



# November 2009



## Ready to buy a home? Ask yourself a few key questions first.

A home is one of the biggest purchases many Americans will make in their lifetime. Which is why planning and preparation are critical when it comes to paving your path to homeownership. Ask yourself the following questions and answer them honestly to determine if now is the right time for you to buy.

### Can you afford to own a home?

Whether it's a sellers market or in our case today, a buyers market, knowing what and IF you can afford a home is critical. The National Association of REALTORS® notes correctly that homes and financing are closely intertwined and describes financing as the difference between the purchase price and the down payment, commonly referred to as debt or the mortgage. The best case scenario is to have some money saved for a down payment and additional money set aside for closing costs. In some cases, though, closing costs can be worked into the price of the home. Here's another great exercise: roughly determine how much a monthly mortgage

payment you can afford. In addition to your monthly rent or current mortgage payment, take the rest of the money it would take to pay the new mortgage and put it into a savings account. Do this for six months. There are two good things about this exercise: (1) You get a feel for what it would be like paying the new mortgage and (2) you now have some money saved for potential closing costs or even a down payment on the house! Be sure to talk to your REALTOR® or a mortgage professional for information on loan programs that match your financial needs.

### Do you know what you want?

Whether you are moving up to a larger home, are a first-time homebuyer or are purchasing a second house, knowing what you want will simplify your home search process. Talk honestly and openly about details such as: square footage, floor plans, neighborhoods, nearby schools and style. Do you have a special need such as an extra bedroom suite, a large upstairs, a pool or a screen porch? Do you have a particular timeframe to buy? By answering these questions honestly, you'll have a more realistic view of what you really want in your future home.

### How's your credit?

The best way to ensure your loan is approved by the lender is to keep your credit in check. The best advice? For at least one year prior to purchasing a home make absolutely sure you pay your rent, credit card bill, car payment or any other debt in full and on time. Not sure if you're credit score is in a good spot? Ask your REALTOR® to recommend a lender or mortgage professional who can answer all your home financing questions.

Careful planning and preparation will help you throughout the entire home buying process. Once you have these questions answered start the interview process for a real estate agent. Find the one that's right for you, and then be on your way to making the dream of homeownership a reality!

## Happy Thanksgiving! - Keep your kids busy while the Turkey cooks with these crafty activities:

1. Pinecones make great turkeys! Add a little flare with googly eyeballs, glitter, pipe cleaners, pom poms, glue and craft paper and your kids will have a blast coming up with their own colorful gobbler.
2. Personal Turkeys. Trace their hands on a sheet of paper and let them color their own personal turkey.
3. Give thanks! Cut out fall-colored leaves from construction paper. Ask your kids to write down what they are most thankful for this year. Then hang the leaves from a stick placed in a small pot with rocks. What a great centerpiece for the kids table!
4. Kid Cooks. Each year, stores stock up on holiday-clad, pre-made cookie dough. Purchase a few, and with your help, let your kids cut out the cookies. For more ideas like these visit [FamilyFun.com](http://FamilyFun.com)!



## Thanksgiving is right around the corner!



Here's a recipe for everyone's favorite,

### Pumpkin Pie

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (9 inch) unbaked deep dish pie crust
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 eggs
- 1 (15 ounce) can LIBBY'S® 100% Pure Pumpkin
- 1 (12 fluid ounce) can NESTLE® CARNATION® Evaporated Milk

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 F.
2. Combine sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger and cloves in small bowl. Beat eggs lightly in large bowl. Stir in pumpkin and sugar-spice mixture. Gradually stir in evaporated milk. Pour into pie shell.
3. Bake for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to 350 F.; bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours. Serve immediately or refrigerate. (Do not freeze as this will cause the crust to separate from the filling.)

## Money Saving Tips for the Holiday Season



The month of November not only marks a time when family and friends get together for the Thanksgiving feast, its also when many households begin thinking about what they can and can't afford during the holiday season. Below are several budget-friendly tips to keep your spending in control and credit card bills at bay.

1. **Create a Budget:** Look closely at your finances to determine the most you can spend on gifts this holiday season. Now write down all the people you want to buy gifts for. Next to those names, jot down a maximum dollar amount you can spend for that person's gift. If you're like most people you'll need some help remembering those amounts – carry that list to each shopping trip.
2. **Do your Research:** Now that you know how much you want to spend on each gift, jump on the Internet. Start researching great gift ideas. Find out how much they cost at big-name retail stores. Then look for deals on competitors Websites. You might even try eBay. The bottom-line: by researching gifts and the various price points, you will likely see some savings.
3. **Use Cash:** Studies have shown that consumers using cash pay more attention to what they are spending and decrease their chance of overspending. It may not be the most convenient method for shopping, but it certainly beats going over your budget.
4. **Get Creative:** If you plan ahead, handmade gifts can be a wonderful alternative to the typical store-bought item. Knitting, beading or fly-tying are all inventive ways to create the perfect gift for someone special.
5. **Stick to the Plan:** This step may be the most important (second possibly to creating your budget). Keep your plan in your pocket – or purse – during all shopping trips and refer to your list often. If things should change consult your budget, consider removing a friend or family member from your list, and work it into your plan.