

House Hunting Like a Pro

Arguably, the most fun step throughout the home-buying process is the search itself. Today, the majority of house hunting is done online. There are numerous listing websites available for home buyers to utilize in their search. Even social media platforms now advertise homes for sale. However, old fashioned house hunting methods are still viable in today's market too. Visiting open houses with your agent, cruising neighborhoods for "For Sale" signs, and hearing about homes for sale by word of mouth are still effective ways to find your dream home.

House Hunting Online

In this day and age, you can see so many more houses while searching for your home online than anyone was ever able to see in the past. There are hundreds of listing websites available which can make it difficult to know where to look. Thankfully, we know some great listing websites and are happy to point you that way:

- [realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com) —As one of the most well known listing websites, we have to include it as one of the better sources for finding houses online. Like its competitors, it has an extensive inventory, but most of the listings are not theirs to advertise. You'll have to go through extra steps to target a specific listing found on this website.
- [zillow.com](https://www.zillow.com) — Zillow is a good resource for searching for homes online because it contains listings nationwide. However, Zillow's feed is often a day or more behind real time MLS listings.
- [lakescountryrealty.com](https://www.lakescountryrealty.com) — Our top recommendation for looking for homes online would of course be to use the free Keri Shull Online Home Search tool. If you hesitate to take our word for it, try it out for yourself. The Property Search tool provides hundreds of listings all over the Chisago Lakes Area as well as Greater Minnesota and Western Wisconsin, and you can filter your search by specifying a variety of criteria regarding the home you want. It will even show you nearby schools, area statistics, and demographics.

Dos and Don'ts for House Hunting Online

We also have some general dos and don'ts for searching for homes online:

- Don't get caught up in the small things like paint color or staging — these are quick fixes and you can customize the house to your liking once it's yours!
- Don't rely solely on listing photos. Photographs don't always do the house justice and it could look totally different in person.
- Do read between the lines of the listing. The descriptions can be misleading with tricky phrasing, so be sure to read through carefully.
- Do remember that the asking price is not the same as the sales price. In competitive markets, the sales price can be quite higher than the original asking price.
- Don't forget HOA fees and other maintenance fees if you're looking at a condo or townhome. These extra fees can make a big difference in your overall budget.

Lakes Country Realty

When you work with Lakes Country Realty, you can obtain Instant Access to hundreds of homes in the area just like a realtor would, which allows you to find out about new listings immediately when they go on the market and before the general public has a chance to view them! This will truly give you an edge on the competition. Learn more about our Instant Access and sign up today.

House Hunting in Person

Online listings can help narrow down your search, but you will never get the true feel of a home unless you see it in person. By arranging a personal tour, you give yourself the opportunity to get a real feel for the neighborhood, ask questions on the spot, and tweak your wishlist. Sometimes the only true way to know if a house is for you — with or without a wishlist — is to walk into the home and know that it is the one for you.

Your agent can arrange private tours for you to view houses on the market or you can attend open houses. Not all properties will host open houses, so don't rely on them as your sole method of visiting houses in your search. Working with a top real estate agent like those at Lakes Country Realty can guarantee that you will visit homes in person on your schedule and not miss out on a home by waiting around for the open house.

Here are our trusted dos and do nots to keep in mind when searching for homes in person:

- Don't get caught up in things you can change. Just like when house hunting online, look past the aspects that need touch-ups and see the big picture.
- Do take your own photos and notes. Just don't post online.
- Do make a plan ahead of time. You'll probably have more than one target neighborhood, so plan out your route accordingly to make your search as efficient as possible.
- Don't fall for a house based purely on the staging. Remember that the furniture probably doesn't come with the house; make sure to imagine your own pieces fitting into the space.
- Don't ignore the neighborhood. It happens to everyone. They get caught up in the house and overlook a bad neighborhood. The location is just as important as the house itself, maybe more so.
- Do wear slip on/off shoes to protect the house you're seeing and keep the floors clean. You may be the one buying this house, so do as you'd want
- Don't let your realtor do the driving. You'll be driving to and from this home a lot if you purchase it. Driving yourself gives you a feel for what that will be like and lets you discover first hand any inconveniences that are on your route.
- Do further investigate things you consider as drawbacks to the house. If it's on a busy street, come back at rush hour to see how loud it is.
- Don't only house hunt in person when the weather is nice. Every house looks better on a sunny day. Experience the home at varying times of the day.