Ball Realty
Buyers' Guide

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Learn all about buying a property with our complete guide!

Finding The Right Suburb

If you are moving to a new area, one of the biggest considerations is the location of your new property.

Selecting a suburb is a really important part of the process, but unless you've lived there, you're not going have an in-depth knowledge of the area. How do you find out about the area? It's a lot easier now than it was 20 years ago.

There are many sources of data on the internet. Use tools like Wikipedia and Google to search the suburbs for data about the area, demographics, schools, parks bus routes, etc. Ball Realty also has a section on our website dedicated to providing information about the local suburbs. Once you've done your online research it's a good idea to go and take a look around the suburb.

If you can, make a few trips at different times of the day to see what it's like. If you are going to be commuting by car, it may be worth taking a trip there at the time you would normally be commuting. If you have children, you may want to take a closer look at the schools and the park facilities. For example, Pacific Pines is very family-orientated community and has many park spaces, skateboard / BMX parks and dog parks. The designers have tried to make the road system as safe for families as possible but also as free flowing as possible for all the commuters.

Selecting Your Property

There are so many reasons we buy a new property.

Your first home; an expanding family; moving to a new area for work...A tree / sea change; downsizing; upsizing; as an investment to name but a few to. While some people are seasoned property buyers, there are many more that are not. This simple guide is not an exhaustive guide to the how's or why's of buying a property, but is more as a guide and a memory aide to help you keep a clear head when your heart is shouting loudly about what you should and shouldn't buy.

Buying reasons

As mentioned before, there are many reasons to buy a house, but try and be clear about why 'you' are buying. That might seem a silly or glib statement to make, after all, no one just goes out and buys a house on a whim (well not many anyway). Be clear on the reasons you want to buy a house. Don't get caught up in hype (positive or negative). One way to be clear, and it can help you keep focused, is to write out a list of all the things you are looking for in your next property, then try and prioritise them with the most important one first. Don't stop there, spend another couple of minutes to work out how important each of those priorities are.

To illustrate the point, here is a simple example;

I have five things that are really important to me:

- Close to schools
- A pool (or room for one)
- Lowset
- Detached
- Low Maintenance

Now I go through and prioritise them

1. Detached
2. Low maintenance
3. Close to schools
4. Low Set
5. A pool (or room for one)

So now I've thought about what my priorities are, some people have less and many people have more. Don't worry about how many you have, just concentrate on trying to list them and put them in order of priority, then the reason why will become evident.

Now you have sorted out your priorities, think about 'how' important those priorities are. The 'how' will help you determine, or at least consider, what things you may be able to compromise on (if you need to). One way to do this is to add a weighting to each of the priorities. No matter how many priorities you have, make the total of the weighting add up to 100. You could use a spreadsheet to keep a tally if you are that way inclined. Taking the list from above, here is how it could be weighted in the example below.

Priority	Item	Weighting
1	Detached	40
2	Low maintenance	20
3	Close to schools	25
4	Low Set	10
5	A pool (or room for one)	5

Priority List Example 1

In **Example 1**, you can see that a detached house is the highest priority and it's the biggest reason too (highest weighting) but, also, although "close to schools" is the third priority, it is the second highest weighting (you can think of weighting as the 'Importance').

Using a process like this can help you crystallise your expectations as to what is important and how important it actually is. You can really see how your preferences are centred around 5 or 6 key wants and the rest is really 'nice-to-have' items. You can see this factor more strongly in **Example 2.**

Priority	Item	Weighting
1	Detached	18
2	4 beds	21
3	Rumpus or Pool room	8
4	3 bathrooms	8
5	Bath in Family Bathroom	7
6	Large Shed	7
7	Large double Garage	5
8	Close to Schools	5
9	Close to shopping centre	5
10	Large garden	3
11	Usable land	3
12	Good light	3
13	Close to public transport	1
14	Close to parks	1
15	Close to motorway	1
16	Energy efficient	1
17	Solar hot water	1
18	Solar Power	1
19	Pool	1
20	High set	1
21	Dog friendly area	1
22	Ducted Air Conditioning	1
23	Walk in wardrobe	1
24	Good internet	1
25	Close to good restaurants	1
26	Pubs	1
27	Good neighbours	1
28	Close to a Good GYM	1

Priority List Example 2

Head or Heart?

However, here's the kicker, we often decide with our heart, not our head. Which means we might buy something we later regret (buyer's remorse) or, conversely and certainly a lot more frequently, we don't buy something because our heart says things like "I really don't like the colours of the walls in the living room" or "Geez, that furniture is something my grandmother would like". The first is a simple fix with some paint and the second is even easier, the furniture WON'T BE THERE when you move in.

Even if you know what you want in your next property, your heart is a powerful thing and it tries to overrule your brain. There is a reason why style shows like Selling Houses Australia exist. They take a house that can't sell, do some cosmetic changes (new paint and rented furniture arranged in the most appealing layout) and it sells for many thousands (tens of thousands) more than the offers they were getting before the makeover. What most people don't seem to realise is it's the same house, on the same block of land with the same views and the same connections to transport, etc. What it proves is that most people buy with their heart. When YOU are looking to buy your next property, use this knowledge to your advantage. If the house meets your priorities and importance, see passed the décor and the furniture and you'll have less competition. Less completion increases your chances of buying the right house for you.

The next dilemma is faced by people buying investment properties. The seasoned investor with multiple properties will tell you the more properties you buy, the easier it becomes to see the value (decision made with the head) over the love (decision made with the heart) when picking an investment property. Many first time investors make the comment: "I can't buy this, I couldn't live here". That statement is really two separate things: buying it and living in it. Just because you wouldn't necessarily want to live there, doesn't mean it's not a good investment and, conversely, just because you would want to live there doesn't necessarily make it a good investment choice.

When buying an investment property, research as much as you can. Know how much you can afford. Many first time investors forget about the incidentals and the hidden costs of an investment property. Make sure you have funds to cover things like replacing a worn out cooktop or dishwasher, as a landlord you are required (in QLD) to provide these as working appliances. Make sure you know what you'll do if the property is left vacant for a period of time (for example, if the house is damaged in a storm and deemed unsafe and your tenants have to move out, you wouldn't be able to charge them rent until the house is repaired and, if you don't have sufficient insurance, you'll need to cover that cost too. As you can see, it's vitally important to have a good agency to assist you avoid some of the potential pitfalls that the unsuspecting investor can fall into.

Buying an investment property should only be considered with your head and cold hard facts. Again, make a list of what you want from an investment. Items to consider could include:

Investment Concerns	Things to Consider
Investment return	Is it high enough?
Vacancy rates	Will it be easy to re-let?
Are there Body Corp fees?	You'll need to cover these
Maintenance	How much, how often, at what cost?
Holiday or permanent let	Holiday lets can give high returns but also higher fees and lower occupancy.
Resale value	Even if you don't intend to sell it, circumstances change.
Gearing	Positive gearing pays you money after you've paid your costs, negative means you have to contribute additional monies but may be able to claim against your tax.
Location	Do you need to be able to get there?
Management	Who will manage the property? A good agent is vital to protect you and your property. The law is fraught with loopholes that can catch the unwary investor out. You don't want to be stuck with bad tenants or large costs, legal or otherwise, for something that a good Property Manager would have spotted and avoided for you.

Table of considerations regarding investment properties.

Finding the right property

In a slow marketing, where nothing is selling quickly (a buyers' market), people often think that this is the best time to buy, it can be, but not always. First, why it can be good? In a slow market there are many more properties than buyers which means there is a higher chance of finding a property with all or most of your 'wants' and you'll have less people also wanting to buy that same house and it could be cheaper than in a fast-moving market. Great right! Well not always. Just imagine that your dream house comes up during a slow-moving market. There aren't anywhere near as many buyers out there, but the ones that are there are very serious and any property that stands above the others will sell just as quickly as in a fast market. Sellers are human too and, although the market might be slow, they often still want the price they want, which might not be in line with what you are willing to pay. Here is the impasse that can often break a deal on your dream home

In a fast-moving market where you have many more buyers than sellers, you can be faced with a different set of difficulties to overcome. On many occasions one person in a couple finds a property they like, they arrange a second viewing to bring their partner through only to be told "Sorry, there is an offer on it now and it's off the market". Unfortunately, in some circumstances, your offer might be used to encourage other buyers to make, or increase, their offers.

What's the best way to buy in a fast-moving market? Do your homework, make sure you know what you want and how important those wants are (see the buying reasons section above). Have a clear understanding with your buying partner(s) of what compromises you each would find acceptable. It is much easier to sort this out before you go looking, rather than having a heated conversation in an open home. Do your research, as much as you can, before you go looking. There's no point looking at properties with really steep gardens if you want a flat block. If schools are important, look up the schools' website for the area you're looking at. Many schools will give you a tour if you are thinking of moving your children to their school.

When you're looking at the property, use your check lists to make sure you know what's there. Try to look passed the décor and furniture as these are easy fixes. Concentrate on the room sizes, the layout, the location and the orientation as these are the things you can't change, so it's important to the get them right. Don't let a poor colour choice put you off. When you have found the property you want, make an offer as soon as you can; on contract if you can. Make sure you set the conditions: Subject to Building and Pest inspection and Subject to Finance are the two most common. However, talk to the agent as the vendor might favour a longer (or shorter) settlement and, if you can match 'their' want, you might have a better chance of getting your offer accepted. Be prepared to amend your offer. If you have done deep research, you'll know what the house is worth, both to you and to the market in general.

Keeping the sale together

Once you've found your property, made the offer and had it accepted, then comes the Building and Pest inspection. An important point to remember here is, the building and pest inspectors are fulfilling more than just one role. What does that mean? Well, firstly, their role is to identify any structural defects or pest infestations. There are two more important factors that you need to understand, though, when dealing with building and pest inspectors; many sales fall through because of the wording in the report.

Sometimes the report can make prospective buyers think that the house is much worse than they thought. Most of the time this is not the case. In today's litigious world, understandably, the inspectors are simply protecting themselves, legally, from any potential issue that may or may not arise from something they have (or have not) seen. It is therefore recommended that you attend the building and pest inspection and ask questions. This will help you to understand the report, when you receive it.

Termites!!

In Queensland termites are everywhere. Pest inspectors have commented that there are 3 types of homes: homes that have had termites, homes that have termites, and homes that will have termites at some point in the future. What it is important to know is what can be done about them. This is why you engage a professional to inspect the home and make their recommendations. It is also important, once you own the property, to have regular pest inspections to ensure no future problems.

Easements, drainage and roof tiles

Some buyers are put off a property by the existence of an easement on the land. Easements need to be investigated but are not necessarily a problem. In areas such as Pacific Pines and surrounding suburbs, drainage easements are commonplace and are there to allow access for the maintenance of storm water drains that are in place to take away heavy flows of rain, to avoid flooding issues.

If drainage issues are discovered, these can always be addressed by adding extra drains, or installing a section of aggie-piping to re-direct the water into the stormwater drains. Your agent will be able to recommend a local contractor. Sometimes it is a good thing to view the prospective houses in the rain, if you notice a drainage issue, as you can make the decision to request that it be fixed, request a reduction, or leave it as it is.

Another common issue that comes up in inspection reports is evidence of broken roof tiles. Tiles can be broken for many reasons, some of which are: degradation from extremes of weather, workmen walking on the roof, hail damage, or just a faulty tile. The thing is, most houses with tiled roofs will have at least 1 broken or cracked tile and roof tiles are easily replaced and this can be requested from the vendor during the Contract period.

Moving Home Checklist

Moving into a home is a difficult, exhausting and tedious task. Below is a helpful checklist you can use to ensure you complete all the necessary tasks during your move.

Task List	
Create a folder to keep a record of everything related to your move (receipts, inventory, quotes, etc.)	☐
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5-8 Weeks Before Moving

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Confirm with the agent when you can pick up the keys.	☐
Plan your moving transportation (truck rental, removalists, pod hire, friends, etc.) If using a professional company, ask for any handouts that may assist.	☐
Research storage facilities, if required.	☐
Check with your insurance company to see if your possessions are covered during transit.	☐
If you are packing, plan how and when to pack and organise boxes, paper/bubble wrap, tape/tape gun, labels, markers, etc.	☐
Have a clean-out and organise anything you don't want to take with you. Hold or plan to hold a garage sale (no later than week 3), donate, sell or throw out any unnecessary items.	☐
Begin to use up supplies of pantry, freezer and perishable foods.	☐

Notes

4-5 Weeks Before Moving

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Begin your "Change of Address" process – *(see Change Address List, start adding any personal extras required)*	☐
Plan how you will move vehicles, plants and pets - make necessary arrangements.	☐
If renting, advise your current landlord / estate agent.	☐
If travelling long distance, collect the family's dental and medical records, letters of introduction and children's school records.	☐
Design and pre-plan your space. Try to establish the exact purpose of every room. This will enable you to pack boxes accordingly – you can use a floor plan or sketch.	☐
Pre-plan and schedule repairs to be done that you have committed to making.	☐
Contact the local Council to arrange a rubbish pick up if you are getting rid of a lot of stuff.	☐
Return borrowed or rented items.	☐

Notes

2-4 Weeks Before Moving

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Finalise moving transportation, helpers, etc.	☐
Garage Sale - anything you don't sell try online (eBay) or donate.	☐
Make any necessary travel arrangements for your move – if driving interstate ensure your vehicle is serviced.	☐
If traveling long distance, collect the family's dental and medical records, letters of introduction and children's school records.	☐
Phone	☐
Internet	☐
Cable / Satellite TV Services	☐
Gas	☐
Electricity	☐
Discontinue any delivery services, automated payment plans and local memberships (i.e. gym).	☐
Check with manufacturers whether your refrigerator motor and / or your washing machine motor require bolting down.	☐
Schedule disconnection / connection of utilities at old and new home. Ball Realty have partnered with Direct Connect (find it on our web site at https://ballrealty.com.au/rent/tenants and just click on the Direct Connect logo) to take care of organising all your disconnections and reconnections for free!	☐

1 Week Before Moving

Organise the following and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
The final accounts for gas, water and electricity. Use Direct Connect https://ballrealty.com.au/rent/tenants for assistance if needed.	☐
Ensure that electricity, gas, water and other services (see above) will be ready at your new address on the day you move in. Use Direct Connect https://ballrealty.com.au/rent/tenants for assistance.	☐
Set aside essential items that you will need on moving day to ensure that they don't get packed: Medicines, valuables and important papers that you need to keep with you.	☐
Collect any outstanding items i.e. laybys, dry cleaning, etc.	☐
Cancel deliveries of papers and magazines etc.	☐
Make childcare arrangements for moving day.	☐
Pack a suitcase with clothing and other personal items ready for moving day.	☐
If moving with young children have something arranged to keep them entertained at your destination i.e. books, movies on a laptop or iPad, a small TV with DVD player or childcare.	☐
Clean out medicine cabinet. Any unwanted medicines can be taken to your local pharmacy for disposal.	☐
Complete a mail re-direct at the Post Office to ensure that your post is re-directed to your new home.	☐

Notes

3 Days Before Moving

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
The final accounts for gas, water and electricity. Use Direct Connect for assistance if needed.	☐
Ensure that electricity, gas, water and other services (see above) will be ready at your new address on the day you move in. Use Direct Connect for assistance.	☐
Set aside essential items that you will need on moving day to ensure that they don't get packed: Medicines, valuables and important papers that you need to keep with you.	☐
Collect any outstanding items i.e. laybys, dry cleaning, etc.	☐
Cancel deliveries of papers and magazines etc.	☐
Make childcare arrangements for moving day.	☐
Pack a suitcase with clothing and other personal items ready for moving day.	☐
If moving with young children have something arranged to keep them entertained at your destination i.e. books, movies on a laptop or iPad, a small TV with DVD player or childcare.	☐
Clean out medicine cabinet. Any unwanted medicines can be taken to your local pharmacy for disposal.	☐
Complete a mail re-direct at the Post Office to ensure that your post is re-directed to your new home.	☐

Notes

2 Days Before Moving

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Empty and clean rubbish bins.	☐
Remove and pack any curtains, blinds, etc. that are not remaining in the property.	☐
Confirm any travel reservations.	☐

Notes

1 Day Before Moving

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Make sure gas, electricity and water meters have been read.	☐
Defrost fridge and freezer. Remove all food and wash out interior and ensure that they are well dried.	☐
If your vehicle/s are being transported, ensure all your personal belongings have been removed.	☐
Collect all keys and have sorted ready to give to your Real Estate Agent when necessary.	☐
Set aside your packed suitcase and essentials so they don't get packed.	☐
If travelling with pets, ensure you have food, medications, leashes, travel cage and a water dish packed in the car.	☐
Pack an esky with drinks and snacks if you are travelling long distance by car.	☐

Notes

Moving Day

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Carry all essential items with you. (Medicines, valuables and important papers)	☐
Turn off all taps, lights and electrical switches.	☐
Double check that nothing has been left behind.	☐
Lock all windows, doors and have keys ready to deliver or for collection.	☐

Notes

New Home

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Task List	
Ensure someone is at the new property for the removalists / truck / pod.	☐
Ensure that your utilities have been connected.	☐
Check your possessions as soon as possible and note any damage. Take photos if an insurance claim will be required.	☐
Finalise changes of address. *(see attached list)*	☐

Notes

Change of Address List

Complete the following tasks and use the checklist below to keep track.

Send update of address to	
Water	☐
Council Rates	☐
Electricity Supplier	☐
Gas Supplier	☐
Cable or Satellite TV Provider	☐
Newspaper / Magazine subscriptions	☐
Pool / Garden / Maintenance providers	☐
Telephone / Mobile providers	☐
Internet provider	☐
Finance / Loan providers	☐
Bank / Building society	☐
Health Fund providers	☐
Superfund providers	☐
Sports and social club memberships	☐
Sports and social club memberships	☐
Dentist	☐
Doctor / Health Care providers	☐
Family and Friends	☐

The Investors Check List 1

Ensure you meet the listed requirements, keep track using this checklist.

Item	Comments	
Safety Switch	All rental properties in Queensland are required to have safety switches fitted and working. Failure to have a working Safety Switch can result in a $1500. You can find more information about Electrical Safety Requirements in Queensland on the Qld Government Website	☐
Water Meter	In Queensland a landlord can charge the tenant for water consumption. The Residential Tenancies Authorities (RTA) state that the minimum requirements for charging for water consumption are: • The rental premises are individually metered (or water is delivered by vehicle), and • The rental premises are water efficient, and • The tenancy agreement states the tenant must pay for water consumption. The RTA has a fact sheet you can download here	☐
Pool	You are required to have a Pool Compliance certificate before letting (or selling) your property. The Qld Government website has a guide on pool fences compliance here and a general guide here. • For the pool barrier to be compliant: An extract from the Qld Gov. website • Replace, tighten or adjust the hinges on your gates • Ensure the pool barrier height is at least 1200mm from bottom to top • Trim back any vegetation or branches that a child could use to climb over the pool barrier • Shield or remove climbable objects within 900mm of the pool barrier • install fixed security screens on windows that open into the pool enclosure • Remove climbable objects from the pool barrier and surrounding areas. Ball Realty Pool and Spa fencing checklist here	☐

The Investors Check List 2

Ensure you meet the listed requirements, keep track using this checklist.

Item	Comments	
Insurances	If you want to protect your property then you must insure it. No rental agency or tenant insurance will protect you in the event of loss. As a minimum we recommend you have both buildings protection (to cover structural damage) and Landlord Protection Insurance which will protect you against non-payment by tenants. Landlord insurances can also cover you for public liability and other claims against you and your property. There are a number of specialist landlord insurers, we recommend talking to companies like Terri Scheer.	☐
Smoke Alarms	Does the property have fully compliant smoke alarms? In Queensland, Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 requires smoke alarms are installed in all domestic dwellings. It is the responsibility of the landlord to ensure smoke alarms are in working order. As of 1st January 2022 all smoke alarms must be: • Photoelectric and interconnected • Compliant with AS3786:2014 • Installed on each storey of the property and in all bedrooms and hallways • Powered by mains power or non-removable 10-year lithium battery	☐

Notes

Selecting a Property Management Company

Although you can, of course, manage your property yourself, there are many advantages to using a professional management company that is familiar with all the policies, procedures and legal requirements of renting a property. Using a Qualified and professional agency helps to protect you and your property and it takes all the potential hassle away and allows you to reap the rewards of your investment. Just some of the advantages of using a qualified management company are:

Item	Comments	
Finding tenants	Typically, they will have tenants waiting	☐
Guided open homes	A professional letting agent will show your property and be able to answer questions a prospective tenant might ask	☐
Process applications	It's not uncommon to have 10, 20, 30, or more applications for a single property. Being able to access and deal with them quickly is important if you want to get the best possible tenant for your property. Well set up agencies will have industry leading tools and procedures in place to do this	☐
Legal Documents and Bond Lodgement	The Tenancy Agreement not only protects the Tenant but it also protects you; get it wrong at it could be costly. Your agent will have Industry and Government approved application and Lease Agreements and will deal with the correct lodgement of these legally binding documents.	☐

Item	Comments	
Rent Collection	Your agent will collect the rent and act on your behalf to collect any arears if the tenant misses a payment for any reason. They will also attend court or Rent Tribunals on your behalf if there is a dispute.	☐
Maintenance and Property Care	Your agent will have a list of fully qualified contractors and trades people that can be used to carry out industry compliant maintenance or repairs. Your agent will handle all the negotiation for you seeking approvals, where necessary, and ensuring all communications are logged and all affected parties and kept informed in writing.	☐
Regular Inspections	Your agent will carry out quarterly property inspections making detailed notes and taking photographic evidence of condition so that it cannot be disputed at a later date. As an owner you can also request to attend an inspection with your agent.	☐
Lease Terminations	When the Lease ends, for whatever reason, a full final inspection will be carried out and the condition compared with the entry condition. Your agent will authorise the release of the tenant's Bond, once the exit conditions have been satisfied.	☐

Notes

Pool Safety Checklist 1

All pools and outdoor spas must have a compliant Pool Safety Certificate.

Doors and Windows

Task List	
Ensure that all windows or doors are properly secured to ensure that any child is prevented from being able to gain direct access to the pool or spa.	☐
Openings must be less than 10cm *Unless fitted with childproof secured security screens	☐
Any opening windows must be at least 120cm above the floor or restricted to an opening of less than 10cm	☐

Pool Signage

Task List	
You must have a clear sign with CPR instructions which must include instructions for infants and children visible from the pool / spa area.	☐

Pool gates

Task List	
Gates MUST open outwards.	☐
Gates MUST be self-closing.	☐
Gates MUST automatically latch/lock when they close	☐
The latch opener must be at least 150cm above ground level and at least 140cm above any horizontal fence bar	☐
The gate cannot be propped or held open or stopped from automatically closing	☐

Pool Safety Checklist 2

All pools and outdoor spas must have a compliant Pool Safety Certificate.

Doors and Windows

Task List	
The pool fence stops access to the pool other than through a secured gate	☐
The lowest exterior height of the pool fence is at least 120cm high	☐
The fence uprights and bottom gap are less than 10cm	☐
All horizontal railings or bars are a minimum of 90cm apart	☐
There are not any broken or damaged posts, railings or fencing	☐
There are no objects that can be climbed upon to gain entry to the pool area within 90cm of the pool fence or gates. This includes things like: Chairs; stools; steps; BBQ's, trees and shrubs, plant pots, garden furniture etc.	☐

Notes

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