

(/)

◀ Buyer Resources (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buy/>)



[BUYERS \(HTTPS://WWW.HOMELIGHT.COM/BLOG/FOR-BUYERS/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/for-buyers/)

[HOUSE HUNTING \(HTTPS://WWW.HOMELIGHT.COM/BLOG/HOUSE-HUNTING/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/house-hunting/)

[OPEN HOUSES \(HTTPS://WWW.HOMELIGHT.COM/BLOG/HOUSE-HUNTING/OPEN-HOUSE/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/house-hunting/open-house/)

How Do Open Houses Work in 2021? Your Guide to In-Person & Virtual Viewings

by Amna Shamim (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/author/amna-shamim/>)

May 18, 2021

5 min read



([https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/&t=How Do Open Houses Work in 2021? Your Guide to In-Person & Virtual Viewings](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/&t=How+Do+Open+Houses+Work+in+2021%3F+Your+Guide+to+In-Person+%26amp;+Virtual+Viewings))



([https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=How Do Open Houses Work in 2021? Your Guide to In-Person & Virtual Viewings&url=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=How+Do+Open+Houses+Work+in+2021%3F+Your+Guide+to+In-Person+%26amp;+Virtual+Viewings&url=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/))



(<https://plus.google.com/share?url=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/>)



Traditional open houses (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-what-happens-at-an-open-house/>) follow an age-old pattern that you'll recognize from popular media, even if you've never planned or attended one yourself before.

Before an open house can occur, the seller and listing agent will choose the dates and times for the open house. These dates and times are usually on the weekends when more people are free to attend. There might be only one open house for a property, or there might be several.

As a buyer, you can find open houses (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-to-find-open-houses/>) through your agent, the multiple listing service (MLS) (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-what-is-the-mls-multiple-listing-service/>), or sometimes through luck (driving around, happening across posted notices, and so on.)

There may be a lot of open houses on a given weekend, so you'll want to be strategic about which ones to attend and in what order to minimize running around.

Open really does mean open, so there might be other people (perhaps a lot of them) there when you go. To attend, you don't have to book time with the agent or make any other special preparations.

... And that means that when you arrive, you can walk right in! You don't have to ring the doorbell or wait for admission.

The seller might ask you to follow certain health, safety, or cleanliness guidelines (and you should comply.) This holds true even during normal times, as homeowners are often still living there and don't want to come home to a messy or damaged house.

The open house will be hosted by a real estate agent, not the seller — so unfortunately, you won't be able to ask the current homeowners any questions about the neighborhood or their neighbors. This is because many buyers find it easier to imagine living in the house without the current residents hovering around.

You'll be expected to sign in so the agent can record visitor numbers and determine how popular the open house was. You may also be asked for details, such as your approved price range (<https://www.homelight.com/how-much-house-can-i-afford>), your ideal home size (two bed, three bed, and so on), and if you're working with another agent.

You'll be able to walk through the house and take notes about features you like or don't like. It's common to take measurements and peek inside cabinets and closets to see what storage is like (bring a measuring tape with you if you like). If you feel uncomfortable, you can always confirm with the listing agent that it's okay to do all these things.

Marla Alt, CEO, Founder, and Owner of 123organize (<https://www.123organize.com/>) advises you to "Look for rugs, throws, art, and wall decor. If the placement on the floor or wall seems off, it might be covering something. Of course there is general wear and tear in houses, especially on floors, but it's always good to know for sure what's being covered."

One critical piece of open house etiquette (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-open-house-etiquette/>) is to try not to crowd other visitors — wait for other groups to leave a room before you enter.

You can ask the agent questions about the house. While you won't have access to the homeowners insights, the listing agent will be able to answer most of your questions at the open house.

The listing agent might also ask *you* questions (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-to-answer-brokers-questions-at-open-house/>) to help you determine if the home you're looking at is a fit for your needs. Don't feel nervous or like there are bad or wrong answers — generally the listing agent is looking for your insights and may have other houses to suggest that would also fit your criteria.

There might be fliers or informational handouts for you to take home so you don't forget the relevant details of the house you just visited. Some agents create these for popular homes as they can help buyers keep track when they're visiting several houses on the same day or weekend. Using a house-hunting checklist (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-house-hunting-checklist/>) can also help you keep properties straight.

While some open houses include refreshments, you shouldn't expect them. If you're hungry or thirsty, stop on your way for drinks or a snack.

(<https://3xlsey17pnzh3nf35w1wwnug-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Open-houses-in-2021.png>)

Source: (LinkedIn Sales Solutions / Unsplash)

How do virtual open houses work?

Much like traditional open houses, the first step to a virtual open house (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-attending-a-virtual-open-house/>) is for the seller and listing agent to choose the days and times for the open house. Then they pick the hosting platform(s).

You can find virtual open houses through social media, your real estate agent, and possibly the local MLS. While some MLSs include virtual open house information as part of the listings, that may change once the pandemic ends (or not), depending on their popularity.

If you are attending a virtual open house, Kevin Bartlett (<https://www.homelight.com/agents/kevin-bartlett-fl-3338354>), a MoveSafe certified agent in Estero, Florida (<https://www.homelight.com/estero-fl/top-real-estate-agents>), recommends "If you're on Zoom, be a good access point to get on a computer or an iPad."

You'll also want to make sure your internet connection is strong and you won't be distracted by packages arriving or other day-to-day things when you should be focused on checking out your potential new home.

Some virtual open houses are recorded (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-can-you-tour-a-house-without-leaving-your-home/>), so if you can't make the live version, ask the listing agent if you can have access to the recording. If enough interested buyers are asking for recordings, it could nudge listing agents into recording open houses they may not have otherwise.

You might have to register in advance to attend a virtual open house. This could be due to the hosting platforms' attendee limits, or an agent's desire to be able to answer questions without moving so slowly as to bore attendees.

The agent will host the open house and will walk viewers through the home, stopping to show features in more detail or answer questions.

Alt advises that "During the virtual open house or virtual walk-through, ask the Realtor® to do all of the small tests you would do in person, such as checking water pressure in faucets and checking underneath for leaks, and turning on and off overhead lighting."

Be sure to ask the Realtor® to show you the floors and walls that may need to be refinished or repainted so you can factor them into your budget.

During a virtual open house, you can ask to view areas that weren't included in the listing photos. These can include the garage, the entire basement, the pantry, linen closets and bedroom closets so you can assess storage space.

If you're interested but can't request an in-person showing, then you may be able to ask for a personal virtual tour of the house instead.

(<https://3xlsey17pnzh3nf35w1wwnug-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Open-houses-in-2021-2.png>)

Source: (Maxime / Unsplash)

Can you book a private showing?

While private showings were harder to come by before the pandemic, more agents are offering them now as a way to show a home while adhering to the rules around coronavirus safety.

They are usually only offered to very interested and serious buyers, so attending a virtual open house might be a good idea before asking for a private showing. This is partially due to the extra work required to sanitize the house after each and every showing.

Bartlett explains, "It does create more work because we sanitize the house after showings. We professionally get the house cleaned and disinfected. We take preventative measures with face masks and gloves, and booties to keep people as safe as possible."

(<https://3xlsey17pnzh3nf35w1wwnug-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/3.png>)

Source: (DocuSign / Unsplash)

How do buyers use open houses?

As a source of information

Most buyers use open houses as a source of information (<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-do-open-houses-work/>) during their home search. Open houses are an opportunity to get a better sense of the home in a more engaging way than static pictures can provide, and to allow buyers to learn more from the listing agent.

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) 2021 Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends Report reveals that buyers aged 75 to 95 are twice as likely to visit an open house as part of their buying process than home buyers aged 22 to 30 (<https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/home-buyer-and-seller-generational-trends>).

However, only around 20% of those aged 75 to 95 attend virtual open houses, compared to 54% of buyers aged 22 to 30. Attendance at virtual open houses diminishes with age.

If you're on the younger side and house hunting in an area with an older population, attending virtual open houses may give you access to more information and inventory than other buyers in your area.

To find an agent to represent them

While this is rarer, the same NAR report indicates that a small percentage of buyers do find their agents by attending open houses. As many as 5% to 8% of homebuyers find their real estate agent as a result of visiting an open house.

To launch their home search journey

A very small number of people each year begin their home search journey by attending open houses. This is usually done by those who need help deciding what details are important to them in their next home, and the strategy can result in a slower buying process overall.

If you aren't sure what type of open houses are available in your area, ask your real estate agent. And if you don't have one of those yet, you can easily find one through the HomeLight buyers agent directory (<https://www.homelight.com/buying>).

Header Image Source: (Roger Starnes Sr / Unsplash)



([https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/&t=How Do Open Houses Work in 2021? Your Guide to In-Person & Virtual Viewings](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/&t=How+Do+Open+Houses+Work+in+2021?Your+Guide+to+In-Person+%26+Virtual+Viewings))



([https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=How Do Open Houses Work in 2021? Your Guide to In-Person & Virtual Viewings&url=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=How+Do+Open+Houses+Work+in+2021?Your+Guide+to+In-Person+%26+Virtual+Viewings&url=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/))



(<https://plus.google.com/share?url=https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-do-open-houses-work/>)



Amna Shamim

Contributing Author

Amna Shamim is a writer and digital marketing consultant who works with local and e-commerce businesses, ensuring they are easily findable online to and trusted by their clients. Her words have been featured in Glamour Magazine, Business Insider, Entrepreneur, Huff Post, Thrive Global, BUST, Paste, and other publications.



(<mailto:amna.shamim@homelight.com>)

Related posts

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-new-home-inspection-checklist/>)

BUYERS

Building a House? Here's Your New Home Inspection Checklist

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-average-cost-to-build-a-1500-sq-ft-house/>)

BUYERS

What's The Average Cost to Build a 1500 Square Foot House?

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-mortgage-loan-costs/>)

BUYERS

Count the Closing Costs: A Line-By-Line Guide to Closing Costs With A Mortgage

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-seller-did-not-complete-repairs-before-closing/>)

BUYERS

So, the Seller Didn't Complete Repairs Before Closing. Now What?!

Popular Posts Latest Posts

BUYERS

Here's How Much Money You Need to Build Your Dream Home

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-much-does-it-cost-to-build-a-house/>)

BUYERS

Unsolved Mysteries: 9 Ways to Find the History of a Property Online

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-how-to-find-the-history-of-a-property-online/>)

BUYERS

How Much House Can I Afford If I Make \$70,000 a Year?

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/buyer-i-make-70000-a-year-how-much-house-can-i-afford/>)

LOGISTICS

LOGISTICS

When Do You Get to Cash In the Big Fat Check After Closing?

(<https://www.homelight.com/blog/when-does-the-seller-get-paid-after-closing/>)

Take the next step

Find a top real estate agent in your area to help you buy your dream home.

City, State, ZIP

Find an Agent

Company

About HomeLight (<https://www.homelight.com/about-us>)

Testimonials (<https://www.homelight.com/testimonials>)

Careers (<https://www.homelight.com/careers>)

Press (<https://www.homelight.com/press>)

Affiliate Program (<https://affiliate.homelight.com>)

Real Estate Investors (<https://www.homelight.com/ibuyers>)

Sign In (<https://www.homelight.com/client/sign-in>)

Find top real estate agents in these similar cities

Atlanta (<https://www.homelight.com/atlanta-ga/top-real-estate-agents>)

Austin (<https://www.homelight.com/austin-tx/top-real-estate-agents>)

Boston (<https://www.homelight.com/boston-ma/top-real-estate-agents>)

Chicago (<https://www.homelight.com/chicago-il/top-real-estate-agents>)

Dallas (<https://www.homelight.com/dallas-tx/top-real-estate-agents>)

Denver (<https://www.homelight.com/denver-co/top-real-estate-agents>)

Fort Lauderdale (<https://www.homelight.com/fort-lauderdale-fl/top-real-estate-agents>)

Houston (<https://www.homelight.com/houston-tx/top-real-estate-agents>)

Los Angeles (<https://www.homelight.com/los-angeles-ca/top-real-estate-agents>)

Miami (<https://www.homelight.com/miami-fl/top-real-estate-agents>)

New York (<https://www.homelight.com/new-york-ny/top-real-estate-agents>)

Portland (<https://www.homelight.com/portland-or/top-real-estate-agents>)

San Diego (<https://www.homelight.com/san-diego-ca/top-real-estate-agents>)

San Francisco (<https://www.homelight.com/san-francisco-ca/top-real-estate-agents>)

Sarasota (<https://www.homelight.com/sarasota-fl/top-real-estate-agents>)

Seattle (<https://www.homelight.com/seattle-wa/top-real-estate-agents>)

For Sellers

Find a Listing Agent (<https://www.homelight.com/find-real-estate-agents>)

Simple Sale (<https://www.homelight.com/simple>)

HomeLight Trade-In (<https://www.homelight.com/trade-in>)

[Home Value Estimator \(https://www.homelight.com/home-value-estimator\)](https://www.homelight.com/home-value-estimator)
[Sellers Resource Center \(https://www.homelight.com/blog/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/)
[Sell Your Home Fast \(https://www.homelight.com/sell-fast\)](https://www.homelight.com/sell-fast)
[Best Time To Sell House \(https://www.homelight.com/best-time-to-sell-house\)](https://www.homelight.com/best-time-to-sell-house)
[Commissions Calculator \(https://www.homelight.com/real-estate-agent-commissions\)](https://www.homelight.com/real-estate-agent-commissions)
[Net Proceeds Calculator \(https://www.homelight.com/net-proceeds-calculator\)](https://www.homelight.com/net-proceeds-calculator)
[How To Sell Your Home Gulde \(https://www.homelight.com/blog/guide-how-to-sell-a-house/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/guide-how-to-sell-a-house/)

For Buyers

[Find a Buyer's Agent \(https://www.homelight.com/find-real-estate-agents/buying\)](https://www.homelight.com/find-real-estate-agents/buying)
[Get Pre-approved \(https://www.homelight.com/home-loans\)](https://www.homelight.com/home-loans)
[Buyers Resource Center \(https://www.homelight.com/blog/buy/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/buy/)
[Housing Market Trends \(https://www.homelight.com/housing-market\)](https://www.homelight.com/housing-market)
[Home Affordability Calculator \(https://www.homelight.com/how-much-house-can-i-afford\)](https://www.homelight.com/how-much-house-can-i-afford)
[Down Payment Calculator \(https://www.homelight.com/down-payment-calculator\)](https://www.homelight.com/down-payment-calculator)

For Agents

[HomeLight Elite \(https://www.homelight.com/elite\)](https://www.homelight.com/elite)
[The Walkthrough \(https://www.homelight.com/blog/for-agents/podcast/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/for-agents/podcast/)
[Agent Resource Center \(https://www.homelight.com/blog/agents/\)](https://www.homelight.com/blog/agents/)
[Agent Sign Up \(https://www.homelight.com/agents\)](https://www.homelight.com/agents)
[FAQ for Agents \(https://homelight.zendesk.com/hc/en-us\)](https://homelight.zendesk.com/hc/en-us)
[Agent Directory \(https://www.homelight.com/states\)](https://www.homelight.com/states)

HomeLight has an A+ rating with the
Better Business Bureau

[\(https://twitter.com/homelightapp\)](https://twitter.com/homelightapp) [\(https://www.instagram.com/gohomelight/\)](https://www.instagram.com/gohomelight/) [\(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCimugR9XF17-OZ7B9fNnxWw\)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCimugR9XF17-OZ7B9fNnxWw) [\(https://www.pinterest.com/homelightapp/\)](https://www.pinterest.com/homelightapp/)

© HomeLight, Inc. 100 1st Street, Suite 2600, San Francisco, CA 94105.

[Privacy Policy \(https://www.homelight.com/privacy-policy\)](https://www.homelight.com/privacy-policy) [Terms of Service \(https://www.homelight.com/terms\)](https://www.homelight.com/terms)