



# Arm yourself against unfair agents.

These days, real estate agents are a dime a dozen. Problem is, it's incredibly tough to tell which agents will actually do a great job for you.

All it takes is a 2-week course to get a real estate license. Meaning, in order to avoid a terrible experience or getting ripped off, you need a reliable process to weed out the bad agents who don't know what they're doing.

This tool helps guide you through the process of interviewing agents. Sometimes, you don't know what you don't know. But after asking an agent these questions, you'll have a much better idea of whether they're right for the job.

Remember, agents are interviewing for a job with you. Even if they're your friends, going through these questions with them will help ensure you remain friends after the transactions. Because if they don't know your expectations, they can't meet your expectations.

Here are our suggested questions to ask any agent before hiring them:



# 01: Start with the basics.

## **What differentiates you from other Realtors?**

They should be able to tell the unique benefits of working with them. How will they save you money? What tools do they have in their belt to sell your home faster? Make them prove themselves.

## **Do you have a seller process that you follow to ensure I have a smooth, predictable experience?**

(Ask to see the agent's seller process. It should be a step-by-step checklist from day 1 to closing day.) This is important because you want to make sure the agent isn't just winging it and trying to keep up with all the details of the transaction from memory.

## **How do you price a home?**

You should be able to tell immediately if an agent is lazy if they start to price your home by exclusively using a "price per square foot" approach. That's like pricing a car's value by the pound.

Every property is unique and your home should be valued based on its uniqueness, in addition to its size and location. It's not a good strategy to only use sold comps in pricing your home. That's like driving down the road while looking through the rear-view mirror. You need to consider the current active listings and price your home to be competitive with other active listings.

## **Do you provide a written marketing strategy? How will that strategy get traffic to my home?**

(From day one there should be a game plan, preferably in writing. That game plan should be clear about how the agent will promote your property to qualified buyers.)

# 02: What is their history?

## **Are you a full time Real Estate Agent?**

It is important to use an agent who is fully committed to be an expert at their profession. The more time they spend doing this, the better they're going to be. This is a big financial decision, and you don't want to hire an agent who prioritizes their day job over being your agent.

## **How long have you been in real estate?**

You want an agent with at least 3 years of experience — the more experience, the better. Otherwise they're less likely to know the local market, understand nuances of negotiations strategies, be able to effectively evaluate a home's value, or know how to measure and respond to the demand in a buyer and sellers market.

(About 90% of all agents quit by the end of their 3rd year.)

## 03: How involved are they?

### How many current clients do you have?

It is important they have enough clients they are working with to know the current market. If they have too many clients they may not have enough time to give you their full attention. It is recommended they are working with 10-24 clients at a time.

### How do you manage working with all those clients?

If they have a decent size client base and do not have a team supporting them, watch out. The agent may lack the time to give you the level of attention you need.

### Do you have a team who supports you?

Many times agents won't hire a team because they want to make as much money as possible and not pay for the support necessary to give their clients the highest level of service. Your experience suffers as a result.

### What are their roles?

Most agents are not skilled marketers. It is important they have a specialist supporting the marketing of your house. Next, most agents are very social and personable, which means they could have a weakness for the details. It is best if they have a transaction coordinator to handle the details, paperwork, scheduling, and managing the seller process. This is crucial because otherwise they risk missing important deadlines—which happens much more often than you think and can lead to deals falling through.

### If you don't have a team supporting you, what happens to the efforts on the sale of my home when you are working with other clients, go on vacation, get sick, etc.?

This is obviously a hard question for them to answer. But if you're going to entrust this important decision to them, they'd better have a plan.

## 04: How do they treat clients?

### Do you have service / pricing options so I can pick the best plan for me?

Here's why this is so important: When you have a choice, you have the power to make the best decision for you. Fee for service companies (like Scout Realty) give customers control to decide what service plan best fits their home and needs.

### How do you help me save money when selling my home?

Certain agents will be able to save you more money than others. Some will simply say, "Sorry, you have to pay 6% of your home's value, my company won't allow it, and there's no getting around it." But that's not true. A great answer from an agent would be: "We don't charge outrageous commissions. Instead, we charge a simple flat fee for service no matter the value of your home. The more valuable your home is, the more money you will save."

### Do you charge up-front fees?

Most agents don't. So beware if you interview an agent that claims it's the norm.

### What is your listing strategy to sell my home?

There are many different strategies that work. The important thing is that they have a strategy. You don't want an agent that just wants the listing to have a sign in the yard to attract unrepresented buyers for themselves. YES—believe it or not this happens.

# 05: Let's talk logistics.

## **What can I expect in terms of regular communication, updates on the market, and updates on the sale of my home?**

It is recommended that you have a scheduled weekly status call with your agent. This call should give you insight on your home's activity, feedback from the previous week's showings, any changes to active listings that are your competition, any new listings that have entered the market, and the strategy for the upcoming week.

## **Will you have professional photos taken?**

This is a MUST. No exceptions.

## **Do you attend the appraisal?**

This is a MUST. You need your agent to represent you at the appraisal, to advocate on your behalf, and justify the contract price.

## **Do you use any technology to make my transaction easier or more efficient?**

At the very least they should be using a transaction management software, which has capabilities to digitally sign documents.

# 06: Are they credible?

## **How many houses did you sell last year? Can you send me a breakdown of the address, price, sales, date, (and if you want to call for references, then ask for names and numbers here)?**

If they have been in the business for over 1 year, they need to be selling a minimum of 12 homes, preferably 24-36 homes per year. The agent needs to be selling enough homes to be up to date on the changes in the market. If they aren't selling enough homes, then they aren't getting enough transactions to be proficient as a real estate agent.

\*\*\*Ask for the agent to show you their sales report. This sales report will give you a list of past clients who you can use to randomly select as references. Don't let the agent hand pick their favorite clients.

## **What is the cheapest home you sold last year? (Do the math and then ask them to charge you that rate.)**

From the agent's previous year's sales report, look at the cheapest house the agent sold last year. That should establish the basis for the amount of money the agent would work for.

Example: If the cheapest house the agent sold last year was \$200,000 they probably received 3% commission, which would be \$6,000. If your house is worth \$400,000 then why would you pay twice as much ( $\$400k \times 3\% = \$12,000$ ) for the agent to do the exact same amount of work? If the agent deals fairly with you they will price-match what they have charged someone else. If they refuse to price match, then ask the agent to explain what you get in return for the extra fees. Your other option is to hire a company that offers a fair flat fee for service no matter the value of your home.

## **Do you have any sort of customer guarantee for if things don't go well?**

If the agent doesn't perform how they said they would perform, or if their behavior is not how you would want to be represented, then you will be protected as long as you've agreed to a "cancel at anytime" policy. The agent should not hold you to a listing agreement if they have failed to do their job. (This should be the standard for all agents, but it's not.)

# 07: Final inquiries.

## **If my listing attracts an unrepresented buyer who wants to buy my house, will you represent them on the purchase?**

If their answer is yes, then ask “do you not think that would be a conflict of interest?”

## **What communication and followup systems do you have in place to stay in touch and sell my house to all interested parties after the initial point of contact?**

Just because someone toured the house and didn't make an offer doesn't mean the work is done. Your agent shouldn't give up—they should have a follow up system in place with prospective buyers. Keep in mind, the listing agent most likely was not at the showing to SELL the house. The agent's opportunity to SELL the house comes in the followup after the house gets shown, as well as during open houses. They need to be able to get to the core reasons the buyer has failed to make an offer—and, if possible, give clarity or remove their objections. Also, they need to have a system to communicate price reductions to past visitors.

## **Do you have a call center to schedule showings?**

Your agent needs to use a call center to set up showings. If they are the single point of contact to schedule showings, then they may be with other clients or in a meeting when showing requests come in. You DON'T want those calls going to voicemail. This could hurt the sale of your home because buyers aren't getting the real-time access and support to see your home. Also, call centers do a great job of getting feedback and compiling data. Feedback and data are essential to making the necessary adjustment to your listing.

## **In the State of Tennessee, the brokerage owns the listing, not the agent. What services differentiate your brokerage from other companies? What will your brokerage do that directly impacts the sale of my house?**

The agent should not just rely on their ability but also on the strength of their company's abilities. Find out what the company will do for you that will directly improve the sales prospects of your home. Because some brokerages offer massive benefits, while others offer almost nothing.

## **What makes you a great negotiator?**

Most agents have never taken a negotiation class. Unfortunately it's not a prerequisite training to be able to represent clients. Beware of the agent that tries to be overly strong and says they will “fight for you.” More deals get done out of cooperation and win-win dealings than through contention and trying to beat the other side.

# Last thoughts: **SELLER PRO TIP**

- #1** Clearly communicate your expectations for the agent. Failure to do so will lead to frustration, broken relationships, and a failed listing attempt.
- #2** List homes on exact \$50 or \$100k increments to have maximum visibility on internet searches. Example: It's a bad idea to price a home at \$499,900. Buyers who search online between \$400-500k will find your listing, but buyers searching between \$500-600 will totally miss your listing on account of \$100. You don't want to miss out on those higher-end buyers thinking your home looks like a deal.
- #3** If your listing fails to attract offers, or if you want to sell it fast, then offer a buyer's agent bonus or buyer's closing cost credit for acceptable offers received within a specified timeframe. Make this time frame short, like 5-7 days.
- #4** Sometimes sellers think their house is the best house EVER!! You feel so strongly about how valuable you think your home is that you want to list the home at a really high price and "see what happens." Agents who don't push back on you and feel like the listing price is too high are angling to be soft with you to get the listing. They want the listing to attract unrepresented buyers. They know your house probably won't sell if it is overvalued and will keep their mouth shut to get the listing. Then they'll just talk you into lowering the price later.



**You'll get the best results if you choose an agent who will tell you what you NEED to hear, not what you WANT to hear.**

**Choose the agent who is unafraid to disagree with you. They are putting your interest ahead of their own.**

**Come to an agreement on the listing price, even if it is way on the high side. Then have a plan in place to make scheduled price reductions based on the number of showings, lack of offers, or accumulated days on the market.**

## Let's take this to the next level.

**We'd love for you to use this guide on us.  
We're ready to answer all your questions. :)**

**Contact us to interview a Scout agent today.  
Office@ScoutRealty.com  
615-868-9000**

**Let's take the next step together!**



**SCOUT**  
REALTY