

Everything is Negotiable

by Rhonda Ender, BuyingRevolution Consultant

In real estate, you don't get what you pay for.
You get what you *ask* for.

Most buyers – and some agents – don't know that absolutely everything in a real estate transaction is, in fact, negotiable.

That's why it's critical to have an experienced agent in your corner, each time you buy. It's not unusual to find that something you don't care much about is really important to your seller – and vice versa – and the last thing you want at closing (or after) is any confusion, miscommunication or disappointment.

Flower Power

Take rhododendrons, for instance. The rule is that if an item is attached to the property, it's included in the sale. If it's not attached, it's the seller's personal property. So where does that leave rhodies? What if they're mature, award-winning plants?

If you just assume that those flowers – or the hand-crafted kitchen island, or the delightful chandelier in the dining room – will be there when you move in, you might be making a frustrating, expensive and completely avoidable mistake.*

There are the four classic categories of negotiables: money, timing, services and property. How many did you include when you closed on your last purchase?

Construction Can-Do's


Buying a new home brings a multitude of new negotiating possibilities. Your builder often needs to keep your purchase price

high (for the sake of sales on remaining properties in your development), but in return, there's often a great deal of room to negotiate upgrades – such as appliances, blinds, lighting, HVAC or finishes – or a major credit that comes back to you at closing, or even perks such as memberships in your community golf or country club.

Remember that new home inspections nearly always result in a final punchlist – but once you close, you don't have much leverage in getting those things repaired. Again, make sure you have an agent who will actually go back to the property and see to it that everything gets done while you still have some bargaining power.

No Assumptions

Appearances can even be unintentionally deceptive. One seller was unable to move his massive, \$7000 children's play equipment from his backyard before showing his house. He didn't mean to imply that the unit was part of the sale, but the equipment appeared in the listing photos, and most potential buyers just made the wrong assumption. Problems were avoided, however, by an agent who thought to ask a simple but vital question: "Does that come with the house?"

When it comes to negotiating, it comes down to this: Assume nothing. Question everything. And when you get the answers you want, get them in writing. 

*Potted plants are personal property, but the garden is considered attached, so would automatically be included with the sale unless the seller specifies otherwise. Same with the chandelier and the island – unless, of course, the island is unattached; at that point you'd be glad you have an agent who's seen it all and makes no assumptions.

Negotiables You Might Not Think Of

MONEY

- Price (problem is, negotiating often starts and ends here)
- Money back at closing
- Prepays
- Title & escrow fees
- Closing costs

TIMING

- Closing date
- Possession date
- Length of inspection contingency (sellers love a short period, which tells them you're serious and will follow through)
- Length of finance contingency (ditto)

SERVICES

- Closing agent/escrow company
- Title company
- Upgrades (particularly with new construction)
- 1 year home warranty
- Steam cleaning the carpet
- Professional home/condo cleaning
- Gardener or other professional services

PROPERTY

- Furniture
- Appliances
- Light fixtures
- Window treatments
- Yard attractions, such as patio furniture, a stand-alone trellis or fountain, children's play equipment (if portable)
- Community country club or golf club membership

No One Negotiates Better

At Buying Revolution, we're something like negotiating bulldogs. Seasoned and successful, we handle the entire process, nail every detail and make sure there are no misunderstandings – and that we save you every possible dollar.