

Where To Look

Increase the odds of finding the perfect home by registering with several estate agents. Focus on the estate agents that deal in the type of property you want. A quick look through the local newspaper or in the agents' window will soon tell you what type of properties they deal in. If you can, make an appointment to go and see the estate agent, so he or she will know that you are serious about buying.

When you meet the estate agent, be specific about your needs. Tell them what you want to buy, how much you can afford and where you want to buy. But be prepared to be flexible too. The estate agent will have a good idea how far your money will go.

Once you have registered the agent will give you some descriptions for properties they think will suit you. The Property Misdescriptions Act of 1993 means that the properties you view should pretty well match the description the agent gives you.

It may take a while before you see the property you want but don't be afraid to pester your estate agents. Ring them once a week to see if they have anything new on their books. By keeping in regular contact, the estate agent knows that you are interested and will put you at the top of the list of people to contact.

If they have new property, ask for a description over the phone. If it sounds good, ask to go and see it as soon as possible, but don't feel obliged to look at every property offered. Viewing is time consuming.

If you see details of a property that you like, be prepared to move quickly. If you are the first person to view, you stand a better chance of getting the property should you decide it's the one you want. Ask the estate agent to make an appointment for you. If the property is vacant, the estate agent will want to go with you to view. If you are interested, make another appointment to view the property as you may see things second-time around that you missed on your first viewing.

If the property is on the market with more than one estate agent this doesn't mean that a rival agent can continue to market the property once it has been sold. Most agencies operate as joint sole agents, which means that they split the commission once the sale goes through. It is not in a seller's interests to put a property on the market with an agent that is not a joint sole agent, because they risk having to pay a separate commission to each agent they use.

Estate agents work on behalf of the seller and make their money by charging them a percentage of the sale. So as a buyer, you won't have to pay anything to the estate agent.