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Before you sign

What an experienced property buyer checks in Cyprus.
From the search to the keys.

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What you will take away

> *You leave with a checklist you can use tomorrow.*

1. Which documents to request, and at what stage
2. Which title, which permit, which certificate of approval
3. What the real total cost is
4. What changes by type of property
5. Which professional confirms what

The buyer's journey

> *Every check has a right stage. The same check after the deposit costs more.*

1 **Search and evaluation** › 2 **Before reservation or deposit** › 3 **Before signing** › 4 **Payments and completion** › 5 **Handover and possession**

The further right we go, the fewer options the buyer has and the more expensive it becomes to withdraw.

Buying without a clear purpose

> *The same home can be the right purchase to live in and the wrong one as an investment.*

Living in it

School, commute, noise, orientation, the family's future needs.

Investment

Rental demand, maintenance costs, resale liquidity in five years.

Holiday home

Seasonality, distance, upkeep while it stays closed.

Business use

First, whether the use is permitted. Then the price.

Write your purpose in one sentence before you see the first property.

Deciding on first impressions

> *Décor changes in a weekend. Location, permits and title deed do not.*

What I see

- Photos and presentation
- Furniture and colours
- A neighbourhood, an architecture
- A good day, a good hour
- A low price

What I check

- A second visit, a different day and time
- Construction, damage, damp, maintenance
- Noise, parking, access, neighbours
- What can be built around me
- Why the price is low

When I see a listing or an advert

> *An asking price is not a value, and a square metre is not the same square metre everywhere.*

- An asking price is not a proven value
- Covered, usable, commercial, with or without verandas
- Independent valuation before you commit
- Compare with what is on the market today
- Then compare with prices actually achieved
- A licensed estate agent has comparables that listings don't show

Two listings, the same number

Both say 100 m²

One means covered area including verandas and stairwell.

The other means net internal area.

Always ask how it was measured.

Who does what

> *No profession covers another's work.*

Licensed estate agent

Coordinates the transaction from start to transfer.

Independent lawyer

Always, and of your own choosing: title, encumbrances, contract, deposit of contract.

Engineer and land surveyor

With the architect: construction, plans, boundaries, building potential.

Valuer

A documented market value.

Bank

Lending, its own valuation, security.

Tax adviser or legal clerk

VAT and fees. Certificates for the transfer from the Sewerage Board and other authorities.

Why a licensed estate agent

An unregistered agent risks nothing. A licensed agent risks their licence.

- Registered, with an annual licence from the Estate Agents Registration Council
- Written exams in property and planning law before registration
- The licence number appears on documents and listings — ask for it and check it
- Subject to disciplinary control: there is an authority you can complain to
- An obliged entity for anti-money laundering: identifies the parties

Article 21, Law 71(I)/2010

The estate agent must inform the buyer about the physical condition of the property and the property rights that burden it.

Whether acting for the seller or for the buyer.

An agreement with an unregistered agent creates no legal claim to a fee.

Who sells and who signs

> *Check not only the property but also the person across the table.*

1. Registered owner matches the seller
2. Co-owners, inheritance, minors
3. A company as seller: certificates, resolution, authorised signatory
4. Power of attorney: validity, scope, date

Why now

To buy a whole co-owned property, everyone transferring must lawfully take part or be represented.

Buying a share is a different case, with its own procedures.

First be clear which right you are buying.

What exactly you are buying

> *"I'm buying a flat" can mean four different legal things.*

Full ownership

Registered in your name, with its own title deed.

Separate unit

A unit in a jointly owned building, with its own title deed.

Undivided share

A percentage of a common plot. You don't control its use alone.

Contractual rights

No title deed issued yet. Protection comes from depositing the contract.

Ask directly: what will the title deed in my name say?

Title deed and search certificate

> *The title deed says who owns the property. It doesn't say whether it was built legally.*

- Certificate of registration: owner, area, assessed value
- Search certificate: encumbrances and prohibitions
- Valid for the date it bears, not for the future
- The contract has a search dated within five working days of signing attached
- Title pending: which step exactly is missing

When the title is pending, which step is missing?

- Competent authority's certificate
- Survey work
- Horizontal division
- Application to the Land Registry
- Settlement of the mortgage

Mortgages, encumbrances, prohibitions

> *A property can be good and still not transferable free of encumbrances.*

- Mortgages, encumbrances, prohibitions, claims
- Rights of way and third-party rights
- Full discharge versus partial release
- How and when it is removed goes into the contract

A mortgage doesn't mean no

It means a process is needed: who removes it, when, with what money, and what happens if it isn't removed.

When the property is part of a project

The mortgage may burden the whole project. Then a partial release is needed for your unit.

Two permits and a certificate

> *Planning permit, building permit and certificate of approval are not the same thing.*

Planning permit

Is this development allowed on this plot?

Building permit

Are these specific plans approved?

Certificate of approval

Was it built as approved? What exactly it covers, and whether it carries notes.

Ask for legible copies and every later amendment.

A property can have a title deed and still have a permit issue.

And before all of this: the plot must have a land title.

Extensions and change of use

> *The most expensive surprise is a part of the house that isn't on the plans.*

What we check

- Approved plans compared with the building
- Enclosed verandas, pergolas, pools, storerooms
- Space converted to living space or another use
- A pending issue is not an automatic rejection

Hypothetical teaching example

- Impression: more space for the same money
- What's missing: nobody saw the approved plans
- Consequence: delay in transfer or loan, cost to correct
- Step: plans, certificate of approval, comparison by an engineer

Technical inspection and energy performance

> *An inspection doesn't hunt for flaws. It puts a number on the next three years.*

- Structure, roof, waterproofing, damp
- Electrical and mechanical, drainage, insulation
- Energy performance certificate and energy class
- Repair budget, with quotes

"As is" doesn't exempt you from checking. It makes it more urgent.

Energy class in the listing

The certificate is issued by a registered qualified expert.

The energy class must appear in sale and rental listings — fines have been imposed for leaving it out.

What the price includes

> *If it isn't written, it isn't included.*

Parking and storage

In the title deed or only in the description?

Equipment

Kitchen, wardrobes, air conditioning, light fittings.

Installations

Solar heater, PV panels, water tank, fencing.

Written inventory

In the contract, with photos if needed.

Checks by type of property

Apartments · houses · plots · land · offices · shops · warehouses

Apartments and ground-floor units

> *With an apartment, you also buy into a partnership with the other co-owners.*

- Parking, storage, garden, roof: how they are documented
- Common areas and exclusive use
- Co-ownership share, rules, management committee
- Common expenses, reserve fund, outstanding debts
- Lift, insurance, major planned repairs

Hypothetical teaching example

Two parking spaces "in practice".

No mention in the title deed or rules of which space belongs to the unit and which is common.

After the purchase, the second space is disputed.

Apartment: what you are really buying

> *You don't only buy a unit. You also join a management.*

1. Co-ownership: you join a community with shared decisions and shared costs
2. Documenting spaces: where parking, storage, garden and roof belong
3. Common areas versus parts with exclusive-use rights
4. Co-ownership share, internal rules, management committee
5. Financial issues: common expenses, reserve fund, future major costs
6. Infrastructure: lift, building insurance, planned repairs
7. Area: covered is not net — the price per real m² changes
8. The engineer compares plans and the area schedule before you commit

Details ›

Apartment: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
Nobody checked where the parking space belongs	The space is disputed after the purchase	**Title deed and rules of the jointly owned building**
No statement of common expenses was requested	You take on the previous owner's debts	**Confirmation from the management committee**
The building's reserve fund wasn't checked	Special levy for lift or waterproofing	**General meeting minutes and budget**
Rules on short-term letting were ignored	The investment doesn't perform as calculated	**Building rules before you commit**
Covered and net area were confused	You pay more per real m²	**Plans and area schedule**
The co-ownership share wasn't checked	Disproportionate share of common costs	**Title deed and schedule of shares**

‹ Back

Houses and villas

> *The fence isn't the boundary. The boundary is what the survey says.*

Boundaries and possession

Plot boundaries versus fencing and actual possession.

Structures

Extensions, basements, outbuildings, pool.

Construction

Roof, waterproofing, drainage, sewerage or septic tank.

Rights

Rights of way and shared installations, where they exist.

These don't show in photos. They show in survey plans and certificates.

Details ›

House: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
The fence was taken as the boundary	Building on a neighbour's land or loss of area	**Survey and boundary marking by a land surveyor**
Plans weren't compared with the building	Unauthorised extension and cost to correct	**Approved plans and certificate of approval**
Pool or outbuilding without a permit	Obstacle to transfer or to a loan	**A separate permit for each structure**
Sewerage wasn't checked	Connection cost or septic tank upkeep	**Confirmation from the district Sewerage Board**
Roof and waterproofing were ignored	Major cost within the first two years	**Technical inspection with quotes**
Rights of way weren't checked	Third parties have a right of passage	**Search certificate and title deed**

‹ Back

Plots

> *Building density tells you how much. It doesn't tell you whether it works.*

- Zone, building density, coverage, height, floors, uses
- Legal access to a registered road and frontage width
- Stage of division and what is still missing
- Services: water, electricity, sewerage, connection costs
- Slope, ground conditions, retaining walls, watercourses, restrictions

The right question

Not "how many square metres am I entitled to".

But "does what I want fit, with these setbacks, this slope and this excavation cost?"

An engineer or architect answers, with a preliminary study, before the deposit.

Details ›

Plot: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
Building density was treated as a guarantee	The building you want doesn't fit	**Preliminary study by an architect**
The stage of division wasn't checked	Years of delay before a title deed	**Division permit and competent authority's certificate**
Slope and ground conditions were ignored	Excavation and retaining wall costs	**Geotechnical report and cost estimate**
A watercourse or restriction wasn't spotted	Reduced usable area	**Survey plan and zone planning data**
Utility connections were taken for granted	Unexpected costs for water, electricity, sewerage	**Confirmations from utility providers**

‹ Back

Fields and agricultural land

> *A field is not a plot waiting to happen.*

What is confirmed in writing

- Permitted use and exactly what the zone allows
- Access, rights of way, available services
- Protected areas and special regimes, where they apply
- Area and road frontage

The mistake

- Buying on an unconfirmed change of zone
- "It will be included in the plan" is not evidence
- Assuming every field can be built on — or none can
- Confirmation from third parties instead of the competent authority

Details ›

Field: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
Bought expecting a change of zone	Land that can't be used and is hard to resell	**Written confirmation of today's zone**
Access wasn't checked	A plot with no legal access	**Title deed, survey plan, registered road**
Special protection regimes were ignored	A ban or serious limits on development	**Planning data and competent authority**
Assumed buildable because of its size	Case-by-case conditions aren't met	**Written confirmation for this specific plot**
Rights of way and third-party rights weren't checked	Restricted use	**Search certificate**
Infrastructure costs weren't calculated	Development becomes uneconomic	**Cost estimate by an engineer**

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Offices

The first question isn't the price. It's whether your activity is permitted.

Use

Permitted use for this specific activity.

Building operation

Parking, accessibility, opening hours.

Installations

Fire safety, air conditioning, electrics, telecoms.

Cost

Common expenses and fit-out costs.

Restrictions

Change of use or conversion to residential.

Tax

If the transaction carries VAT, reclaiming it depends on your activity and status.

Details ›

Office: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
Permitted use wasn't confirmed	The business can't operate	**Planning permit for that specific use**
Parking requirements were ignored	Licensing or day-to-day operating problems	**Planning permit and building rules**
Fire safety wasn't checked	Compliance costs before opening	**Fire safety study and certificate**
Fit-out costs weren't calculated	The budget is exceeded	**Quotes before signing**
The building's common expenses weren't requested	High fixed running costs	**Statement of common expenses and rules**
Tax treatment wasn't considered	VAT that wasn't budgeted	**Accountant or tax adviser**

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Shops and food outlets

Are you buying a property or a business?

The property

- Lawful use and any separate operating licences
- Frontage, visibility, signage, loading
- Ventilation and special installations
- Restrictions in the building's rules

The business

- Equipment and exactly what is transferred
- Customers and existing staff
- Liabilities that are carried over
- Separate contract and separate valuation

Details ›

Shop and food outlet: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
Buying the property was confused with buying the business	Hidden liabilities are taken on	**Separate contract and separate valuation**
Operating licences weren't checked	The premises can't open	**Competent authority, health, fire safety**
Ventilation and grease drainage were ignored	High installation cost	**Mechanical engineer's study**
The building's rules weren't checked	Limits on hours, signage, odours	**Rules of the jointly owned building**
Loading and unloading wasn't considered	An operating problem every day	**Site check and road-use permit**
The existing lease was ignored	You don't receive vacant possession	**Leases and statement of arrears**

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Warehouses, workshops, industrial

> *The building has to carry the activity, literally.*

Zone

Permitted activities in that specific zone.

Access and loads

Heavy vehicles, clear height, floor loads.

Electrical capacity

Upgrades cost money and take time.

Previous use

Fire safety, environmental checks, possible remediation.

Details ›

Warehouse and industrial: in detail

The omission	Possible consequence	Check or document
The permitted activity wasn't confirmed	The use can't be licensed	**Planning zone and competent authority**
Electrical capacity wasn't checked	Costly and slow upgrade	**Supply confirmation and electrical engineer's study**
Clear height and floor load were ignored	Equipment doesn't fit or can't be supported	**Building technical data from an engineer**
Heavy-vehicle access wasn't checked	A daily operating problem	**Site check and access plans**
Previous use was ignored	Obligation for environmental remediation	**History of use and environmental check**
Fire safety for the activity wasn't checked	Non-compliance and extra cost	**Fire safety study and certificate**

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How you buy changes the checks

> *It's not only what you buy, but in what form.*

New or resale

Tax treatment and the file checks change.

Under construction or off-plan

Specifications, stages, delivery.

Vacant or tenanted

Possession, lease terms, deposits.

Full ownership or a share

Control over use, and liquidity.

Buying by assignment

You take over someone else's place in a contract. There is a registration deadline.

Auctions

Their own procedure and their own risks. Handled separately.

Properties under construction

> *A rendering is not a specification.*

1. Seller and project: permits, land, encumbrances on the project
2. Binding material specifications, annexed to the contract
3. Payment stages with certification of actual progress
4. Delivery date and how delays are handled
5. Handover, defects, title deed issue process

"It's guaranteed"

If it isn't written in the document, is it?

The right answer is:

"Show me where the document says so."

The real total cost

> *The price is one part of the cost. The budget is written beforehand, on paper.*

- Price and confirmed tax treatment of the specific transaction
- Legal, technical, valuation and bank costs
- Agency fee, only if payable by the buyer
- Insurance, connections, local charges, common expenses
- Repairs, fit-out, furniture, reserve

Don't add up what doesn't apply together

As a rule, where VAT is due, no transfer fees are paid.

But if the Land Registry doesn't accept the declared price and values the property higher, transfer fees may arise on top of VAT.

Where no VAT is due, transfer fees are generally reduced by 50%.

Capital gains tax is paid by the seller.

VAT, transfer fees and what changed in 2026

> *Get this wrong and the mistake has five figures.*

19%
Standard VAT rate

5%
Reduced, for an eligible main and permanent residence

18
Months of use still counted as first occupation, from 1/9/2026

10
Years the home must remain your main residence at the reduced 5%

- Calling a property "new" or "resale" in a listing doesn't decide its tax treatment
- Reduced 5%: first 130 m² of buildable area and first €350,000, with upper limits of 190 m² and €475,000
- If it stops being the main residence within ten years: notify within 30 days and repay the difference proportionally
- Transfer fees in bands, where no VAT is due: 3% up to €85,000, 5% up to €170,000, 8% above, reduced by 50%
- Stamp duty: abolished from 1/1/2026 — unless signed by at least one party by 31/12/2025

Financing

> *Pre-approval is not approval.*

- Pre-approval versus final approval
- Bank valuation versus agreed price
- Required own contribution and cash for costs
- Effect of an interest rate change on the instalment
- Payment dates matched to when the loan is released

The most painful surprise

A bank valuation lower than the agreed price.

The loan is based on the lower figure and the buyer covers the difference.

Don't commit money before you know where you stand.

If the bank is late, who bears the cost? It goes into the contract before signing, not after.

Gross and net operating yield

> *Gross yield is advertising. Net yield is a decision.*

- Actual lease terms, possession, deposits, arrears
- Vacant periods, management, maintenance, insurance
- Income tax and GHS contribution, where due
- Short-term letting: registration and fee

Hypothetical assumption	Amount
Capital invested, including purchase costs	€250.000
Potential annual rent, €1,200 × 12	€14.400
One month without a tenant	−€1.200
Owner's annual operating costs	−€2.700
Net operating income	**€10.500**

Gross yield 5.76% · Net operating yield 4.20%

Before tax, financing and one-off capital costs. Hypothetical teaching example.

From reservation to handover

> *Five separate events that many people think of as one.*

1. **Reservation on written terms**
2. **Signing the contract**
3. **Deposit at the Land Registry**
4. **Transfer of title**
5. **Physical handover**

within six months of signing

The order of the last two isn't fixed: when the title is pending, handover can come years before transfer.

- Every payment on written terms, to a clear recipient, with secure verification of details and proof
- Depositing the contract triggers the buyer protections of Law 81(I)/2011
- Buyers from non-EU countries need permission to acquire, with conditions and limits
- Buying property does not automatically give a right of residence

Handover and outstanding items

> *Handover is a process on paper, not a ceremony with keys.*

Final inspection

Defects recorded in writing, with deadlines for repair.

Deliverables

Keys, meters, warranties, documents and manuals.

Possession

Vacant possession or taking over an existing lease, as agreed.

Outstanding items

What remains, who does it, by when, and what happens if it isn't done.

Five actions, from tomorrow

1. Write the purpose of your purchase in one sentence.
2. A licensed estate agent and a lawyer of your own choosing, before you pay the first euro.
3. Ask for title deed, permits and certificate of approval together.
4. Put every verbal promise into the contract.
5. Deposit the contract at the Land Registry immediately.

In property, you don't pay for the mistakes you made. You pay for the questions you didn't ask.

Ten practical takeaways

1. Write the purpose of your purchase in one sentence, before you see the first property.

2. No financial commitment without written terms and proof of payment.

3. The licensed estate agent coordinates the transaction. The lawyer who checks your risks is your own choice.

4. Title deed, permit and certificate of approval answer different questions.

5. A search certificate is valid for one date. The contract carries a search dated within five working days of signing.

6. Verbal promises are written into the contract, or they don't exist.

7. The contract is deposited at the Land Registry immediately, within the deadline.

8. With a plot, the question isn't what you're entitled to but whether what you want fits, and at what cost: slope, ground conditions, excavation and retaining walls.

9. With commercial property, the first question is whether the activity is permitted.

10. Final inspection with paper in hand, before you take the keys.

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Questions

Send us your questions and we will be glad to help.
Your email is used only to reply to your question.

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Buyer's checklist — page 1

#	Stage	Checkpoint	Status	Outstanding items
1	Before the offer	Written purpose of purchase and holding period		
2	Before the offer	Budget with confirmed tax treatment, fees, charges, reserve		
3	Before the offer	Financing pre-approval and available own contribution		
4	Before the offer	Second visit on a different day and time		
5	Before the offer	Comparison with similar properties, on the same area basis		
6	Before the offer	Energy class and energy performance certificate		
7	Before the deposit	Independent lawyer of my own choosing		
8	Before the deposit	Identification of the registered owner and right to sign		
9	Before the deposit	Title deed or, if missing, the step that is pending		
10	Before the deposit	Search certificate: mortgages, encumbrances, prohibitions, recently dated		
11	Before the deposit	What exactly I am buying: unit, share or contractual rights		
12	Before the deposit	Written reservation terms, recipient, proof, refund terms		
13	Before the deposit	Registered estate agent and written fee agreement: who pays and when		
14	Before signing	Planning permit, building permit and all amendments		

Complete for each property. Ok = checked and confirmed.

Buyer's checklist — page 2

#	Stage	Checkpoint	Status	Outstanding items
15	Before signing	Certificate of approval: what it covers and whether it carries notes		
16	Before signing	Approved plans compared with the existing building		
17	Before signing	Independent technical inspection and repair budget		
18	Before signing	Independent valuation		
19	Before signing	Written list of what the price includes		
20	Before signing	Specifications, payment stages, delivery date		
21	Before signing	Payment dates matched to loan release, and what applies if the bank is late		
22	Before signing	How and when the mortgage is discharged or partially released		
23	Before signing	Search certificate within five working days of signing, before or after, attached to the contract		
24	Immediately after signing	Deposit of the contract at the Land Registry, within six months at the latest, with proof of deposit		
25	Before transfer	Permission to acquire, for buyers from non-EU countries		
26	Before transfer	Updated search and settled debts on the property		
27	Handover	Final inspection and defects recorded in writing with deadlines		
28	Handover	Keys, meters, warranties, documents delivered, status of possession		

Property: ..... Date: ..... Completed by: .....