

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SELLING WITH AN ONLINE ESTATE AGENT





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So, you're considering using an online estate agent?

You're not alone, around 1 in every 12 people selling a property choose an online estate agent. That's despite the fact they are a relatively new concept and lack physical office or a high street presence.

But, as with anything, there are pros and cons.

Using An Online Estate Agent

| Pros | Cons |
|---|---|
| → Can save you money → Fees are usually fixed (not based on a percentage of your sale price) → You generally have more control → Usually open 7 days a week (sometimes 24 hours a day) | → You'll sometimes have to pay even if you don't successfully sell → You may have to do more work yourself (such as viewings) → Not all agents are local to your area |



Of course, that's not a definitive list and you may notice other pros and cons depending on your individual circumstances, needs, and wants.

However, on the whole, online estate agents are an excellent choice for many people.

In this guide, we'll show you how to get the best from your chosen agent. All of these tips apply to online estate agents and many also apply to high street agents too.

By the time you reach the end, you'll have complete confidence that no matter which agent you choose to sell your home, you'll be able to sell quickly and for the maximum price possible.

Don't forget to check out our blog for helpful tips on selling your property. This article with 101 ways to sell your house quicker is a great place to start!

Before You Start - Get Your Property 'Market-Ready'

Many people only think about 'staging' their home in preparation for viewings. In truth, you should get it ready before your estate agent even arrives to conduct a valuation.

That's because you want them to see the house in the condition it will be in when people view. That way, they can give a fairer valuation based on how it's likely to appeal to people.

So, you'll want to start by having a good sort out and declutter.

Decluttering makes things look tidier and more spacious, helping your property appeal to a broader range of people.

While doing this, try to de-personalise as much as possible (such as by removing family photos). This will help people imagine themselves living there instead of feeling like they are intruding on someone else's life.

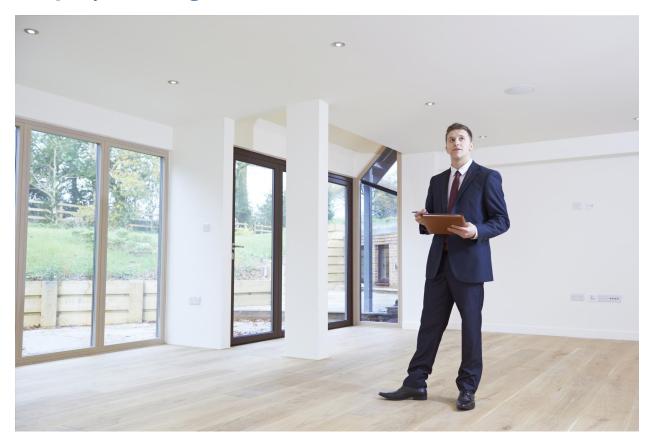


Take care to fix any nagging issues too such as a dripping tap or broken door handle. You'll also want to make sure you deep clean the entire house.

A clean house with everything in working order will broaden your appeal. However, the biggest thing is that it will tell people the house is well taken care of. That means they'll feel more confident that, if they buy it, there won't be any surprises hidden away.

You can get more tips on staging your property in our article here.

Step 1) Getting Your Valuation



Before you can sell your home, you need to know how much it's worth.

Every single property is worth exactly what someone is prepared to pay for it. Not a penny less, not a penny more.

That means valuing a property is an art, not a science. All estate agents use their experience and local sales data to produce their 'best guess'.



But, you won't know for sure how accurate it is until you're on the market.

While market conditions (among other factors) affect things, a general rule of thumb is this... If you sell within the first few days, your agent may have undervalued your property. If it takes more than two weeks, you may have overvalued it (though typically, the higher the value of the property, the longer it will take to find a buyer – even if it's fairly priced!).

And this is why it's important to get multiple valuations. Ideally, you'll want valuations from at least 3 different estate agents. Thankfully, valuations are almost always free and without obligation to proceed.

Top Tip:

If the agent asks you what your desired selling price is BEFORE telling you their valuation, do not tell them. Doing so is likely to influence their valuation and you may not get an honest and fair assessment of the potential value of your home.

Most valuations are about the same. Be wary of any that are considerably higher or lower. Try to choose a valuation that is in the middle.

Our recommended online estate agents:

| Top-Rated Online Agent | Sell For FREE |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Yopa | PURPLE BRICKS |
| Read Our Review | Read Our Review |
| Visit Agent Website | Visit Agent Website |



What about estate agents who don't conduct in-person valuations?

There are some agents who will only value your property remotely. Are these valuations less worthy?

Well, it's definitely better if an agent can visit your home and get a proper feel for what it offers and the condition it's in. However, it isn't essential.

Whether the valuation happens remotely or in-person, the agent will always have a pretty good idea how much your home is worth BEFORE they even see your property.

The condition of your property and its unique quirks will determine whether they recommend listing at the top or bottom of the range they've identified. And this can be assessed relatively easily on a video call.

So for this reason, don't be put off if your agent won't visit you in person. We recommend getting at least one in-person valuation to make sure there aren't any things missed on a video call.

What questions should you ask during a valuation?

Remember, a valuation isn't just so you can discover how much you may get for your property. It's also your chance to grill the estate agent and ask them any questions that might help you decide whether to instruct them or not.

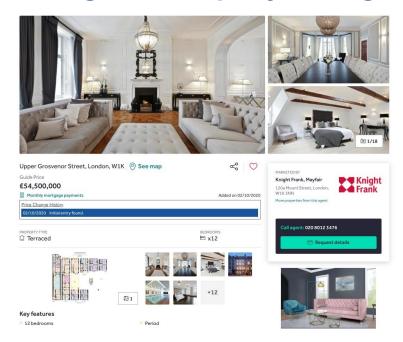
For example, some good questions you could ask include:

- Are you tied into a contract? If so, for how long?
- What are your opening hours?
- Do you offer hosted viewings?
- Are photographs and a floor plan included?
- How quickly will my property be listed?

You can get more ideas for questions to ask in our article <u>15 of the best questions to ask</u> your estate agent when selling a property.



Step 2) Creating Your Property Listing



In most cases, even with online estate agents, you won't have to create your property listing yourself. That's good news because your listing is the 'advert' for your property. The stronger it is, the better your chances of selling at your desired price.

The bad news is that many estate agents don't even know how to create a good listing themselves!

But, don't despair. We are about to give you the information you need to create a listing that will be stronger than almost every other one out there!

We've found that many high street estate agents are stuck in their ways and won't deviate from what they've always done (that's why so many listings use the same uninspiring approach).

But, most online estate agents are happy to let you guide how your listing looks - particularly if you've chosen an 'pay upfront' option – another good reason to use an online agent!



Your asking price (high importance)

It's a fairly obvious fact that if your asking price is too high, you'll probably struggle to find a buyer. If it's too low, you may sell quickly but will always wonder how much more money you could have got.

However, pricing your property correctly goes much, much deeper than that.

If your agent wants to put your property on the market for an odd price, slightly below a round number (for example; £199,950), push against it.

While it's true that psychologically such a number appears to cost less (that's why so many things are priced £1.99, £29.99, etc), it will significantly impact how many people see your listing.

Why? Because of the way the property portals work.

Take Rightmove for instance. When you search for a property to buy, you set your minimum and maximum price to help filter your results.

The minimum and maximum amounts are set by Rightmove and increase in rounded £10,000 increments up to £300,000. After that, they increase in rounded £25,000 increments up to £500,000 where they then change to £50,000 increments.

The point is, you want to make sure your property is up for sale at a price which falls on one of these increments. For example, don't put your property up for sale at £297,000, put it up for £300,000.

In doing so, you'll maximise the number of people who see it. That's because if someone sets a minimum price of £300,000 your property will show up.

If you had priced it at £297,000 or even £299,950, you would only show when someone uses a minimum price of £290,000 or less. Anyone searching with a £300,000 minimum won't see your property even though it's only just below!

Of course, there are many other pricing strategies you can use including offers over, offers in the region of, guide prices, and so on. Most estate agents are pretty good at knowing how to use these properly but making use of incremental prices is one technique that so many agents (online and traditional) miss.



Your property photographs (high importance)

As well as price, the other major thing that will impact how many viewing requests you get (and therefore potentially how long it takes to find a buyer) is your photographs.

Think about it. When you search for properties, what do you look at first? It's the photographs, right? Most people, once they've filtered properties based on their requirements, scroll through and look at the photographs.

Only once you've seen a property that looks right will you start looking at the extra details, such as reading the full description.

So, don't cut corners on photographs – ALWAYS use a professional. They have professional cameras, wide angle lenses, know the right places to take photographs from, and are experts in editing photos to make sure your property looks its best.

Speaking of 'looking its best', please do have a tidy and declutter before your photographs are taken. Make sure everything is clean and sparkling and fix anything that's worn or broken. You only get one chance to make a first impression and your photos will be that chance.

Top Tip:

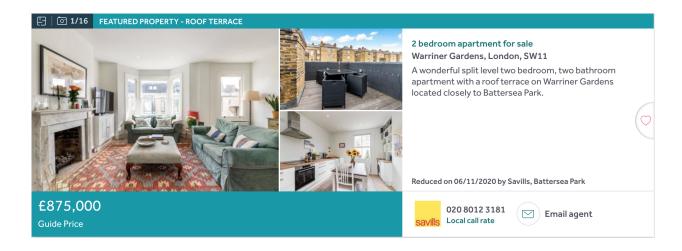
Ask your estate agent to lead with your best photograph as the main image. Most agents will automatically use the 'front of house' shot as your main image – yet even Rightmove say this is not the best approach!

Instead, they recommend leading with an interior shot, remembering that nice kitchens and bathrooms help sell properties.

If your listing will appear as a featured or premium listing, you'll need to make sure your first photos are the strongest. The ones that show off the best features your property has to offer.

That's because, on Rightmove, featured and premium listings show a gallery of 3-4 images in the main search results (see the example below). This is instead of the usual 2 images on a standard listing. The images are also slightly larger.





Want to level-up your listing further?

Ensure your agent places your photos in the same order someone will experience the property during a viewing. For instance, if your viewings will start in the living room then progress to the kitchen, put the photos in that order (with the exception of your lead photos).

Why?

When people arrive for a viewing, you want them to feel comfortable in your home and feel like they already know where everything is.

You know that 'feeling' people describe they get when they view the property that's just perfect for them? It's thought to be linked to familiarity. Having photos in the same order they'll experience it during a viewing helps to create that familiarity.

Your summary text (medium importance)

Next up, you need to make sure your summary text helps your property stand out.

The summary text is the description that appears alongside your property images on the search results page of Rightmove (and some other portals).





Now, most agents write a dull, uninspiring description here that just tells you a few facts. They don't use engaging language that will entice people to click through to find out more.

Rightmove recommends you have a few key features in capital letters to help the stand out at-a-glance which is good advice.

We recommend picking out a few key features of your property and putting them in the form of a question, for example on the example above, we'd have gone with:

Looking for a three storey town house with FIVE DOUBLE BEDROOMS, a loft, and OFF-STREET PARKING that's just moments from Brockley station and local amenities? This is the property for you...

This gets across the same information but makes use of capital letters and presents the information as a question.

Why is this important? Well, it's pure psychology.

As human beings when there's a question, we hate leaving it unanswered (it's part of the reason we spend so much money on space exploration). So, asking a question opens a loop that people want to close.

The added assurance the property is the right one for them and the three dots encourage people to click through to find out more.

This is an advanced psychological marketing trick that few estate agents know about, let alone use. Now you know about it, you can make sure your chosen agent follows it and gives your listing a better chance of getting views!



Your floorplan (medium importance)

Please, whatever you do, don't list without an accurate floorplan! Not all estate agents offer one as standard (particularly online agents) so you'll need to check it's included.

According to surveys, 90% of buyers think that having a floorplan is essential or very useful.

That means it's not something you should overlook. Remember how we mentioned having your photos in an order that will give people familiarity when viewing your property? Well, the floorplan helps enhance this effect.

After people have checked the photos, they'll often look at the floorplan to help better visualise the layout and how it might work for them. Just make sure that the floorplan is relatively accurate, otherwise it can do more harm than good!

Your main description (low importance)

Once someone has clicked through to your listing they're likely to browse all the photos and check the floorplan before moving to your main description. This should be made up of three parts.

1) The key features

These are shown as bullet points at the top of your description and you can have up to 10 of them (try and ensure you use them all!).

The point is to pull out the most important things about your property so that people can see at-a-glance why they should consider buying it. Think about anything that makes your property unique. For instance, is it the only one in the area with a balcony or an extension?

Anything unique that's likely to set you apart from your competition is a must. However, you can also include more common things here if you think they'll appeal to people. Excellent transport links or good schools are always received well, as are new kitchens or bathrooms.



Your agent should have a pretty good idea what to include here as they see so many properties and will know what makes yours stand out. Your job is to make sure they're putting the best features here and pointing out anything they've missed.

2) The property description

This is the opportunity to really describe your property in a way that will make people imagine themselves living there and get excited about viewing it.

Unfortunately, most estate agents use to just describe the property very matter of factly. Let's give you an example of a bad use of this space:

A large and individual extended four bedroom detached house with a stunning open plan kitchen/diner and living space to the rear with feature Velux windows and bi-fold doors.

Situated in a sought after and convenient residential location this great property is well worthy of viewing.

It sounds OK but it's hardly a description that's going to set your pulse racing, is it?

Let's try rewriting it with the same information but told in a much more engaging way:

Need space for all the family? With four good-sized bedrooms, this large detached house will impress friends and family every time they visit.

The open plan kitchen/diner makes it perfect for entertaining and bringing the family together at meal times.

Love those warm summer days? The rear living space has bi-fold doors that allow you to fully open up the space and bring the outdoors in, giving you the perfect place to relax after a busy day.

And you won't have to compromise on location either as this properly has great transport links that means you quickly get to where you need to be each day.



See how this paints a picture in your mind and helps you to understand how you might use and enjoy the space?

Don't get us wrong, this is a very difficult skill to learn. Writing descriptions like this takes time, and that's one of the reasons many estate agents don't do it.

You'll be lucky if you find any agent that understands this technique well enough to apply it properly. However, with some guidance, you should be able to push your agent away from simply describing your property and instead describe what it's actually like to live there!

Top Tip:

If your estate agent needs help in writing property descriptions in this way (or you'd like to learn more about it yourself), send them to this article where we explain some of the techniques in more detail:

https://www.propertyroad.co.uk/how-to-write-a-good-property-description/

3) The full description

This is the part of the description where you get to explain each room to the potential viewer. Most people will read this last and so it has relative low importance, however, it's a great way for potential viewers to check the specifics of each room.

The most important thing here is that your agent includes room measurements. People will often use the section to check room sizes and check their furniture will fit.

It's also the best place for giving a commentary of what's actually included in each room. We're OK with this section being quite dry as its main job is simply to present the facts.

Pulling all this together - a perfect example

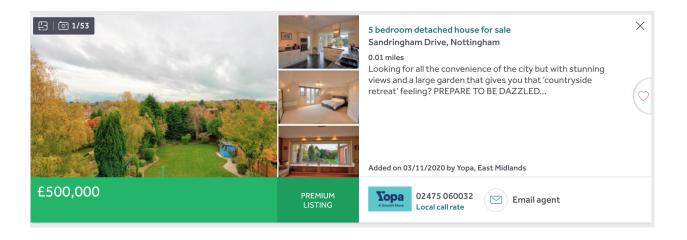
We've been through a lot of information already and a lot of it is high-level marketing psychology that most estate agents don't know, let alone use.



We know it may be a little overwhelming so here's an example of how it looks when you pull together everything we've discussed above.

We know from the estate agent who listed this property, this house was getting **5x TIMES more viewings** than other similar properties on the market at the time. That's purely down to how well it was marketed and the fact that these techniques were used.

The search result listing:



The key features:

Key features

- MODERN BATHROOMS
- BALCONY
- SPECTACULAR VIEWS
- NEW & ORIGINAL FEATURES THROUGHOUT
- FIVE BEDROOMS

- OAK WOOD FLOORING
- CONVENIENTLY PLACED FOR THE A52 AND M1
- IMPRESSIVE GARDENS
- BESPOKE OPEN PLAN KITCHEN DINER
- CATCHMENT FOR OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS

The property description:



Property description

Looking for all the convenience of the city but with stunning views that give you that 'countryside retreat' feeling?

Whether you have a growing family or need a home office (or two!), this flexible and beautifully appointed 5 bed detached home is the perfect suburban escape.

Situated on the outskirts of the city, with excellent transport links and popular amenities within walking distance, you can dip into Nottingham whenever you feel the need.

However, when all you want is to escape it, this home welcomes you back with peaceful tranquillity and a view to die for.

A 15-foot wide window in the spacious rear-facing living room perfectly frames the adorable, easy-to-maintain, large garden. Or head upstairs and admire the far-reaching views across the city from the rear-facing balcony.

Who needs a TV when a wonderful view like this is just a glance away?

Heading into the rear garden you'll be delighted to learn it's south-facing, so you'll be able to enjoy the sun all day long. Just choose your favourite spot, sit back and feel the stress fade away. Later, maybe enjoy a family barbecue on the large, and perfect for entertaining, raised patio.

But it's not just the garden that will blow you away.

The well-maintained interior is equally inviting, with a flexible layout that suits a wide range of lifestyles.

The spacious bedrooms can be used for a variety of purposes and you'll benefit from not just one, but TWO en suites as well as a large family bathroom complete with walk-in shower and roll top bath. The kitchen diner is equally spacious with integrated fridge, freezer, microwave and oven as well as space to hide away your white goods.

Properties like this don't come on the market often, so book your viewing today to avoid missing this rare opportunity to secure a home you can love for years to come...

I'm sure that after reading this description you can see exactly why it's likely to appeal to people more than a dry description of factual information?

Note that the listing then went on to show the full description, complete with measurements. We've decided to omit including it here for the sake of brevity but the key techniques that are being used are shown in the above screenshots.



Key Takeaways:

- → Always prepare and stage your property BEFORE having a valuation
- → Don't reveal your own price expectation until after the estate agent has told you what THEY think
- → Price your property on one of the preset portal filter increments for maximum coverage
- → Lead with your best photograph on your listing (which usually isn't the front of your house!)
- → Order your photos in the order people will experience your property in order to create 'familiarity'
- → Make sure your summary text is engaging so it stands out and attracts people to your listing
- → Always use an accurate floorplan
- → Make use of all 10 'Key Features' where possible
- → Ensure your property description is written in a way that paints a picture of what it's like to live there (rather than a dry description)

Step 3) Conducting Viewings

It's almost certain that you won't sell your property without someone first viewing it. It's too big a purchase for people to risk buying purely based on an online listing.

And, if you're using an online estate agent, you may need to pay extra if you want them to conduct the viewings for you.

If you are away from home a lot, or you simply don't have the confidence to conduct your own viewings, paying for this upgrade will be well worth it. However, try and choose an online agent that charges you a single fee for unlimited viewings. That way, you won't have expensive ongoing charges if your property takes a while to sell.



But, if you are confident and have the time to conduct your own viewings... we strongly recommend you do.

That's because no-one knows your home as well as you. You know about the beautiful sunrises you see in a morning or just how peaceful your street is, or whatever it is that your property has to offer.

That means, you can talk about what it's actually like to live there. No estate agent in the world can do that unless they've also lived in your home!

Top Tip:

If you can't do viewings yourself, ask your agent if it's possible to meet the main person who will be conducting viewings on your behalf. This will give you the chance to show them around your property and point out all of the important things buyers are likely to want to know.

And, when you tell buyers about your personal experience, it's easier for them to relate to it. That means they're more likely to fall in love with your home.

Of course, to do this effectively, you need to be confident about showing people around your home. But don't worry, the next few tips will ensure you're fully prepared...

Have a thorough clean and tidy before each viewing

We know we mentioned this when we covered getting your property ready to go on the market. But, it's essential you keep up the clean and tidy feeling throughout all your viewings.

A clean house is something most people aspire to and so it will make your property more appealing. But, more than that, it shows you take pride in your home. That means if the buyer spots something amiss, they're more likely to overlook it.



Plan a route for your tour



Remember how we said your photos should try and follow the way people will experience your house? The route you take during viewings should try and mimic this.

However, what's most important is that you try to start and end in the best rooms. This way, you create a good first impression and leave a good last impression. Human nature means anything not so good in between is likely to be forgotten (or at least given less importance!).

Practice what you'll say

Ask a friend or family member if you can practice what you'll say as you show people around. It will help you refine your conversation and ensure you remember all of the good things you want to point out.

Plus, knowing what you'll say will give you much more confidence if you're nervous about showing people around.



Watch and listen for reactions

Once you've done a few viewings you'll start to get more confident in what you're doing. The key then is to start adapting what you say based on the comments people make and their reactions.

For instance, if people keep questioning whether a double bed will fit in a room, get a tape measure and check. The next time you show someone around, you'll be able to pre-empt the question and answer it before they even ask (putting it in as positive a light as possible).

We've published a more detailed guide to hosting your own viewings which you may find useful: How To Do Your Own House Viewings

Are there any downsides to conducting your own viewings?

Well yes, there are a few things to consider. They will take up your time. Expect each viewing to last around 30 minutes on average.

They can be exhausting too as you'll be talking a lot and concentrating on not saying the wrong thing! When you have back to back viewings, they can be quite intense.

Also, keep in mind that some buyers prefer viewings hosted by estate agents. That's because they feel more able to be honest and ask difficult questions.

But, on the whole, if you do your own viewings, you're likely to have more appeal to potential buyers, as we showed in our analysis here: <u>Video Demonstrates Everything</u> <u>That's Wrong With High Street Estate Agents</u>

Getting (and acting on) feedback

An important part of the process is getting feedback from anyone who has viewed your property. Whether they're interested or not, it's good to know what they think of your home.

Of course, you shouldn't take any of the feedback personally. You may love your house but it won't work for everyone.



Now, your estate agent will typically chase people for feedback on your behalf. However, if you're using one of the cheaper online agents, you may be expected to do this yourself. It's worth clarifying this in advance.

The key thing is to listen to any feedback you receive. If multiple people have mentioned the same issue, you'll want to consider what you can do about it. For instance, if people are saying one of the rooms is too small, can you remove some furniture to make it look more spacious?

Top Tip:

There's a tendency among many online agents to rely on their automated online systems too much. Some aren't great at picking up the phone to chase for feedback in person.

In this situation, be prepared to keep chasing your agent or even taking matters into your own hands and messaging viewers to ask for feedback yourself (keep in mind you may not get as honest responses as your agent would though!).

Step 4) Negotiating An Offer

If you've done everything correctly, it won't be long before you start to receive offers from interested buyers.

This can be both an exciting and stressful time as many buyers (and sellers for that matter!) like to play games in order to gain the upper hand in the negotiation.

That's why using an online agent that will help you negotiate is a good call. In fact, most agents will be able to do all of the negotiation for you and advise you on the best course of action.

The key thing is to understand what makes you attractive as a seller and what makes your buyers appealing.



The strongest seller is usually one that doesn't need to find somewhere else to move to. If this is you, you'll have more negotiating strength than a seller who needs to find an onward purchase.

Equally, a seller who has already found the property they want to buy (and had an offer accepted) is in a stronger position than one who hasn't even started looking yet.

For buyers, a cash buyer (i.e. they don't need a mortgage) who doesn't need to sell first is in the strongest position to negotiate. Someone who needs a mortgage and needs to sell their own property (especially if they're not yet on the market) is in the weakest position.

So, make sure you understand your own position, and check your buyers position before you negotiate.

We published a full guide to negotiating as a seller, here: <u>How To Negotiate A Higher Price When Selling</u>

Step 5) Sales Progression





Once you've accepted an offer, the focus will move away from your property and your estate agent and on to your solicitor and preparing for the moving day.

However, that doesn't mean your estate agent is no longer needed. In fact, they're vital to ensuring your sale now completes.

Most online agents include sales progression and they'll act as the 'middleman' between you and your buyers and your respective solicitors. They'll be chasing for updates from the other parties in the chain and ensuring everyone is moving towards completion.

But, as with all estate agents, some are better than others at this. That's why, if you get the opportunity, you should swap phone numbers and/or email addresses with your buyers.

Often, it's quicker and easier to get updates and answer questions when you communicate directly. However, don't withhold what you learn from your agent, it's vital you keep them full up-to-date so they can continue to help you progress.

We've outlined what the conveyancing process looks like when selling, <u>here</u>. Understanding this will help you keep on top of everything and ensure your solicitor is keeping on top of everything.

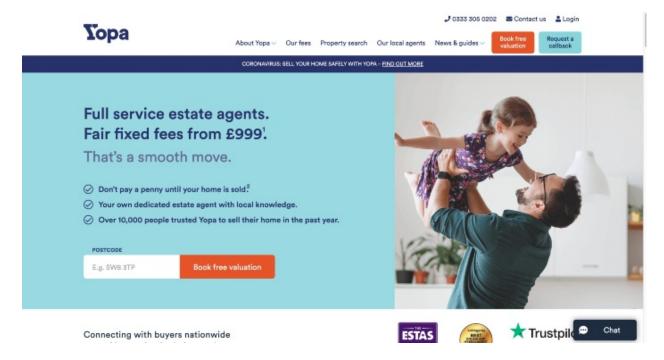
If the conveyancing process feels like it's taking a long time, this is completely normal! However, if you're concerned, read our guide here to find out what could be causing the delay and what you can do about it.



Our Top 3 Recommended Online Estate Agents

Now we've taken you through the entire process, you're ready to choose an estate agent and get started. Here are the top 3 online estate agents we currently recommend:

#1 - Yopa (Our Rating = 9.6)



Best Thing = Strong Reputation Worst Thing = High 'No Sale, No Fee' Price

<u>Yopa</u> is perhaps one of the best online estate agents (in terms of recognisability) around after Purplebricks thanks to their innovative TV advertising campaigns.

In terms of service, they get plenty of positive reviews and offer a fast and cost-effective way to sell your home.

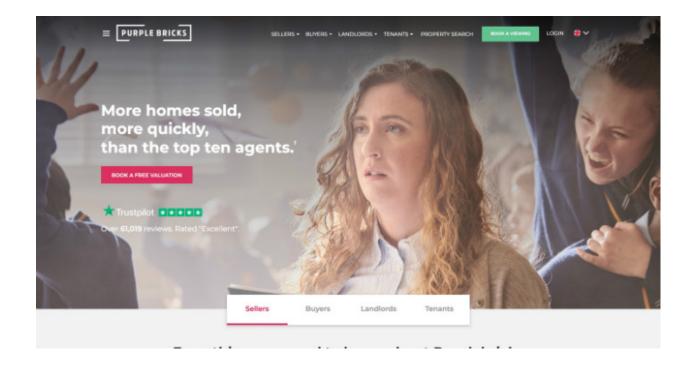
They also offer both upfront and pay on completion payment options making them suitable for pretty much anyone. As a result, they are currently the top-rated agent in our online estate agent reviews table.

Read Review

Visit Website



#2 – Purplebricks (Our Rating = 9.5)



Best Thing = FREE Package Worst Thing = Hosted Viewings Add-On Is Expensive

The largest of all the online estate agents, Purplebricks have become a very well-known brand in the UK as well as abroad. That's mostly thanks to an incredibly expensive, high intensity advertising campaign.

This has an added benefit to you as a seller as people will trust your estate agent more and not see it as you simply trying to sell as cheaply as possible.

This is important as the brand now offers a completely free to list service that will get your property on the major portals. However, keep in mind you'll be doing some of the work yourself and it doesn't include any visibility on the main portal, Rightmove.

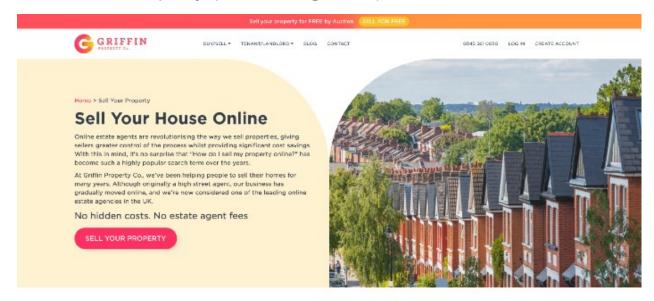
However, they have a number of add-ons and two other packages (Boost and Full House) that offer really good value for money and allow you to get the things missing from the free package – including the Rightmove listing.

Read Review

Visit Website



#3 – Griffin Property (Our Rating = 9.2)



How to Sell your Property Online

Griffin Property Co. makes it easier than ever to sell house online. Our online portal gives you full control over your property listing, allowing you to present your home exactly as you want. You'll start by adding you basic details. You can then choose to add your own



Best Thing = Range Of Add-Ons Worst Thing = Hosted Viewings Not Available

We're big fans of the website design for Griffin Property Co. and they also offer some good value for money packages. Plus, there's an excellent range of cost-effective add-on services to choose from.

The downside is that you'll have to conduct all the viewings yourself as they don't offer a hosted viewings service. If you can go without that then the £245 package could be a serious contender.

Read Review

Visit Website

View all of our online estate agent reviews by clicking here