GUIDE · FIRST HOME

Your first home, step by step.

From screening to keys, in plain English: what happens at each step, who does what, the questions worth asking, and where to research an area before you fall for one.

By the Liaison team, based in Queen Creek Updated October 2026 About 10 minutes

Where it starts

IN ONE PARAGRAPH

A first home is a six-figure decision most people make only a few times, and the order of the steps matters more than any one of them. You tell us your goal, a real person talks it through with you, and we hand-pick an agent and a lender who explain each step, from screening to keys. You are never obligated to work with the expert we pick, and the match costs you nothing.

Liaison's part is three steps. First, you tell us your goal: what you want to do, where in the Valley and when. It takes about two minutes. Next, a real person from our team calls or texts you to talk through your goals. Then we hand-pick a vetted local agent or lender for your situation and set up your first conversation.

What "screened" means

Before you shop, a lender looks at your income, your debts, your credit and your savings, and tells you what you could borrow. We call that being screened. The letter you get back says what the lender expects to lend you, on the facts you gave it that day.

It is not a promise of a loan. The final approval comes later, once a specific home, its appraisal and your updated file have all been reviewed. The letter can change if something changes: a new debt, a job change or a rate move. It is still the most useful first step, because it tells you what to look at and what to leave alone.

There is a shorter guide on this: What “screened” actually means.

The order of a purchase

Every purchase is different, and your agent and lender tell you how long each step takes for your home and your loan. This is the order, in plain words.

01

Talk with a real person

You tell us your goal, your timeline and your area. We never ask your age or who you live with.

02

Get screened

A lender checks your income, debts, credit and savings and tells you what you could borrow.

03

Pick your agent

We hand-pick an agent who knows the part of the Valley you want, and set up your first conversation. If the fit is wrong, tell us. We pick again.

04

Look

Your agent shows you homes that fit what you were screened for, where you want to be.

05

Offer

Your agent writes the offer with you: the price, what you ask the seller to include, and the dates. The seller accepts, counters or declines.

06

Inspection

An inspector looks the home over and writes up what they find. You and your agent decide what to ask the seller to fix or credit.

07

Appraisal

The lender has the home valued, because it will not lend more than the home is worth to it.

08

Final approval

The lender reviews your updated file and the appraisal and gives the final yes on the loan.

09

Closing

You sign the loan and the deed documents, the money moves, and the home is recorded in your name.

10

Keys

Once the sale is recorded, the home is yours.

Questions worth asking

Bring these to your first conversations. A good agent and a good lender answer them plainly.

Ask your agent

- Which parts of the Valley do you work in most?
- How do you help a first-time buyer decide what to offer?
- What happens if the inspection finds something?
- Who do I call when I have a question on a Sunday?
- What do you need from me, and when?

Ask your lender

- What am I screened for, and what would change it?
- Which loan types fit me, and why?
- What will I pay each month, and what is in that number?
- What do I bring to closing, in total?
- How will you keep me posted between now and the final approval?

The loan words you will hear

Your lender explains which of these fits you. The words, in one place.

FHA loan

A government-backed loan with its own rules on who is eligible. An FHA loan can be assumed by a later buyer when they are eligible and the servicer approves.

VA loan

A government-backed loan tied to a veteran's home loan benefit. Anyone who qualifies can assume one, veteran or not.

USDA loan

A government-backed loan for buyers and homes that meet USDA's rules. It can be assumed when the servicer approves.

Conventional loan

A loan that is not government-backed. Most have a due-on-sale clause, so most cannot be assumed.

Servicer

The company that collects the payments on a loan.

Assumable mortgage

A home loan a buyer can take over from the seller, with its rate, remaining balance and remaining years. See the loan assumption playbook.

Researching an area

Use the same official sources for every city, and let the facts do the describing. These three cover schools, the Census's numbers on people, home values and commutes, and

the city's own site for services and news.

Arizona School Report Cards ↗ Census QuickFacts ↗

Each city's official website, in the area explorer →

Our area explorer puts the Census numbers for twelve Valley cities side by side, and the Valley quiz ranks them for your drive, your home and your weekends.

What it costs you

Nothing, now or later. The agent or lender you are matched with covers our service, so the match and the conversation with our team are free. You are never obligated to work with the expert we pick.

This guide explains how a purchase usually goes. It is not loan advice or an offer of credit. Liaison is a concierge and referral service, not a lender or a brokerage. Equal Housing Opportunity.

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