

BUYING A HOME

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A Home Buyer's Story: Get It in Writing

By Kristin Offler

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When we [put the offer on our house](#), Matt and I thought that the seller would surely finish up any of the small, leftover work before [the closing](#). We assumed, as I think many first time buyers do, that once you leave the closing, you and the seller part ways forever.

This is sometimes the case. I wish it had been for us, but in reality we spent almost a year after our closing dealing with our seller and his unfinished projects around the property. Because our real estate agent was good at her job, she made sure our contract listed every last item that needed to be finished on the house.

We're talking some major things, like connecting the house to natural gas and installing a septic system, along with little things, like putting up the shutters (this was supposed to be done in July, but didn't happen until November), fixing the broken fence (it took 8 months to get the workers here, and just one day to complete), and replacing a window that never worked properly (they dropped off the parts in December and didn't come back until April to do the work, which took an hour).

With our wedding approaching, we decided to close on the house despite the unfinished work. Had we waited to close until the seller finished everything, we probably would have seen progress much faster. Instead, we emailed his office weekly for months, asking when people were coming to work on the house. Our biggest gripe was the natural gas line: we had no way to heat our house until it went in, which finally happened two days before Christmas. We live in New England; we needed heat two months before we got it.

The smaller projects weren't a big deal. We were just frustrated that it took months upon months to get the seller to send the right people to our house to do each job. In hindsight, we should have said we wouldn't close until he was done with everything aside from the major jobs. And even then, we should have asked him to give us a date by which we could expect that work to be done.

The lesson: get everything in writing, no matter how much you trust a seller. We're lucky our contract contained a list of jobs that the seller was required to complete. What we should have done was give him a deadline, though.

Trust me; you'll want to say thank you and goodbye to your seller at the closing. If they're still in the picture a year later—and by "in the picture" I mean they still owe you work that hasn't been completed—you'll just resent them. Get everything in writing *and* create deadlines. Everyone will be happier this way.

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Kristin Offler is a freelance writer who recently completed a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. She lives happily in her new home in the Northeast with her husband and dog. Views expressed by guest bloggers do not necessarily reflect that of LendingTree/Tree.com.

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Your story provided a great lesson that many people need to learn. getting everything in writing can not only apply to buying a new home, but also any other business transaction a person can have.

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