



Selling your home

A helping hand from RICS with an introduction by property expert Phil Spencer

Buying, selling or extending a home is one of the most exciting things you'll ever do it's also one of the biggest financial commitments you'll make. More than ever before, property means big money - YOUR money. It will pay for you to seek the best advice possible from professional experts who really know what they are talking about.

It's my opinion that you can do no better than accept 'a helping hand' from RICS. Choosing the right estate agent to sell your property is the absolute key to a smooth transaction.

In my experience most vendors don't pay sufficient attention to getting this right. Finding a local agent with a real understanding of the housing market is not always easy. I'd recommend you use an RICS member firm. The domestic property selling industry is unregulated - just about anyone can set up in business.

RICS members are unique - they ARE regulated. In other words they are qualified to offer the advice they do, they have to follow a strict code of conduct and their terms of business will be fair and clear.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Spencer'.

Phil Spencer is known nationwide as co-presenter of two of Channel 4's award winning property programmes **Relocation** and **Location, Location, Location**. Phil has a degree in estate management. His passion is property and he is delighted to be able to work in an industry that is exciting and ever-changing. His wealth of expertise in the property arena positions him perfectly to act as an informed commentator on the market and provide up to the minute, guidance, comment and opinion on the latest issues.

How RICS can help

Many estate agents throughout the UK are RICS members. Here are the advantages of using an RICS member:

- They give you clear, impartial and expert advice
- They act in your interest
- They are tightly regulated and have strict codes of conduct to protect you - including proper insurance
- RICS members have to update their skills and knowledge throughout their careers, so you can rely on their expertise
- You are further protected by our complaints service.

The estate agent's role

The estate agent sells your house for you - and they try to make sure they get the best possible deal in the specified time. You pay them a fee for acting on your behalf, so you need to make sure you employ a reputable firm. Ask the estate agent if they are an RICS member and look out for the RICS logo.

Using local agents

It's a good idea to choose a local RICS member with experience of selling homes like yours. Here are some points to follow before you make a decision:

- When getting valuations from different agents - bear in mind the highest valuation may not be the most realistic
- Check their terms and conditions - charges may vary
- Find out exactly what you're paying for - how the agent will advertise your property, and where you may be able to negotiate fees, although most agents charge a standard fee based on a percentage of the selling price. We'd advise against very low fees as the agent will have less motivation to sell your property quickly and for the best price - which means you could actually lose money
- Agree a minimum selling time. If you 're happy with the service, you can always extend it - and if you're not, you can change agents when the time 's up
- Last but not least, try and choose an agent you like - selling a house can be a long process, so it 's important you get on.

'By choosing an RICS member you can have confidence that they will both fully understand 'the selling process and employ best practice while doing it'.

Sole agency

This is where one estate agent takes full responsibility for selling your home, and you pay them the agreed commission on completion.

Joint agency

This is an arrangement where two or more agents sell your property and share the commission when the sale goes through - regardless of which agency makes the sale.

Multiple agency

This is an arrangement where you sell through more than one agent, but instruct them independently - so whoever sells the house gets the commission.

What happens next?

When you've decided which agent (or agents) to go with, ask them to come round to discuss the sale with you. An RICS member will offer good advice on the best way to sell your particular property - whether by negotiated contract, auction or sealed bid.

They'll also tell you how much you can realistically expect to get after you've paid all the fees and taxes, and whether smartening up your home will increase the selling price.

Let the agent know how quickly you want to sell, as this could affect their advice. An RICS member can also help you look for a new home if you haven't already found somewhere and can arrange for it to be surveyed for you.

Once you enter into a contract with an agent, they have to give you details in writing of their charges and the length of contract. Make sure you understand the contract fully before you sign - you don't want to sign into a lengthy tie-in.

Selling at auction

Most property is bought and sold through estate agents, but you can also sell your property at auction. If you sell at auction you must exchange contracts and agree the sale straight away - you'll be legally bound to the sale and won't be able to back out.

A RICS member who specialises in auctions can offer you good advice before you decide to sell this way.

Some auctions are carried out using a sealed bid system. This means all potential buyers send a letter to the agent stating how much they want to pay for the property. When the letters are opened, you sell to the bidder of your choice.

The essentials

- Talk to a qualified RICS member to find out if your property is suitable for auction. They'll tell you how the process works and give you a likely sale and reserve price
- Read your copy of the auctioneer's terms carefully. Discuss the cost of the sale and their rate of commission
- Ask your solicitor to prepare your title deeds and any special conditions of sale which the auctioneer needs. The auctioneer may also request your solicitor conducts local authority and Land Registry searches for the potential buyer
- Say when you're leaving the property. Unless the sale is subject to tenancies, this is usually four weeks after the auction
- If your property sells at auction, the auctioneer will sign the contract on your behalf and collect a deposit from the buyer. The deposit is normally 10%

- Depending on the terms of the contract, the buyer pays the remaining 90% within 28 days of the sale.

Your RICS member can advise on ways to get the best price for your property. Here are some tips for showing round potential buyers



- First impressions count, so make sure your house is always clean and tidy
- Buyers like light airy rooms, so open windows and put lights on if the weather's dull
- If it's winter, put the heating on so it feels warm and inviting
- If possible don't have your pets in the house when potential buyers come round - and try to get rid of any pet smells
- When you show people round, don't talk too much. Let them ask questions
- Make viewing easy, so they feel comfortable about coming back.

Remember:

'Don't hesitate to ask your estate agent if they are, or employ, RICS members. They will be proud of their membership and you will have the reassurance that they are regulated.'

Your agent is working for you so keep a close track of what is going on. Never ever think that no news is good news; poor communication is a deal breaker.

If you use an agent that is an RICS member you will have access to independent redress if unfortunately something goes wrong.

Seller's checklist

Here 's a brief summary of the various costs you have to consider when you sell your home:

Estate agent's fees

These are likely to be between 1 - 3% of the sale price plus VAT. Charges vary from one agent to another, so it 's worth checking on fees in your area.

Solicitor's fees

These vary from place to place. Expect to pay the solicitor about 1% of the total agreed price - but check the range of services they'll provide for the fee, and ask if they offer a no sale, no charge deal. It's often worth choosing a solicitor on the recommendation of a friend or colleague - otherwise contact the Law Society on t +44 (0)870 606 2555 to find firms in your area.

Surveyor's fees

If you're moving to a new home, it's worth paying for a survey on the new property from a qualified RICS member - especially on older properties, or buildings you want to extend or renovate. Again, surveyors' fees vary, so compare prices before choosing, and negotiate the fee to match the size and type of property. Ask the surveyor exactly what 's covered in the survey, so you know what you 're paying for.

Moving costs

The cost of moving varies according to how many belongings you have, how difficult they are to pack, how far you 're moving and the time of year. Shop around for the best deal - and remember it's worth checking to see if the quote includes insurance.

Storage

If you're not moving straight into a new home, you may have to consider storage. The costs for this vary according to how much you need to store. As a rough guide, a two-bedroom house will probably fill up to four containers, and a three-bed house can fill six.

It's always worth asking your estate agent if they are an RICS member - they'll have the initials TechRICS, MRICS or FRICS after their name, or look out for the RICS logo.

(information taken with permission from www.rics.org)