

# YOUR REALTOR<sup>®</sup>'S ROLE

## — understanding your options —

Buying or selling a house is the largest financial investment most people make, and it's one of the most complex. You need to think about financing, appraisals, zoning regulations, short sales, repairs, and more. **Realtors<sup>®</sup> are here to help.**

### REALTORS<sup>®</sup> AND REAL ESTATE AGENTS

A real estate agent's job is to help guide you through the complexities of buying or selling a property. But not everyone with a real estate license is a Realtor<sup>®</sup>. A Realtor<sup>®</sup> is not just a real estate licensee, but is also a member of the National Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup>.

What's the difference? Realtors<sup>®</sup> must meet stricter education requirements than the law requires, and they're bound not only by that law, but by the higher standard of the REALTOR<sup>®</sup> Code of Ethics.



That's why only Realtors<sup>®</sup> are allowed to use the famous Realtor<sup>®</sup> "R".

Your Realtor<sup>®</sup> is committed to protecting your interests throughout the entire transaction with the integrity, honor, professionalism, and expertise that meets the high standards set by the "Realtor<sup>®</sup>" name.

And Realtors<sup>®</sup> have access to more and more sophisticated tools to help sellers market their properties to the right audience, help buyers find just the right home, and make the entire process run smoothly.

You'll find your Realtor<sup>®</sup> isn't just an expert on your local real estate market, but also a trusted advisor who can help you navigate a complex transaction.

### WHAT WILL A REALTOR<sup>®</sup> DO FOR ME?

Realtors<sup>®</sup> can be invaluable to buyers and sellers in a number of ways:

#### If you're buying, your Realtor<sup>®</sup> can...

- + help you determine how much home you can afford
- + explain financing options and help you find the right loan
- + assist in your home search through the local Multiple Listing Service, or with houses you find through Realtor.com and other Web sites
- + provide objective data about each property — including helping find information you might not realize is available
- + provide negotiating expertise, and help resolve any issues that arise with the seller that could delay closing or void the contract
- + help you get and understand any homeowner association documents
- + coordinate appraisals and other issues your lender may require
- + help you determine what inspections are necessary, such as for dry rot, asbestos, and mold, and the condition of the roof and septic tank — just to name a few
- + explain earnest money deposits, escrow accounts, and closing costs
- + go on a final walk-through to make sure everything is in order and any repairs have been made properly
- + work with you and the seller's agent to reach a smooth and problem-free closing

#### If you're selling, your Realtor<sup>®</sup> can...

- + go over the market conditions to help you set the right price for your home based on everything from size and condition to recent sales in your neighborhood
- + find the best places to market your property — including the local Multiple Listing Service and other channels that may not be available to the general public
- + help prepare or "stage" your home for sale by suggesting small improvements that can make a big difference — everything from arranging furniture to choosing the right paint color
- + take professional photos and video, and make sure they're included in your home's advertising
- + coordinate inspections, appraisals, and other issues to ensure a smooth closing
- + provide negotiating expertise, and help resolve any issues that arise with the buyer that could delay closing or void the contract
- + work with you and the buyer's agent to reach a smooth and problem-free closing

## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF WORKING WITH YOUR REALTOR®

You choose your Realtor® the way you would choose a doctor, accountant, or other professional: Meet with several, take a friend or colleague's recommendation, or respond to an ad, for example.

- + Once you've found the Realtor® you want to represent you (as either a buyer or a seller), you enter into what's called a "brokerage relationship."
- + In order to work together, you and your Realtor® need a written "brokerage agreement" that outlines at a minimum:
  - + what services the Realtor® will provide;
  - + how long he or she will be providing those services; and
  - + what fee (if any) and how it's paid.

This agreement might be for a single day — to see a few houses — or several months. For sellers, the fee is typically a percentage of the sale price, while a buyer might see "Fee to be paid by seller's agent."

In most cases, your Realtor® will act as what's called a standard or "full-service" agent, providing you with a wide range of assistance and all the advantages of having a trained real estate professional working for you.

There are other options available to you, including hiring a Realtor® as a limited-services agent or as an independent contractor; your Realtor® can explain the benefits and drawbacks of each relationship.

Remember that you and your Realtor® will decide what kind of working relationship works best for you.

Whatever you and your Realtor® agree to, once you've signed that brokerage agreement, your Realtor® can start working for you and representing your interests.

Whether you're buying or selling your home — or just checking out your options — you need the expertise of someone whose job it is to know your local market inside and out. You need a Realtor®.



### WHY DO I HAVE TO SIGN A BROKERAGE AGREEMENT?

The short answer is that Virginia law requires it in order to protect you.

The longer answer is that having something in writing — whether it covers a single property or a months-long relationship — ensures that both you and your Realtor® understand exactly what's expected from each other.

Be sure to discuss your options with your Realtor®, and make sure all your questions are answered.

Learn more about how Realtors® can be an invaluable resource to you when you're buying or selling real estate and learn about issues specifically affecting homeowners in Virginia at [www.VARealtor.com/Consumer](http://www.VARealtor.com/Consumer)

