

Your buying journey, a step-by-step guide

At Switch, we believe in keeping things simple and giving clear, straightforward legal advice that's easy to understand and jargon-free. Whether you're a first time buyer, or have previous experience, our step-by-step guide explains the conveyancing process. We've also included answers to some common questions.



Step One: Instruct Switch

The first step in the Conveyancing process is to instruct Switch to act on your behalf, by returning our initial forms, with your ID and payment.



Step Two: Draft Contracts Received

The conveyancer for your seller will provide us with a draft Contract, together with standard property forms completed by the Seller.



Step Three: Searches Ordered

Searches typically take between 2 to 6 weeks to complete. It is advisable to arrange for a survey, and any required specialist reports. Please also arrange for your mortgage valuation to be carried out at this stage, if applicable.



Step Four: Enquiries raised and documents to Sign

At this stage, we will check for any discrepancies in the legal title, property forms and search results. If there are queries, or additional information is required, we will raise these 'enquiries' with the seller's conveyancer. We will also send you a report with a summary of all the legal information you need to know, and the legal documents will be sent for you to sign at this stage, in the post.



Step Five: Mortgage Offer Received

If you are having a mortgage, the 'offer' document usually arrives a few weeks after the valuation has been carried out. Your mortgage broker (if any) will be able to advise you on timescales and updates on the mortgage documents and valuation.



Step Six: Replies to enquiries Received

This step often takes the most time, waiting for all the legal information to arrive- especially if we need information from others, such as a Landlord, or Council. When all replies are in, we will finalise everything and ask you to pay your Deposit.



Step Seven: Exchange Contracts

Exchange of contracts is an essential legal step in the conveyancing process, which makes your purchase legally binding. Failure to complete after exchange could lead to you losing your deposit. Exchange of Contracts is also when the Completion date (moving day) is set. Before exchange takes place, you (plus any other buyers or sellers in the chain, if there is one) will need to be legally ready to exchange and the completion date should be agreed by all parties.



Step Eight: Completion

Completion is when the conveyancing transaction is finalised, the money changes hands and legal ownership is transferred. Keys are usually available for you to collect from the Agent, in the late afternoon.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take?

Every property transaction is as unique as you are, and no two take the same time to reach exchange of contracts and completion. On average, conveyancing takes 4-5 months, but the actual time will vary for different transactions. You can rely on us to keep you updated at every step, and you can track progress of your conveyancing 24/7 via our online portal. We strongly recommend you wait until contracts are exchanged before booking removals.

What is a 'chain'?

If there is more than one property transaction linked to another, for example you are buying and selling together, then this is called a chain. Usually, all people involved in the chain need to exchange and complete at the same time- for example if you are selling and moving into your new home on the same day. When you have a chain of properties, there are multiple buyers and sellers all at slightly different stages in the conveyancing process, and a delay somewhere else in the chain can delay your purchase too. The conveyancing process in England and Wales allows for Buyer or Seller to change their mind and withdraw for any reason until exchange of contracts takes place.

Do I need a Survey?

We always recommend an independent survey, which can highlight structural, maintenance and other issues which you might not be aware of, and won't be picked up from conveyancing searches and enquiries. We also recommend you having other systems checked, such as central heating and drains, which can be expensive for you to fix if things go wrong or aren't working when you move in.

When do I arrange Buildings Insurance?

We recommend you get quotes for buildings and contents insurance as early as possible. Buildings insurance will need to be in place for exchange of contracts (not the day you complete or move in). The minimum insurance value and rebuild cost will usually be set out in your mortgage offer or valuation (if applicable). If you are buying a brand-new property, the Developer will usually insure the home until legal completion takes place. It's also common in Leasehold properties for the Landlord to insure the whole building, and a share of the cost will be passed on to you, so you don't need to arrange your own buildings insurance. You will still need contents insurance, plus Landlord insurance if you want to rent out the property. If you aren't sure, please give us a call and we can discuss the insurance with you.

How will you contact me?

You can choose how you prefer us to communicate with you, but some legal documents will have to be sent in the post, and these may require a witness to watch you sign. On the day of exchange of contracts, we will need to contact you by phone, but other communications can be via email if you prefer. Please let us know if you have any accessibility requirements.

When do I pay the Deposit?

We usually ask you to pay the deposit just before exchange of contracts, via secure bank transfer. If you are also selling, it is common to use the deposit paid by the Buyer at the bottom of the chain as an exchange deposit throughout the chain. We will usually need the full balance of money from you, including any property tax and legal fees, before exchange of contracts takes place.

How do I verify your Bank Details?

Switch banks with Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and we have no plans to change our bank details. We recommend you call us to verify our bank details before you send any money to us. You can also pay by phone, using a credit/debit card, or online via our website. Please contact us if you need help in making a payment.

How can I protect myself from fraud?

Taking some simple steps listed below can help prevent significant financial loss.

- Avoid discussing your purchase on social media
- Keep your security software updated
- Never send bank details in the text/body of emails
- Always verify our bank details with us, before sending any money
- Be wary of any communication that appears to be from us, advising of changes in bank details

What service level can I expect?

Our goal is to provide you with a tailored, reliable, and efficient service, and our experienced friendly staff are here to support you every step of the way. However, if we have fallen short of our usual excellent service, please refer to our Terms and Conditions for details of action you can take.