



The Buyer's Edge:

5 Juicy Secrets

Agents Don't Tell You

By JoEllen "Sohaila" Handelsman

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Don't Tell You



About Your Guide

This book was written by **JoEllen “Sohaila” Handelsman**, a trusted Realtor® with over 23 years of experience helping buyers and sellers succeed in real estate.

Whether you're buying your first home or moving up to your dream one, Sohaila's mission is to give you the **edge**—the tools, insights, and strategies to make smart moves with confidence.

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Disclaimer

As a licensed real estate agent, I'm excited to share strategies and insights to help guide your real estate journey. Please note, the information in this book is for general educational purposes only and may not apply to every market or situation. This is not legal, tax, or financial advice. For advice specific to your circumstances, always consult with a licensed professional in your area.

Prologue: Welcome to the Inside Track

Buying a home isn't just about scrolling Zillow, touring open houses, and crossing your fingers. It's a game—one with strategies, shortcuts, and insider secrets that most buyers never get told.

Here's the truth: the market isn't "fair." Some buyers consistently win dream homes (and even snag them at better prices) while others lose out again and again. What's the difference? It's not luck—it's leverage.

This book is about giving you **the Buyer's Edge**—the little-known strategies that shift the odds in your favor. These are the same tools savvy buyers use to unlock homes before they hit the apps, to craft offers sellers can't resist, and to make sure they never overpay in the process.

Over the next five chapters, you'll learn how to:

- Spot homes before the masses.
- Decode the *true* cost of ownership.
- Win bidding wars without throwing money away.
- See beyond the "staging magic" to uncover hidden risks (and opportunities).
- Choose an agent who fights for you like a dealmaker, not a tour guide.

This isn't theory. These are the moves that separate frustrated buyers from successful ones.

So grab a coffee, buckle up, and get ready—you're about to learn what most buyers never hear until it's too late. By the end, you'll be armed with **5 juicy secrets** to not just buy a house, but win your dream home on your terms. Welcome to your edge.

Chapter 1 - Zillow Isn't Enough

Tip 1: Go Beyond the Apps

Sure, Zillow and Redfin are fun to scroll through—but if you're only looking where everyone else is, you're already behind.

- **Why the best homes never hit the apps**
Many sellers test their homes “off-market” first. That means top agents (the ones who hustle for their buyers) know about homes before the masses do.
- **Pocket Listings = Your Secret Weapon**
Ask your agent if they have access to a private network of upcoming listings. This can give you first dibs before the bidding wars even start.
- **Build Your “Dream Home Radar”**
Tell your agent what you want in plain English: “*I want a kitchen that feels like a cooking show and a yard big enough for my dog.*” The best agents can then match you with homes not even online yet.

✨ **Pro Buyer Insight:** The dream home is often found through relationships, not refresh buttons.

Chapter 2 - Don't Fall for the Sticker Price

Tip 2: Learn the “True Cost” Test

That listing price? It's only part of the story. Smart buyers look at the *real monthly cost*.

- **The Hidden Budget Busters**

Property taxes, HOA fees, insurance, and maintenance can add hundreds per month. That “affordable” \$750k house might actually cost more than the \$800k one with lower taxes.

- **Run the “All-In Number”**

Don't just ask, “What's the price?” Ask: “What's my monthly all-in with taxes, insurance, and fees?” That's the number that matters.

- **Think Like an Investor**

A home with solar panels, newer roof, or no HOA can save you thousands long-term. That's profit in your pocket.

✦✦ **Pro Buyer Insight:** You don't buy the price—you buy the payment.

Chapter 3 - Win the Bidding War Without Overpaying

Tip 3: The “Offer Psychology” Hack

Most buyers think winning comes down to paying the most. Not true. Winning is about writing the *smartest* offer.

- **Why Sellers Love Certainty**
Sellers want smooth deals, not just big numbers. A clean offer (strong pre-approval, no unnecessary contingencies) can beat higher bids.
- **The Love Letter (Done Right)**
Personal letters can work—but only if they highlight the seller’s pride in their home, not just your wants. (“*We love your rose garden and can picture hosting family dinners there.*”)
- **Timing is Everything**
Submitting fast shows seriousness. Waiting strategically (like just before deadline) can also outmaneuver competitors.

✨ **Pro Buyer Insight:** It’s not about outbidding—it’s about outsmarting.

Chapter 4: Inspect Like Sherlock

Tip 4: What to Look for Beyond the Pretty Staging

Sellers stage homes to make them look flawless—but buyers with a detective’s eye win big.

- **Look Past the Throw Pillows**
Fresh paint could hide water damage. A rug could be covering cracked floors. Always peek behind the “Instagram moments.”
- **The Inspection = Negotiation Gold**
Don’t think of an inspection as a scare tactic—it’s leverage. You can often negotiate repairs, credits, or a lower price.
- **Focus on the Big 5**
Roof, foundation, plumbing, electrical, HVAC. If these pass, small cosmetic issues are just lipstick.

✨ **Pro Buyer Insight:** A \$500 inspection can save you \$50,000 in hidden problems.



Chapter 5: Work with a Closer, Not Just a Realtor

Tip 5: The “Closer’s Edge” Test

Not all agents are created equal. The one you pick determines whether you win or lose your dream home.

- **How to Interview an Agent Like a Boss**

Ask: “*Tell me about a time you won in a multiple-offer situation.*” Their answer tells you if they’re a true negotiator or just a tour guide.

- **The Hidden Cost of an Amateur**

A weak agent might lose you the deal—or worse, overpaying by tens of thousands.

- **Look for the Hustler**

The right agent will text you listings at midnight, knock on doors in your dream neighborhood, and fight like it’s their own money on the line.

✨ **Pro Buyer Insight:** A great agent doesn’t just find houses—they win them for you.

Note: Just a quick reminder—Realtors work on commission, which means we start at zero until your home is bought or sold. Everything I do—whether it’s answering your questions, giving advice, or walking you through the process—is done with your success in mind. I only win when *you* win.

Bonus Section: The Smart Buyer Checklist

30 Days Before Searching

- Get pre-approved with a strong lender.
- List your must-haves vs. nice-to-haves.
- Research neighborhoods like you're stalking your future life.

14 Days Before Touring

- Drive the neighborhoods at night and weekends (vibe check!).
- Ask your agent about upcoming “off-market” homes.
- Double-check your budget for the true monthly cost.

7 Days Before Making an Offer

- Have your lender on speed dial for proof of funds letters.
- Write a “buyer resume” with your strengths (fast close, solid financing).
- Be ready to move quickly when “the one” shows up.

 Now you have your buyers **inside-edge secrets** most never hear. Use them, and you'll not only find your dream home faster, you'll win it smarter and often for less. It's your time to buy your dream home today!

Epilogue: Your Dream Home is Closer Than You Think

Now you know the secrets—the strategies most buyers never hear about until after they've lost the home they wanted. But you don't have to play catch-up. You're already ahead.

The truth is, buying a home isn't just about money—it's about positioning. When you use the Buyer's Edge, you're no longer just "another offer." You're the buyer who's prepared, who understands psychology, and who knows how to win without overpaying.

Your dream home isn't just some far-off wish—it's waiting for you. And now, you have the tools to recognize it, pursue it, and claim it with confidence.

So when the right home appears, don't hesitate. Step forward boldly. Remember: in real estate, fortune favors the prepared. And you, my friend, are prepared.

✨ **Pro Buyer Insight:** The best time to start is now. Whether you're weeks, months, or a year away from buying—every smart move you make today puts you closer to the keys in your hand tomorrow.

Let's Find Your Home Together

If you're ready to put these secrets into action and find your dream home, I'd love to guide you through the process.

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About the Author



JoEllen “Sohaila” Handelsman is a trusted Realtor® with more than 23 years of experience helping buyers find and secure their dream homes and investment opportunities. Known for her insider strategies and strong advocacy, she, with her dedicated colleagues ensures their clients have the edge in competitive markets—winning homes and investment properties without overpaying.

Sohaila believes buying and selling should be exciting, not overwhelming, and she provides the guidance, negotiation power, and market insights that give her buyers and sellers confidence every step of the way.

Outside of real estate, Sohaila is Professional international Belly dance artist, (yes, you read that right!), an Entrepreneur, Empowerment Coach for Women and Community Leader.

Her lifelong dedication to empowerment and creativity shines through in her real estate work, helping buyers not just purchase a house but step into a home where life’s next chapter can thrive.

