

PLAYBOOK

Real Estate Brokers (Buyer Side)

Handshake Outreach email sequence, adapted.

Four messages, one sequence. Mail-merge ready.

ADAPTATION 6

Category notes

Real estate fundamentally changed in August 2024 with the NAR settlement. Buyers now sign a Buyer Representation Agreement (BRA) before being shown homes, commissions are no longer advertised on the MLS, and buyers may be responsible for their agent's compensation directly. This creates a category-wide moment of confusion and skepticism that an honest, well-informed agent can leverage. Most agents are still talking around the BRA. Talking openly about it is a differentiator.

Insider terms: BRA (Buyer Representation Agreement), buyer's agent commission, MLS, dual agency, pocket listings / office exclusives, seller concessions, comparative market analysis (CMA), days on market (DOM), pre-approval vs. pre-qualification. Reference visit-level intent only — “homes in [neighborhood]” — not specific properties.

MESSAGE 1 OF 4 / SEND WITHIN 4-24 HOURS

Message 1: The Honest Hello

Acknowledge the cold contact. Explain the BRA. Give one useful warning.

Subject: A note from [First Name] at [Brokerage] – the BRA in plain English

Hi –

You stopped by [Brokerage]'s site recently looking at homes in [neighborhood/area]. You didn't sign up. That's fine – buyers don't owe agents an email address, and the new rules in our industry mean nothing about how you start a search obligates you to anything.

I'm [Name], [role] at [Brokerage]. One short note.

Since August 2024, every buyer's agent in the country is required to get you to sign a Buyer Representation Agreement (BRA) before showing you a home in person. The BRA is required by NAR settlement rules and most agents are not explaining it well, so here's the short version. The BRA spells out what the agent will do for you, how long the agreement lasts, what they get paid, and who pays them. Sellers can still pay buyer-agent commission – most still do – but it's no longer automatic, and the amount isn't on the MLS anymore. You can negotiate it.

Two things worth knowing: BRAs can be limited to a single property or a single tour day if you're not ready to commit. And they can be ended – read the termination language before you sign, not after.

I'll send two more notes over the next couple of weeks – short, focused on the things that actually matter when you're hunting in this market. If not useful, easy unsubscribe.

– [Name]

[License #, direct line, reply-to]

MESSAGE 2 OF 4 / SEND 3-4 DAYS LATER

Message 2: The Inside Knowledge

The costly signal: the two questions that decide whether you overpay.

Subject: The two questions that decide whether you overpay

[Name],

Following up. The home search question most buyers focus on is how much house can I afford. The two questions that actually decide whether you overpay are different.

Question one: how is your agent paid, and is there any incentive misalignment? Buyer's agents now have a written commission agreement with you – ask explicitly whether the agent's commission changes based on the sale price, the seller's offered compensation, or which house you pick. If the answer is yes, you have a steering risk: an agent paid more for showing you a \$700K house than a \$600K one has a quiet incentive to nudge. The cleanest structures are flat fee or a fixed percentage that doesn't vary by property.

Question two: are you seeing the full market or a curated slice? Pocket listings (also called office exclusives) have grown to about 8% of new listings nationally and over 20% in some metros. These are homes never put on the MLS. Buyers represented by the listing brokerage often get to see them first; everyone else doesn't see them at all. Ask any agent you're considering: "do you have access to listings outside the MLS, and how do I see them?" If the answer is vague, you're potentially missing inventory.

Here's the part I'd tell you even if we never work together: a good buyer's agent runs a CMA on every offer you make using comparable sales from the last 90 days, adjusted for square footage, lot size, condition, and time-on-market. They share the CMA with you, not just "trust me, this is the right price." If your agent doesn't want to show their work, you have the wrong agent.

[Brokerage]'s plain-English explainer on the BRA, commission structures, and how to read a CMA is at [link]. No form.

– [Name]

MESSAGE 3 OF 4 / SEND 5-7 DAYS LATER

Message 3: The Story

One real buyer with a moment of doubt. Walking away is sometimes the win.

Subject: The buyer who walked away from a house she loved (and why)

[Name],

Wanted to share a story.

A client I'll call Priya was a first-time buyer last spring. She'd been looking for four months, and we'd toured maybe sixteen homes when we walked into the one. Mid-century rancher in a great neighborhood. Updated kitchen, a real backyard, light everywhere. She was already mentally placing the couch. She wanted to make an offer on the spot.

I asked her to sit down on the back patio for ten minutes before we wrote anything. I pulled the disclosure packet, and we read it together. The seller had disclosed water intrusion in the basement that had been "remediated." The house had been on the market six weeks in a market where good homes were going in seven days. The CMA I'd run that morning showed it was priced 8% above the comparable sold prices.

Priya wrote an offer anyway – 12% under list, contingent on a sewer scope, a structural inspection, and a mold-specific air quality test. The seller countered, we countered back, the seller went silent. Two weeks later the house went under contract with another buyer. Three weeks after that it was back on the market – their inspections had pulled the same flags.

Priya bought a house six weeks later, \$40,000 less, with no disclosed issues and a clean inspection.

I'm sharing this because the part of buying that gets the least attention is the part where you're emotionally committed to a house. That's the moment where having someone in the room whose only job is to slow you down is worth more than the commission you pay. A good agent's job isn't to help you buy a house. It's to help you not buy the wrong one.

If you want to talk through what you're seeing in the market right now, reply to this email or call [number]. I'll send one more note and then leave you alone.

– [Name]

MESSAGE 4 OF 4 / SEND 5-7 DAYS LATER

Message 4: The Clean Close

Three options. The exit is graceful. The questions are theirs to use — with anyone.

Subject: Last note from me

[Name],

Last email unless you want to stay in touch. Three options:

If you want to start working with someone: Reply or call [number]. The first conversation is a 30-minute consult — we walk through your search criteria, your financing, what's actually moving in [area] right now, and the BRA. You can sign a single-property BRA for a first tour if you want to test the working relationship before committing.

If you want to keep watching the market: [Brokerage] sends a once-a-month note for [area] — actual sold prices (not list prices), days-on-market trends, and one new-construction or off-market property worth knowing about. [link] to subscribe.

If [Brokerage] isn't the right fit: Whoever you end up working with, five questions are worth asking before you sign a BRA: (1) how exactly are you paid, and does your commission change based on the sale price? (2) do you have access to off-MLS listings, and how do I see them? (3) will you run a written CMA on every property I offer on? (4) what's your average days-from-offer-to-close in the last six months? (5) what's your termination clause? The answers separate full-service buyer's agents from agents looking for a quick deal.

Either way, good luck with the search.

— [Name]

How to ship this

- **Replace the brackets.** [Brokerage], [Name], [role], [number], [link], [market] — every placeholder filled, nothing left in template form.
- **Pick a real agent or broker as the sender.** Not a team lead handing off to a junior. Use the actual agent's direct line and reply-to.
- **Render the body as plain text.** HTML email part, slightly large font (~16-17px), warmer-than-white background. Looks typed. Reads typed. People scan plain text differently.
- **Mind the cadence.** Message 1 within 4-24 hours. Message 2 at day 3-4. Message 3 at day 8-11. Message 4 at day 13-18. Then stop.
- **Honor the promise.** If you said “last email,” it's the last email. Reactance kills the relationship faster than silence.