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Understanding the Due Diligence Period

A North Carolina Buyer's Guide

THE DUE DILIGENCE TIMELINE

1 — Contract Executed
Due diligence fee & earnest money deposit are paid

2 — Due Diligence Period
Inspections, appraisal, financing & negotiations happen now

3 — Closing Day
Ownership transfers; final walk-through & signing

DUE DILIGENCE FEE

- Paid directly to the seller, not held in trust
- Generally non-refundable, even if you terminate
- Amount is negotiated; credited toward your purchase price at closing

EARNEST MONEY DEPOSIT

- Held in an escrow / trust account
- Refundable if you terminate during the Due Diligence Period
- At risk after the deadline unless another contract contingency protects you

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THIS TIME?

- Whole-home & pest inspections
- Well and/or septic testing (if applicable)
- Appraisal ordered by your lender
- Final loan approval / financing contingency
- Survey and title search
- HOA document review, if applicable
- Negotiating any repairs or credits
- Confirming insurability of the property

Your Right to Terminate

During the Due Diligence Period, you may terminate the contract for any reason and still receive your earnest money deposit back — you will simply forfeit the due diligence fee already paid to the seller.

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How Much Should Your Due Diligence Fee Be?

There's no required formula — here's how NC buyers typically decide

1% – 3% of the Purchase Price

The commonly used starting range in today's market — not a legal requirement, and always negotiable.
Your agent will help you land on the right number for your specific offer.

What That Looks Like

Purchase Price	1%	2%	3%
$300,000	$3,000	$6,000	$9,000
$500,000	$5,000	$10,000	$15,000
$750,000	$7,500	$15,000	$22,500
$1,000,000	$10,000	$20,000	$30,000

What Moves the Number Up or Down

PUSHES THE FEE HIGHER

- Multiple competing offers
- Low inventory / hot market
- Strong confidence after a pre-offer walkthrough
- Pairing with a shorter due diligence period
- Wanting to stand out to the seller

ALLOWS A LOWER FEE

- Home has sat on the market 30+ days
- Little or no buyer competition
- You want more cushion for inspections
- Uncertainty about condition or repairs needed
- Seller is motivated to close quickly

It's Always Credited Back

Whatever amount you offer is credited toward your purchase price at closing if the deal closes. It's not an extra cost — it's part of the price you're already paying.

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Figures shown are illustrative examples only, not a quote or guarantee. Every offer is different — talk with your agent about the fee strategy that fits your situation.

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