make sure they can work within your finance and settlement deadlines.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

Your lawyer is not just there for settlement day.

Involve them early enough to protect the decision you are about to make.

16. WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR AT AN OPEN HOME?

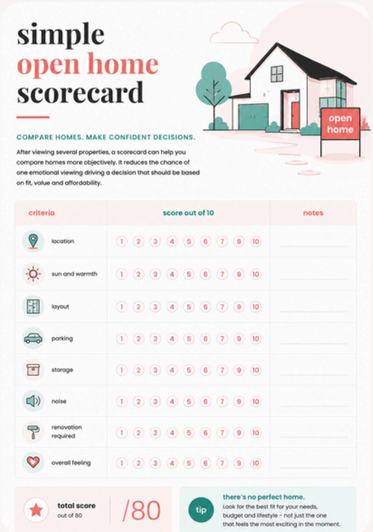
The better question: How do I judge whether this property suits my life, budget and risk level?

Open homes can be exciting, but they can also be distracting. Fresh paint, staging and good lighting can make a property feel better than it is.

The goal is not to find a perfect house. It is to find the right house for your circumstances, your budget and the level of maintenance or renovation you can realistically handle.

Look beyond the styling. Pay attention to sun, warmth, layout, noise, parking, storage, moisture, maintenance and the neighbourhood.

It can help to score each property before you talk about price. This keeps you grounded and makes it easier to compare homes objectively after several weekends of viewing.



simple
open home
scorecard

COMPARE HOMES. MAKE CONFIDENT DECISIONS.

After viewing several properties, a scorecard can help you compare homes more objectively. It reduces the chance of one emotional viewing driving a decision that should be based on fit, value and affordability.

criteria	score out of 10	notes
location	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
sun and warmth	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
layout	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
parking	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
storage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
noise	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
renovation required	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	
overall feeling	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10	

total score out of 80 /80

tip there's no perfect home. Look for the best fit for your needs, budget and lifestyle – not just the one that feels the most exciting in the moment.

- Does the location work for daily life?
- How much natural light does the home receive?
- Is there any sign of dampness, poor drainage or deferred maintenance?
- Is the layout practical?
- Is there enough parking and storage?
- What would need fixing now, soon or later?
- How does the street feel at different times of day?

What to do next
Download my simple scorecard and use it consistently. Emotional reactions matter, but they should not be the only decision-making tool.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

View the property first as a future owner, then as a buyer.

Comfort, cost and risk all matter after settlement.

Ready to take the next step?
Let's have a chat

17. HOW DO I KNOW WHAT TO OFFER?

The better question: What is the property worth to the market, and what is it worth within my plan?

Making an offer is one of the most emotional parts of buying a first home. It is easy to let fear of missing out take over.

A better approach is to build your offer from evidence. Look at recent comparable sales, similar properties currently listed, online estimates, the property condition and how long it has been on the market.

Not every sale is a useful comparison. A property in a better location, with more bedrooms, better condition or superior land may not tell you much unless you adjust your thinking.

Before negotiating, decide your maximum. That figure should be based on market evidence, your approved budget, likely costs after settlement and your comfort with repayments.

·Research comparable sales.
·Compare like with like.
·Ask about vendor expectations without letting them dictate your number.
·Decide your maximum before emotions rise.
·Keep finance, valuation and due diligence conditions in mind.

What to do next
·Write down your offer range before negotiating: ideal price, fair price and walk-away price.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The easiest way to win a property is to overpay.

The smarter way is to understand value before you negotiate.

Found a property you love?
Send me the address before you make an offer.

18. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY OFFER IS ACCEPTED?

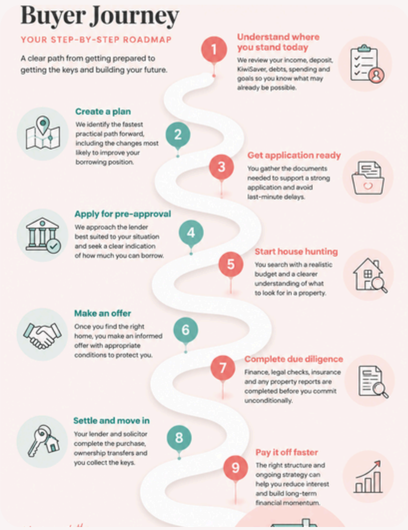
The better question: What checks need to happen before I fully commit?

An accepted offer is exciting, but it is not usually the finish line. For many first home buyers, it begins the conditional period.

Your conditions are there to protect you. They give you time to confirm finance, arrange any inspections, review legal documents, check insurance and make sure the property is suitable before you go unconditional.

Once conditions are satisfied, the agreement becomes unconditional. At that point, both buyer and seller are committed to settlement.

From there, your lender and solicitor work together on loan documents, transfer of funds and settlement. When settlement is complete, you collect the keys.



·Offer accepted.
·Conditional period begins.
·Finance is finalised.
·Building report, LIM, insurance and legal checks are completed where needed.
·Conditions are satisfied.
·Agreement goes unconditional.
·Settlement is completed.
·Keys are released.

What to do next
·During the conditional period, ask questions early. It is much easier to solve issues before you are unconditional.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The conditional period is not a delay.

It is the part of the process designed to help you make a confident decision.

PART THREE – HOW DO I BUY SOONER?

This section focuses on momentum. It challenges the myths and behaviours that keep buyers waiting longer than necessary and helps turn uncertainty into a practical plan.

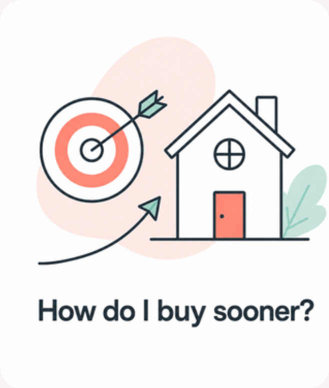
19. WHAT MISTAKES DELAY FIRST HOME BUYERS?

The better question: Which decisions could add months to my journey, and how do I avoid them?

Most delays do not happen because buyers are lazy or careless. They happen because people work on the wrong things, wait for the wrong milestone or rely on assumptions instead of advice.

First home buying does not require perfection. But it does reward preparation.

·Waiting until you feel ready. Many people are closer than they think, or could be closer with a few targeted changes.
·Assuming you need 20%. Some buyers wait for a deposit target that may not be required for their situation.
·Taking on new debt. A car loan, credit card or buy now pay later habit can reduce borrowing capacity at exactly the wrong time.
·Relying too heavily on calculators. They are useful for rough thinking but can be misleading if treated as the final answer.
·Falling in love with one property. Emotion can lead to overpaying or ignoring due diligence.
·Waiting to ask for advice. Early advice can prevent months of working on the wrong problem.



What to do next
·Find out where you stand before you make big changes.
·Avoid new debt once buying is on the horizon.
·Use calculators as a starting point, not a decision-maker.
·Get application-ready before house hunting.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

: Delay often comes from guessing.

Progress usually starts when you know exactly what to work on.

20. WHAT IS THE FASTEST PATH FROM WHERE I AM TODAY?

The better question: What should I do next to improve my chances of buying sooner?

The fastest path is not the same for everyone. For one buyer, it may be saving a little more deposit. For another, it may be closing a credit card, clearing a car loan, improving bank account conduct, using KiwiSaver properly, changing lender strategy or waiting three months with a specific plan.

That is why generic advice can be frustrating. "Save more" may be right for some people, but it is not always the highest-impact move.

A better approach is to diagnose your position first, then focus on the few steps that actually change the outcome.

Think of this as a 90-day planning exercise. What would make your application stronger three months from now? What would improve lender confidence? What would increase borrowing capacity? What would reduce risk or speed up approval?

You do not need to fix everything. You need to fix the things that matter most.

·Confirm your real deposit position.
·Understand your borrowing capacity with your actual numbers.
·Identify debts or limits that reduce affordability.
·Review your bank statements for patterns that may concern a lender.
·Check whether your income is being assessed in the most suitable way.
·Prepare documents before you need them.
·Choose a buying team: adviser, lawyer and insurer.
·Avoid major financial changes without advice.

What to do next
Start with a proper assessment. Once you know whether the answer is "yes", "not yet" or "yes, but with a different strategy", the next step becomes much clearer.

FIRST HOME FASTER TIP

The best plan is not the most complicated one.

It is the one that tells you what to do next and why it matters.

Need a hand?
Scan to book your free first home strategy session.

Your next step

If there's one thing I hope you take from this guide, it's this:
You don't need to have everything figured out before you begin.

You don't need the perfect deposit, the perfect income, or the perfect timing.

You simply need to understand where you stand today, know your options, and focus on the steps that will make the biggest difference.

For some people, that means they're ready to start house hunting sooner than they thought. For others, it means putting a plan in place to strengthen their position over the next few months. Either way, it's always better to know.

My role is to help everyday New Zealanders buy their first home sooner by simplifying the process, creating a personalised strategy, and guiding them from their first conversation through to settlement —and beyond.

Most people don't need more income to buy their first home. They need a better plan.

Continue your journey
If you've found this guide helpful, the **First Home Faster Toolkit** is the perfect next resource. It walks you through the home-buying journey step by step, explains what lenders look for, and includes practical checklists and tools to help you move forward with confidence.

If you'd rather talk through your own situation, I'd love to help.

No pressure. No obligation. No silly questions.

Just honest advice, practical guidance, and a personalised plan designed around you.

Nicola Petersen
Mortgage Adviser | First-Home Buyer Specialist

📞 021 705 853
✉️ nicola@mortgagemanagers.co.nz
🌐 nicsmortgagemagic.co.nz
You might be closer than you think.

NIC'S MORTGAGE MAGIC