Housing Homework
A Self-Check for Aspiring Homebuyers

Before you fall in love with a house, take time to understand your financial picture.
Use this worksheet to assess where you stand and what steps to take next.

1. Credit Readiness

- Check Your Credit Report
  - Go to www.annualcreditreport.com for a free official copy of your credit report from all three bureaus (Experian, TransUnion, Equifax).
    - You don't need to pay for your score yet—just review your history.
    - Minimum Credit Score for Mortgage: 620
- Ask yourself:
  - Have I reviewed my credit report this year?
  - Are there any errors or old accounts I should dispute?
  - Do I have any collections or judgments that need to be resolved?
  - Could I consolidate debts with a personal loan to reach zero balances sooner?
  - Tip: Once you resolve credit issues, scores often improve within 4–6 months.
  - Keep proof of payments and submit disputes so updates appear quickly.

2. Debt and Payment History

- Do I make payments on time, every time?
- Are any accounts more than 30 days late?
- Have I documented any extenuating circumstances (like medical bills or job loss)?
- Has enough time passed since my bankruptcy or foreclosure?
  - General Waiting Periods:
    - Bankruptcy (Chapter 7): 2–4 years
    - Foreclosure: 3–7 years
    - Short Sale: 2–4 years

3. Income and Stability

- Do I have a reliable, documented income history (2 years of W-2s or tax returns)?
- Do I have any savings to assist with the down payment and closing costs?
- Can I comfortably afford a mortgage payment, taxes, and insurance?
- Lenders look for consistency and proof—not perfection.

4. Next Steps & Resources

- Review your credit report and list items to dispute or pay down.
- Keep records of all payments and correspondence.
- Contact a nonprofit credit counselor for free help:
  - credit.org
  - Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: consumerfinance.gov
  - Fair Debt Collection Practices Act: ftc.gov

5. Questions to Ask Yourself

- What kind of home fits my lifestyle and budget?
- What monthly payment would feel comfortable?
- Who can support me through this process—family, advisor, lender?

Homeownership is a process, not a race. Each small step—checking your credit, organizing paperwork, asking questions—moves you closer to your goal.

SAW HOUSING
www.sawhousing.com

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(A one-page guide to get yourself ready for homeownership)
Buying a home is exciting — but it starts with knowing your numbers, your habits, and your team.
Grab a pencil and take a few minutes to fill this out honestly.
It's not a test — it's just homework that helps your dream take shape.

Credit & Debt Check
Have I pulled my free credit report from annualcreditreport.com?
My current credit score(s): __________

What can I do in the next 3 months to raise my score or lower my balances?

____
(Tip: Most lenders need a score of 620+ for a mortgage.)

💰 **Budget Reality Check**
My monthly take-home pay: $________
My comfortable monthly housing payment (goal): $________
My target down payment: $________ or ___%

◻ I have (or will have) enough saved for closing costs (usually 2–5% of purchase price).
◻ I know my other regular expenses (loans, childcare, car, etc.) and how they affect what I can afford.
(Rule of thumb: keep total housing costs — mortgage, taxes, insurance — under 30% of your income.)

🧾 **Getting Prepped for a Lender**
◻ I've gathered my last two pay stubs
◻ I've got two years of W-2s or tax returns
◻ I know my total monthly debts
◻ I have bank statements ready to show savings
◻ I've talked to (or plan to talk to) a friendly lender about pre-qualification

🧠 **What I Know — and What I Need to Learn**
Write one thing you understand well about homebuying: _____________________________
And one thing you need to learn more about: _______________________________________

👥 **Build Your Homebuying Team**
List who's on your side:
Real Estate Agent ____________________________________
Lender / Loan Officer ________________________________
Home Inspector ______________________________________
Insurance Agent ______________________________________
Mentor / Trusted Friend ______________________________
(Tip: Ask people you trust who've recently bought a home — they'll have great local referrals.)

🚧 **Possible Roadblocks**
◻ Credit score below 620
◻ Too much debt
◻ Not enough savings for down payment or closing costs
◻ Employment changes
◻ Write one small step you'll take this month to move forward: ___________________________

🏁 **Next Steps**
◻ Pull your credit report
◻ Make a simple monthly budget
◻ Contact a local lender
◻ Celebrate — you're doing your homework!

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