



# Your Guide to the Home Loan Process

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From your first conversation to the day you receive your keys, this is a clear, straightforward guide to every stage of your loan so you always know what's happening and what to expect.

**Multiple Lenders**

Working For You

**Multi-State Licensed**

Verified Coverage

**NMLS #1963444**

Licensed Broker

**Equal Housing**

Lender

# What to Expect

Whether you're buying your first home or your fifth, understanding what happens between application and closing takes the mystery out of the process.

Our process is designed to eliminate surprises, reduce delays, and keep you informed at every step, so you can move forward with confidence.

Lender Express operates as a mortgage broker, not a bank or direct lender. We shop multiple lenders on your behalf to find the best combination of rate, program, and terms for your situation. You get access to a wide range of products without applying at multiple places.

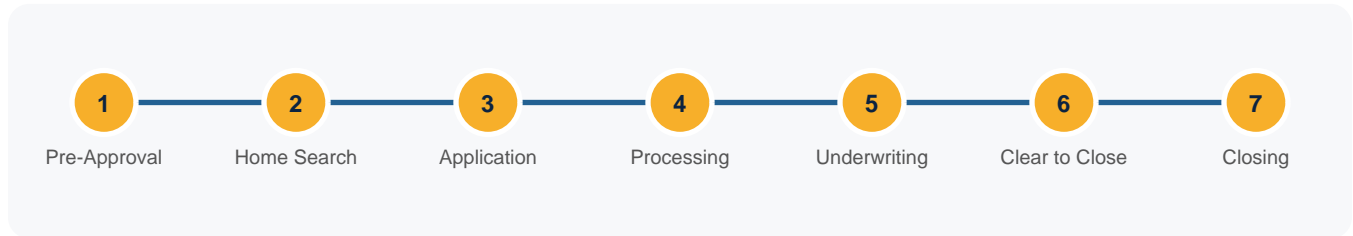
Your loan officer is your guide through every stage. Licensed, experienced, and working exclusively in your interest from pre-approval through closing.

## WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

- + No surprises. You'll know what's needed and when
- + No pressure. Your options explained clearly
- + No jargon. Plain language at every step
- + Direct access to your loan officer throughout
- + Multiple lenders competing for your business

# The Seven Stages of Your Loan

Every home loan follows the same essential path. Here's the full picture.



Stage	Pipeline	What It Means
<b>Pre-Approval</b>	Getting Started	Verify income, assets, and credit to receive your letter
<b>Home Search</b>	Getting Started	Shop with a confirmed budget and competitive offer
<b>Application</b>	Processing	Full application and file assembly under contract
<b>Processing</b>	Processing	Appraisal, disclosures, and underwriting prep
<b>Underwriting</b>	Processing	Independent lender review and conditional approval
<b>Clear to Close</b>	Closing	Final approval with closing documents prepared
<b>Closing</b>	Closing	Sign documents, funds disbursed, keys in hand

## SECTION 1 — GETTING STARTED (1 of 2)

Inquiry › Pre-Qualification

### 1 Inquiry

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

You've connected with a loan officer by phone, email, referral, or online. This is the start of the process, with no commitment yet. Your loan officer will learn about your goals, timeline, and financial situation so they can guide you in the right direction. When you're ready, they'll send you a link to complete your application.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + No pressure and no obligation
- + A chance to ask questions and explore your options
- + Your loan officer starts building a plan based on your goals

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*At this stage, your loan officer is here to listen, not sell. The more you share about your goals and situation, the better they can guide you and recommend the right loan options from the start.*

### 2 Pre-Qualification

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Your loan officer reviews what you've shared including income range, estimated assets, and your general credit picture to identify programs you may qualify for and what your purchasing power looks like. Some loan officers pull credit and run automated underwriting at this stage. You'll receive a checklist of documents to provide so your loan officer can verify your information.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Get a realistic budget estimate before you shop
- + Identify the best loan programs for your situation
- + Receive a document checklist to get organized

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Pre-qualification is an estimate based on what you've shared verbally. It is a starting point, not a commitment. Pre-approval is what carries real weight with sellers.*

## SECTION 1 — GETTING STARTED (2 of 2)

Pre-Approval

### 3 Pre-Approval

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

You've submitted your documentation including pay stubs, bank statements, tax returns, and ID. Your credit has been pulled and your loan officer has reviewed everything and issued a conditional pre-approval letter. This signals to sellers that you are a verified buyer with confirmed financing capacity.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Pre-approval letter ready to include with any offer
- + Your budget is confirmed, not estimated
- + You can shop and make offers with confidence

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*A pre-approval from Lender Express carries weight because it is based on verified documents, not just a conversation. In competitive markets, this distinction matters.*

## SECTION 2 — PROCESSING (1 of 3)

Loan Setup

### 4 Loan Setup

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

You're under contract. Your loan officer confirms all details required under federal disclosure rules including name, income, Social Security number, property address, estimated value, and loan amount. The loan is set up in the lender's system with your selected program and rate. Processing officially begins.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Your loan transitions from pre-approval to a live file
- + Program and rate are confirmed
- + Your processor takes primary responsibility from here

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Once you're under contract, every date in your purchase agreement matters. Your loan officer works closely with your real estate agent to make sure your financing stays on track with your inspection period, contingency deadlines, and closing date.*

## SECTION 2 — PROCESSING (2 of 3)

Initial Disclosures › Submitted to Underwriting

### 5 Initial Disclosures

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Within three business days of your completed application you'll receive your Initial Loan Estimate (LE) and other required federal disclosures. The LE shows your expected rate, monthly payment, and closing costs in a standardized format. You'll acknowledge receipt and confirm your intent to proceed, which starts the official closing clock.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Review your Loan Estimate carefully before signing
- + Your intent to proceed starts the closing timeline
- + You have the right to ask about every line item

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*The Loan Estimate is your financial roadmap. If anything looks different from what was discussed, contact your loan officer before signing your intent to proceed.*

### 6 Submitted to Underwriting

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Your processor has assembled a sufficiently complete file and submitted it to the lender's underwriting department. The appraisal may still be in process at this stage and will be reviewed by the underwriter once it is received. The underwriter is an independent reviewer who evaluates your file against the lender's credit and program guidelines and issues a loan decision.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Your file is complete and under formal review
- + Respond quickly to any requests at this stage
- + Avoid major financial changes during underwriting

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Do not open new credit accounts, make large deposits, or change jobs while in underwriting. Any of these can trigger additional conditions and delay your closing.*

## SECTION 2 — PROCESSING (3 of 3)

Approved with Conditions

### 7 Approved with Conditions

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

The underwriter has reviewed your file and issued a conditional approval. You're approved, subject to satisfying specific conditions before closing. Common conditions include updated pay stubs, a letter explaining something in your file such as a gap in employment or a large deposit, the completed appraisal report, or proof of homeowners insurance. Your loan officer will contact you promptly with any items needed.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Conditional approval means you're on track to close
- + Respond to condition requests as quickly as possible
- + How fast conditions clear determines whether you meet your closing date

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Most loans are approved with conditions and this is completely normal. Think of each condition as a checkbox on the way to your Clear to Close. Speed of response directly impacts your closing date.*

## SECTION 3 — CLOSING (1 of 2)

Clear to Close

### 8 Clear to Close

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

The underwriter has fully approved your loan and the lender has issued a Clear to Close. This means every condition has been satisfied and the loan is authorized to fund. From here, your processor and closer coordinate with the closing agent to prepare your final loan documents and schedule your signing appointment.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Your loan is fully approved and authorized to close
- + The closing agent will confirm your closing time and location
- + The closing agent will provide your final figures before signing

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*At this stage the closing agent takes the lead on scheduling and will provide you with the exact amount needed to close, including how to submit those funds. Your loan officer remains available if you have any questions.*

## SECTION 3 — CLOSING (2 of 2)

Closing Disclosure › Signing and Closing

### 9 Closing Disclosure

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

At least three business days before closing you'll receive a Closing Disclosure (CD), a federally required document showing your final loan terms including rate, monthly payment, and loan costs. Review this carefully and contact your loan officer if anything looks different from your Loan Estimate.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Review every line. This is your final binding agreement.
- + The three-day waiting period is required by federal law
- + Ask questions before you get to the closing table

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Compare your CD to your Loan Estimate line by line. Some numbers can change within allowed tolerances and others cannot. Your loan officer can explain any differences before you sign.*

### 10 Signing and Closing

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Closing is handled by a settlement agent, which is typically a title or escrow company. In some states, an attorney is required to conduct the closing. You'll attend a signing appointment in person or via remote online notary where available. Bring a valid government-issued photo ID. If you're wiring funds, always confirm wire instructions directly with your settlement agent by phone before sending any money.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Bring government-issued photo ID
- + Verify wire instructions by phone every time
- + Ask the closing agent to explain anything unclear

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Wire fraud targeting homebuyers is serious and growing. Never wire funds based on an email alone. Always call the title company at a number you independently confirmed before transferring any money.*

## SECTION 3 — CLOSING (Funded)

Loan Funded

### 11 Loan Funded

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING

After your closing documents are signed and reviewed, your lender sends the loan funds to the closing agent. For a purchase, the closing agent finalizes the transaction, records the deed with the county, and the home officially becomes yours. For a refinance, your existing loan is paid off and any remaining funds, such as cash-out proceeds, are disbursed to you.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- + Deed recorded. The home is officially yours.
- + Loan officer confirms funding and recording
- + Keys are released. Congratulations.

#### YOUR LOAN OFFICER

*Funding and recording can happen same-day or next-day depending on state and county. Your loan officer will give you a specific timeline so you know exactly when to expect your keys.*

# What Buyers Commonly Worry About

These are the concerns we hear most, with honest answers to each.

## My credit isn't perfect.

Many programs are designed for real-world profiles. FHA accepts scores from 580. VA has no minimum. Conventional options start at 620. Your loan officer matches you to the right program, not judges your score.

## I don't have 20% down.

You don't need it. Conventional allows 3% down. FHA is 3.5%. VA and USDA offer 0% for qualified borrowers. Down payment assistance programs may also be available.

## I'm self-employed.

Self-employed borrowers qualify every day. Depending on your circumstances, some programs require only one year of tax returns. Others use two years. Bank statement loans are also available as an alternative to tax return qualification entirely.

## I'm worried about the rate.

As a mortgage broker we shop your file across multiple lenders at once for competitive pricing without multiple applications. Your loan officer explains what drives your rate and how to optimize it.

## What if something goes wrong?

Conditions and requests for additional documents are normal in almost every loan. Your loan officer has seen every scenario and communicates proactively throughout.

## Is my information secure?

Your application and documents are transmitted through encrypted, compliant platforms. Your loan officer will never ask you to send sensitive documents via unencrypted email.

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## Quick Reference: Terms You'll Hear

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### **AUS — Automated Underwriting System**

Software that evaluates your application against program guidelines and returns an initial eligibility decision.

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### **CD — Closing Disclosure**

A federally required document delivered at least 3 business days before closing showing your final, binding loan terms.

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### **Clear to Close (CTC)**

The lender's final authorization to proceed to closing. All conditions satisfied, documents ready.

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### **DTI — Debt-to-Income Ratio**

Your total monthly debt payments divided by gross monthly income. A key underwriting metric.

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### **Escrow**

A neutral third party (title company) that holds funds and documents and disburses them at closing.

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### **LE — Loan Estimate**

A standardized federal disclosure showing expected rate, monthly payment, and estimated closing costs.

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### **NMLS**

Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System. Verify your loan officer at [nmlsconsumeraccess.org](http://nmlsconsumeraccess.org).

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### **Points**

Prepaid interest. One point = 1% of the loan amount. Paying points typically lowers your rate.

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### **TRID**

Federal rule governing the Loan Estimate and Closing Disclosure, establishing mandatory timing, content, and tolerance standards.

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### **Underwriter**

The lender's independent reviewer who evaluates your complete file and issues the approval decision.

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## Your Next Step

If you're already working with a Lender Express loan officer, reach out to them directly. They understand your situation and will guide you based on your goals. If you're just getting started, we'll connect you with a dedicated loan officer who will walk you through everything step by step.

### PHONE

(602) 649-6493

### TOLL-FREE

(888) 286-0367

### EMAIL

[contact@lenderexpress.com](mailto:contact@lenderexpress.com)

### APPLY

[lenderexpress.com](https://lenderexpress.com)

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Loan approval is subject to credit review, income verification, appraisal, and lender guidelines.