

Househunting your way: Alternative ways to find a property

Finding the perfect property isn't always easy. Despite the number of homes for sale, the unpredictable nature of the market can make househunting exhausting.

If you've tried property websites, newspapers and real estate agents' windows without success, here are five more unconventional strategies to try.

1. Do a letterbox drop

This is a strategy most real estate agents use to win listings, but there's nothing stopping you from taking the same approach.

If there are particular streets you like, or you're looking for a specific type of property, try writing a personalised letter to individual property owners saying you're interested in buying their home. If you're lucky, you'll spark the interest of someone who's been thinking of selling. They may be attracted by the prospect of a quick, straightforward sale. Make sure your letter includes your contact details and emphasises that your interest is genuine.

2. Knock on doors

If you're feeling confident, try knocking on the doors of homes you'd love to own. Timing is everything with this strategy - if luck is on your side, you could meet a home owner who's keen to sell without the effort of an agency campaign. However, not everyone appreciates a face-to-face situation, so keep it nice and walk away if someone isn't interested.

3. Look for quiet or off-market sales

Many properties are sold without any kind of sales campaign, because not every vendor wants people to know their home is on the market. If a property is being sold due to a relationship breakdown, financial difficulties or some other family complication, vendors may want to keep the sale 'hush hush'.

The best way to access off-market sales is to keep in constant contact with local agents. Vendors often want an off-market sale to be quick, so being top of mind with agents is important. You'll want agents to think of you when they receive an off-market listing that needs to be sold immediately.

4. Search through expired listings

Websites such as www.OLDLISTINGS.COM.AU allow you to search through old 'for sale' and 'for rent' listings. Using this information, you may be able to target properties that were passed in whose owners might still be interested in selling. Similarly, you may be able to find rental properties in the expired listings, then contact the owners with a genuine offer to purchase.

5. Watch for garage sales

Garage sales can sometimes be a sign that a home is about to come onto the market. The home owners might be trying to sell their clutter before they list the property for sale.

If you see a garage sale advertised at a property you'd like to buy, make sure you attend. Asking the home owner if they plan to sell could give you a head start on other home buyers - you could even make an offer before the property hits the market.

If you have success with any of these strategies, you'll need to be ready to make an offer.

Before you start letterbox dropping or knocking on doors, speak to your mortgage broker to

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arrange finance.