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## Category: Buying Homeowners Insurance Online

### Subcategory: Buying Homeowners Insurance Online

#### **Tip: Dates To Know**

When purchasing home insurance online, make sure to pay attention to the “house year.” This is the term is used for the standard 365-day period that your plan will cover. Then get out your calendar and mark the start date and the date your plan expires. You want to know when your coverage ends so you can plan ahead as to whether you want to renew it, change your policy to a different one, or cancel it and switch to another provider. You don't want that date to sneak up on you and surprise you when you're not ready for it. You should do this every time you buy or renew a homeowners insurance policy. Knowing the exact end date of your house year will give you the time to make your decisions in advance, find online insurance quotes if you are thinking of changing policies or companies, and more.

#### **Tip: Homeowners Insurance Quotes Online**

When it comes to obtaining homeowners insurance quotes online, it's easy to think all sites are the same. Unfortunately, there are wide variations in the quality and type of quotes provided. Learn how to decipher the code and you will be well rewarded with some of the best coverage at the lowest prices &ndash; fail to do so and you could unwittingly find yourself paying more for less. Keep these common sense tips in mind when searching for homeowner's insurance quotes online: Quality Comes First. The most important consideration when buying homeowners insurance in person, over the phone or via an online quote is to make sure you get the right policy. Low quotes can sometimes reflect less coverage &ndash; don't put the financial future of your family on the line simply to save a few bucks; instead, make sure you obtain the right insurance for your needs. Pay special attention to deductibles, exclusions, limitations and other specific policy requirements. Company Rating. Always verify the credit rating of the insurance company prior to making a final decision. After all, you need a company that is able to provide coverage in the event of a claim. Today's tough economic crisis has hurt many companies so it's more important than ever to make sure the company providing insurance is solid. Responsiveness. Customer satisfaction is also important. Shopping for homeowners insurance quotes online doesn't mean sacrificing quality &ndash; contrary to what many people believe, online insurance quotes can be just as helpful as local agents while still providing great prices.

#### **Tip: Talk It Over With Family**

Before you start your online search for homeowners insurance, talk to your family and discuss concerns and areas of interest. What types of things does each family member feel that you need to be covered for? Earthquakes? Hurricanes? Who has personal

possessions that they want appraised and insured? How about your home security? Ask if your family would be more comfortable if you installed a wireless alarm system. It can make your house safer and lower your insurance costs as well. Maybe a member of your family can think of a way to save on your home insurance that you have not thought of. After you talk with your family, make a list of all personal possessions you want to insure, hazards you want to be insured against, and any other questions anyone may have. Then start rounding up some online quotes for homeowners insurance. If you find all the answers you were looking for and a quote that works for you, you can buy home insurance online whenever you are ready. If you still have questions, contact the provider directly and get them squared away.

**Tip: Use Secure & Reliable Sites**

In this age of technology, identity theft has become a major concern. You want to make sure that when you conduct an online transaction both you and your personal information are safe. Only use trusted sites like QuoteScout.com to obtain online home insurance quotes. The same applies when you are ready to buy home insurance online. A company should have a security certificate in plain sight on their Web site. This lets you know they are taking every measure to secure your private information. Whether it is simply submitting some data to get a quote or actually buying online, you want that peace of mind. You also need to make sure that your anti-virus software and firewalls are all up to date and functioning properly. The more protection you have the better off you are. If you take the right steps, when you buy home insurance online you are just as safe as if you did it in person or on the phone.

## Category: Comparing Homeowners Insurance Quotes

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**Tip: Comparing Quotes Online**

The quickest and by far easiest way to compare homeowners insurance quotes is to do it online. So how do you do that? If you are thinking that you have to go to a different site for every company you want to get a quote from, you can put that worry to bed right now. All you need is the help of one Web site. Quote aggregators will provide you with insurance quotes from all the major companies licensed to provide insurance in your area. You can do side-by-side comparisons without having to click from one window to the next or print out dozens of pages and lay them out on your desk or coffee table. Even if you're a slow typer, it won't take long to input the information needed to get you those quotes, and they'll walk you through the process. Sites like these that are reputable will also have a section that goes over frequently asked questions and the "ins and outs" of the insurance industry, arming you with the tools you need to make the right decision on your home insurance.

### **Tip: Credit Score and Homeowners Insurance Quotes**

Among the many criteria used to derive an insurance quote, the personal credit score is one of the most confusing and frustrating for many homeowners. Learn how to compare homeowners insurance even if your credit isn't perfect with these simple tips: Search for companies that do not use insurance credit score information. While many insurance underwriters use individual credit scores to partially determine rates, it is possible to find companies that do not. Don't automatically assume you will pay less though; it's still a good idea to comparison shop before making a final decision. Examine individual scores. Sometimes one family member has better credit than the other person does, so it might be possible to obtain quotes that are more competitive by putting that person down as the primary policyholder. Ask your agent for more information when obtaining a home insurance quote. Know your score. It's often possible to dramatically improve your credit score simply by making a few small changes or even using a different credit reporting agency. Obtain a free copy of your credit score to begin building a better score today; even if it doesn't help reduce homeowners insurance premiums right away, you could still start seeing savings within six to twelve months.

### **Tip: Quotes Come With No Obligation**

When you request an insurance quote, don't get nervous. There is no obligation to purchase that policy. Asking for a quote simply means that you will be made an offer of services at a specified rate. That is all it is: an offer. You do not have to take it. Request as many home insurance quotes as you want. There is never any obligation. One thing to keep in mind, though, is that rates do change. In most cases an insurer will provide you with a quote that is good for a certain period of time, usually 10 to 14 days or so, but that may vary. After that time passes, the quote no longer applies and the rate could change. So pay attention to the date you request quotes so you can adhere to the proper timeline. If you want to accept the policy and rate offered in a homeowners insurance quote, do so within the time period allotted by the company. If not, simply let it go and move on to the next.

### **Tip: Request Home, Auto & Other Insurance Quotes At The Same Time**

Remember that you are most likely eligible for a discount if you have multiple insurance accounts through one company. Now consider this when you compare home insurance quotes. When you are checking quotes for home insurance it might be a good time to get quotes for other things like auto and health insurance as well. If the rates and policies from one company catch your interest for home insurance, get quotes for the others from that company as well. You may find that you can save a considerable amount of money by switching other accounts to a new company when you insure your home. This is a vital part of comparing quotes because it can save you a lot of money with just a little time and effort. You can even do all this at once in the same place with

insurance quote aggregators. You can get insurance quotes in each area and see how you can benefit from the different options, before rushing into the wrong choice.

### **Tip: Understanding the Anti-Concurrent Causation Clause**

The term “Anti-Current Causation” sounds so complex many homeowners would simply ignore anything that followed. However, like most small print related to your insurance, it's actually important to understand, especially when obtaining a new home insurance quote or comparison shopping. The Anti-Concurrent Causation clause is contained in many homeowner policies and may severely limit or restrict the amount of funds paid out in the event of a wind and water-related claim. Essentially the clause limits the amount of coverage to correspond to the flood damage when wind and flooding both act concurrently to cause damage to a property. When shopping for a home insurance quote, be sure to ask the following questions so you can better understand the Anti-Concurrent Causation clause and how it could affect your finances in the event of a major storm. Does the policy contain the Anti-Concurrent Causation clause? Over what time period is the event considered "concurrent?" What would be the limits of my personal liability if only the flood portion were covered while wind damage was excluded?

## **Category: Evaluating Homeowners Insurance Companies**

Subcategory: Evaluating Homeowners Insurance Companies

### **Tip: #1 In Customer Satisfaction**

When it comes time to compare homeowner's insurance companies, a good place to start is with customer complaints and satisfaction ratings. These can be obtained through companies online like JD Power and Associates or your state's Department of Insurance site. See how other customers rate the service they get from their insurance companies. Remember there is a context for each customer complaint, so one bad review doesn't mean the end of the world, but consistent negative comments and ratings might be hint of what to expect with that particular company. You want to be comfortable with your home insurance agency. If you ever need to file a claim, you want the people you deal with to be helpful, knowledgeable and professional. Having that piece of mind will make the process of choosing an insurer and interacting with them much easier. You will know that they are working with your best interests in mind. That's where homeowner's insurance company ratings come into play.

### **Tip: Are Lower Rates Always Better?**

When making home insurance comparisons most people tend to be drawn immediately to the company that offers lower rates. Why not? This is understandable and there is

nothing wrong with it. Just don't make a hasty decision before having all the facts about each provider. That is where you can get into trouble. Everyone wants cheap home insurance in the financial cost sense. But you do not want “cheap” home insurance in the sense that your coverage is severely limited and does not offer the protection you need. So make sure that the low rates don't blind you to the other things that should be helping to form your decision. If you look hard enough you should be able to find a company and insurance policy that is in both your price and coverage range. Top homeowner's insurance companies can provide this. Because spending less now is well and good, but not if you have to pay a lot more down the road.

### **Tip: Companies Licensed In Your State**

Not every homeowner's insurance company is licensed in every state. So just because a friend has a policy through a certain company or there was a commercial on TV that caught your eye, that doesn't mean your choice is made for you. Check with your state's Department of Insurance. Some states will have a list on their Web site while others may not or they may not be very easy to find. If you cannot find the information online, give them a call to see what agencies are licensed to provide insurance where you live. Now that you have that list, you can start doing your research and home insurance comparisons. There is no point in wasting time evaluating companies that would not be able to provide you with home insurance anyway. Your time can instead be spent productively by focusing on the companies that are viable options for you.

### **Tip: Customer Service Up To Par?**

When you start contacting home insurance companies, over the phone or in person, think of it like a job interview. They want your business. Are they doing everything they can to get it? Are they polite and helpful? Are they willing to take the time to explain things to you until you are comfortable? The level of customer service you receive in that initial period should make you feel comfortable. If the people you speak with are neither courteous nor knowledgeable, maybe they are not right for you. Even if the rates they offer seem to be in the right range, this choice is about more than dollars and cents. When you are asking your questions, don't be shy about not understanding something. Ask as many questions as it takes until you know exactly what is happening. If you don't feel they are answering your questions completely, let them know it. Make it clear that you won't be making a decision without being fully informed. They should do everything in their power to provide you with that peace of mind.

### **Tip: Friends & Family**

Talk to your friends and family. Find out who they use for their homeowner's insurance, what types of policies they have and if they have had good experiences with their providers. If you know anyone who has actually had to file a claim with their provider, talk to them and find out how the process went. Were the people they dealt with helpful?

Did they make every effort to process the claim and take care of their needs? If you do not know anyone who has had to file a claim, don't worry. There are other ways to find information like that (Internet, independent rating agencies, etc.) Just get whatever information is readily available to you and you can proceed from there. Remember that you do not have to limit yourself to looking at home insurance companies that people you know use. You can and should look at other providers as well. Just because a neighbor went with one company does not mean that is the right one for you.

**Tip: Home Insurance Comparison: Watch Out for Permits!**

While most homeowners recognize the importance of obtaining proper permits when having work performed, many first-time buyers may not fully appreciate the importance of verifying the quality of construction and proof that all permits and inspections were properly performed. For example, faulty installation of plumbing, electric or other systems can result in damage to the home which may void the warranty related to the device, prevent the future sale of the home and even restrict the amount of insurance coverage should a claim arise. Whether you are buying a brand new home or existing home, take the time to protect yourself. Verify permits. Make sure all work conforms to current building standards and had a permit. If you are unsure, be sure to specify this when obtaining a home insurance comparison quote. You don't want to find out later the work was illegally performed and will not be covered by insurance. Obtain an inspection. Even new homes need an inspection to help spot potential problems. Another excellent idea is to visit the building inspection office to obtain the complete history of permits, inspections and other visits to the home. Keep good records. Going forward it is a good idea to keep good records of all work performed including the company, license numbers, insurance and bond information.

**Tip: Looking At Insurance Provider Financial Stability**

There are several factors to consider when looking for insurance. The decision can't be made solely on the homeowner's insurance quotes you receive. While those are important, they are small pieces in a larger puzzle. The financial stability of the insurance company is paramount. If they are struggling financially, how can you be confident that they will be there for you in the event you need to file a claim? You don't want to have to worry about whether or not your homeowner's insurance company will be able to honor your policy if something happens. You want to know without a doubt that you are safe. So before you make your choice, look into the financial stability of companies you are considering. You can obtain this information easily through independent rating agencies. The last thing you want to get is an "I-O-U" when filing a claim with your insurance provider.

**Tip: Moving? Compare Home Owners Insurance Quotes Ahead of Time**

It's that time of the year when families across the nation pick up to relocate. Whether

you are moving across town or across the state, chances are your homeowners policy is likely to be impacted. While most moves within the same city are minimal, families relocating from one state to another are often caught by surprise at the difference in insurance premiums. Take time to compare home owners insurance quotes ahead of time to prevent unpleasant surprises and make sure you can obtain the right insurance for your needs. To provide a general idea of what you should expect to pay, first determine whether you will need flood insurance. Remember, most policies sell it separately for an average annual rate of roughly \$500 in addition to the regular premium. Next, determine if you reside in a high premium or low premium state. For example, residents of Idaho tend to pay the lowest home owner premiums at only \$457 per year, while states like Florida, Texas and Louisiana have some of the highest rates in the nation well in excess of \$1,100 to \$1,400 annually—exclusive of flood insurance premiums. Finally, if your home insurance premiums will be increasing, be sure to set aside additional funds each month to cover the extra expense. While some insurance companies allow quarterly or even monthly payment options, there is often an additional surcharge added.

## Category: Homeowners Insurance Claims Process Explained

Subcategory: Homeowners Insurance Claims Process Explained

### **Tip: Before You Buy Homeowners Insurance**

Before you buy homeowners insurance, it's a good idea to take a little time to plan and prepare yourself. Not only will it help keep everything in one place in order to easily compare quotes, but it also provides an easy-to-use system that will serve you for years to come. Make a list of the content of your home. It's a good idea to take photographs to store in an off-site location as well as make a copy for home use. Include sales receipts, warranty information or other important items in a file with the photographs. It will assist in the insurance claims process should a loss take place in the future. Make a list of all improvements to the home and property. Include the name and contact information of the contractors or repairpersons that performed the work, warranty information, receipts, permits and business-related information of the company including licensure, bonding and insurance information. Check the dates. Always leave plenty of additional time before the expiration of your current policy. Remember, some types of coverage, like flood insurance, don't go into effect for 30 days or more after a new policy is written, so plan ahead.

### **Tip: Claims After Natural Disaster**

If you have lived through a hurricane, earthquake or other disaster, you know that it can be a nerve-racking time. However, the best thing you can do is keep a level head and

assess the situation as soon as possible. Survey your home and see what damage there is that needs to be repaired. Once you know what needs to be fixed or replaced, take photos and document the extent of the damage. Make any temporary repairs necessary and keep receipts from any expenses incurred in the process. Provide your homeowner's insurance company with the photos, detailed explanations of the damage, and the repairs needed. Include the receipts from the temporary repairs made to be reimbursed for those as well. The sooner you notify your provider of the situation, the sooner they can take action to get your home back in top shape. Natural disasters like earthquakes affect large numbers of people, so the odds are good that you won't be the only one in your area filing a homeowner's insurance claim. So you want to try and get the ball rolling with your insurance company before they get swamped with other claims in your area.

### **Tip: How to File a Claim**

Homeowners insurance is one of those items you purchase hoping never to use. Should you need to file a claim, follow these simple steps: Call Your Agent. The very first step is to contact your agent as soon as possible. Time is of the essence when it comes to filing some claims, so begin as early as possible. Collect Important Information. Hopefully, you have already established a file containing all the contact information and copies of important data needed to substantiate the loss. If not, begin searching for receipts, photographs or any other information that can help show the condition of the property before the loss. Take Photographs. If you are able, take photographs of the damage. Be very careful not to disturb or further damage the property in any way before the adjuster arrives. Secure the Location. Depending upon the type of damage, it may be necessary to shut down the electric, turn off water or move furniture and non-damaged items to prevent further loss from taking place. Remember, safety comes first! Once the area is safe and secure ask your agent what other actions can be taken to reduce further damage from taking place without impeding the claim process. Keep Copies. Ask for copies of all repairs, notes and other information related to the claim to keep for your own records. Document phone calls and other correspondence to help in the event of a problem.

### **Tip: How You Get Your Claim Money**

So if there is damage done to your home and personal belongings, how do you get the money from your home insurance claim? Well, you may actually get more than one check. In most cases, an adjuster will assess the damage and then your provider will offer you a settlement. If you accept, what you will receive initially is more than likely going to be an advance on the overall settlement, not the entire amount you will receive. Don't worry, the rest is coming. That will be the next check as the claim is processed. If you had personal belongings damaged or lost in addition to the structure of your house, you will receive separate checks for the building and the possessions. You may also be entitled to receive a third check for any additional living expenses incurred as a result of

the damages and renovations being conducted. Make sure to keep receipts of hotel bills, clothing or any other items you may need to purchase during that time. Submit these to the insurance company promptly so you can be reimbursed quickly. If you miss something the first time around, like damage that was not initially notice by the adjuster, contact your insurance provider about filing for additional money to take care of those issues. Make sure to do this quickly, though. The longer you wait, the greater the chance of setbacks becomes.

**Tip: Pictures Are Worth 1,000 Words**

Saving and maintaining receipts and other documentation for insurance purposes is a smart practice. But there is one other step you should take to make sure all your bases are covered. Any time that you make renovations to your home or purchase valuables that will be insured, take pictures. These pictures will serve as a photographic documentation of the exact condition and nature of the remodeled portions of your houses and personal possessions. If your home is burglarized, these pictures can be used by law enforcement officials to identify any stolen property that may be recovered. Photographs can be a big help to police in the event a crime is committed and they can help your home insurance claim be processed faster. Keep these photographs stored with your receipts and other documentation, in either a safe deposit box or a fireproof box in your home. It is also a good idea to back up digital photos on disc or the hard drive of your computer as well.

**Tip: Public Adjusters**

Sometimes, in the cases of a dispute over a claim, people choose to use a public adjuster. This person has no affiliation with your insurance company. They will help to assess damages and losses suffered by you after an earthquake or other disaster, for example. Public adjusters will charge a fee, usually a percentage of the total settlement. The fees charged will vary from person to person, however the state government will usually regulate the fee they are allowed to charge victims of a natural disaster immediately following the event. If you choose to use a public adjuster during the claims process, do your homework. You don't want to just pick one out of the phone book or the first Web site you come across. Contact your state's Department of Insurance for a list of qualified public adjusters. An unqualified individual will only slow down the insurance claims process and cost you time and money.

## Category: Homeowners Insurance Costs

Subcategory: Homeowners Insurance Costs

**Tip: Adding a Pool to Your Home & Insurance**

Adding a swimming pool to your property can affect your homeowner's insurance costs for a few reasons. Obviously safety has to be taken into account. If neighbors, family and friends, children and others are potentially going to be using the pool, this will need to be factored into liability coverage. In-ground pools can also add to your property value. Damage done to the pool or surrounding area from an earthquake or other disaster could prove to be costly. Let your insurance provider know when you are planning to add a pool to your property so you can make sure that you are covered in case anything unfortunate happens during landscaping and installation, and that you have all the proper permits and are adhering to appropriate ordinances. If the addition of a pool is going to increase the replacement value of your home, you want that to be documented and have your policy updated with the correct information.

### **Tip: Condition of the Home Being Insured**

A lot goes into determining the cost of your homeowner's insurance plan. One major factor is the age and condition of the electrical and plumbing systems. Older pipes tend to be more susceptible to freezing in cold weather or cracking, developing mold and other problems. Older electrical systems are more likely to short out and/or pose a fire hazard. If your home has one or both of these issues, your policy is likely to be more expensive. In this case, it might be beneficial financially, as well as for safety reasons, to have these systems upgraded. You may have to pay a fair amount to do so now, but it should lower your homeowner's insurance costs in the long run because you will be less likely to file a claim related to one of these issues. If an insurance provider sees something that they expect to eventually lead to a future claim, they will either ask that you take care of that item beforehand or charge you more because they are anticipating having to deal with it down the road.

### **Tip: Costly K-9s**

Animals can also factor when insurance companies are determining your premiums. For example, having certain breeds of dogs that are known for being more aggressive could increase the cost of your policy. The reason for this is that insurers associate a higher risk for liability claims with such pets. Also, certain breeds of animals are considered a higher risk when it comes to biting people. If your pet happens to fall into that category, some companies may increase your rates. You may be able to convince a company not to raise your rates based on pets by providing documentation of some form of obedience training for the animal. Common dog breeds that might be subject to this raise include Pit bulls, Rottweilers and Dobermans. If you are planning to purchase or adopt a pet, you should check with your insurance company to see if your cost of homeowner's insurance will be affected.

### **Tip: Geography & Insurance Rates**

They say in real estate it's all about location, location, location. Well, homeowner

insurance costs are affected by geography as well. The area you live in may present specific risks that need to be addressed when it comes time to choose an insurance policy. On the west coast of the United States, for example, it is more likely that you would consider earthquake protection in your policy. Areas that are prone to seasonal flooding might nudge you into considering flood protection from your provider. Then there are the materials that your home was constructed with. Buildings that are more susceptible to structural damage from an earthquake, or perhaps more vulnerable to fire damage, will most likely cost more to insure. If you are building or looking to buy a new house, you might want to consider how the house is/was built, for your own safety as well as the cost of insuring the home.

### **Tip: How to Be Your Own Worst Enemy When Obtaining Homeowners Insurance Quotes**

Sometimes people are their own worst enemies when it comes to financial concerns, especially when obtaining homeowners insurance quotes. Avoid these common culprits likely to result in higher rates, cancellation and other expensive insurance woes: Lying. Plain and simple, it pays to tell the truth. Remember, the insurance quote is based on obtaining reliable information that will later be verified before putting the full policy into effect. Most new insurance underwriters will send out an agent to take a photo of the property prior to issuing full coverage, so don't elaborate or otherwise make claims that cannot be substantiated. Wrong Size and Other Bad Information. If you aren't sure about square footage, type of construction, age or other important features of the home it's a good idea to ask in advance or simply tell the agent you aren't sure and then provide your best estimate. Be sure they know it is an estimate so they have an opportunity to follow-up later. Life Changes. Newly married, a child that leaves home, a teen that has just started driving and even getting a new dog are just a few examples of the many life events that can dramatically influence the prices of your homeowners insurance quotes. The agent is not trying to pry but rather attempting to provide the best coverage for your specific needs.

### **Tip: Lessons from Louisiana Home Insurance**

When it comes to trying to navigate the challenging waters of insurance, there are many lessons to be learned from Louisiana home insurance experiences. Whether you live in flood prone areas, earthquakes or far from any known natural disasters, it's a good idea to implement these all-important lessons to keep your financial future and family safe from harm when disaster strikes. Have a Plan. Like the old adage, "failure to plan is akin to planning to fail," those that do the best have a plan of action before disaster strikes. Have copies of insurance policies, pictures and other information stored off-site and available if you need to leave in short notice. Provide for Living Expenses. If your home is impacted by a major disaster, you will still need a place to live while it is being repaired—and sometimes those repairs can take months. It's also likely you will be responsible for making mortgage payments on the home even when unable to live in it.

If you do not have adequate savings to supply your financial needs for at least three to six months then consider adding coverage that will assist with living expenses and/or mortgage payments until your home is finished.

**Tip: Permits, Building Codes & Insurance**

Construction and remodeling, no matter how big or small, is not always as simple as it may seem. You need to check with your local municipality to obtain the proper permits and make sure you and whoever is doing the actual work is aware of all the appropriate building codes and ordinances. These codes are meant to ensure the safety of those doing the work and people living in the home once the construction is finished. Certain renovations may also increase your property value, property taxes, and affect the price of homeowner's insurance. Don't worry - not all remodeling will raise your premiums. Any changes made to your home that increase safety and security may, in fact, reduce your premiums. Neglecting to do this before construction starts could lead to unpleasant complications. For one, liability coverage may not apply to injuries sustained during or after completion resulting in that specific section of your home. Later damages to anything renovated without the proper permits or adhering to the appropriate building codes could also be excluded from coverage.

## Category: How to Compare Homeowners Insurance Rates and Save

Subcategory: How to Compare Homeowners Insurance Rates and Save

**Tip: Help For High Risk Homeowners Insurance Rates**

There are many reasons a homeowner might encounter higher than average homeowner insurance rates; but fortunately, a little planning and preparation can prevent the prospect of cancellation or high rate increases. Learn how to find help for high-risk homeowners insurance rates by preventing the problem from occurring in the first place. Dog Bites. One of the most common causes for high insurance rates includes ownership of a violent dog or one with a history of complaints. Do yourself and your pet a favor by investing in a good fence, proper signage, shots and most importantly, obedience training. High Risk Hobbies & Sports. Do you own a gun? Have ceramic kilns in your basement? Provide a trampoline or pool to entertain the kids on hot summer afternoons? These are just a few of the possible reasons your homeowners insurance rates might run higher than average. Understand how your hobbies and other sports or activities are likely to impact insurance rates prior to making the final decision on bringing them into the home. Ask for Help. Always inform the insurance agent about potential high-risk situations, and then ask for specific information to help reduce the cost of premiums. For example, putting additional fences on the property or storing guns and other weapons in specialized storage devices may eliminate much of the risk

associated with ownership. Obtain official inspections that demonstrate you have complied with all suggestions, and then send proof to the insurance company. While it may not eliminate the excess risk, it often reduces premiums to an affordable level without sacrificing coverage or your lifestyle.

## Category: How to Save Money on Homeowners Insurance

Subcategory: How to Save Money on Homeowners Insurance

### **Tip: How to Beat the Rising Price of Homeowners Insurance**

If you are like most Americans, every little bit helps; learn how to beat the rising price of homeowners insurance with these free homeowners insurance quote tips designed to provide the coverage you need without the high cost. Calculate the cost savings of increasing the deductible. Every homeowners insurance policy has a deductible — the amount you are required to pay out of pocket — that must be met before the insurance provider pays the remaining balance of the claim. Typical deductibles range from \$250 to \$2,500 and generally speaking, the lower the deductible, the higher the cost of homeowners insurance. Find out how much money you can save by increasing the deductible of your homeowners insurance policy. Once you find out how much money you can save by increasing the deductible of your homeowners policy, set aside the savings into a bank account. For example, if you currently have a \$250 deductible but increase it to \$1,000 in order to reduce your homeowners policy by \$300 per year, then open a special savings account to put the \$300 savings into it. Do this each year and soon you will have more than enough to pay the additional \$700 deductible plus money left over. Make a little money! The extra deductible will more than pay for itself in just over two years, but why stop there? Keep putting the savings from your insurance premiums into a savings account or even interest-earning Treasury Bills until you can increase the deductible to \$2,000. That will lower the rate of homeowners insurance premiums even more, plus lower the chance of having to make a claim that could result in higher insurance premiums later.

### **Tip: How to Find the Best Home Insurance**

Home insurance can be complex and confusing so it should come as no surprise that most people just want to get it over with while paying the least amount possible. Unfortunately, when the time comes to file a claim they are surprised to learn they don't have the coverage needed to repair, replace or protect their financial interests. The first step in learning how to find the best home insurance is to understand the best policy for your specific needs. Begin by using the following list to help you find the best home insurance without scrimping on coverage: Make a list of special insurance needs. For example, do you live near a flood prone area? Hurricanes? Earthquakes? Each of these may require additional riders or policies to cover losses due to natural disasters. Make a

list of expensive insurance items. Common items that may require additional coverage include expensive jewelry, business items, family heirlooms or other hard to replace items. Ask for quotes for other insurance. It's often possible to save money by insuring your home, automobile, umbrella liability and other policies with the same provider. Ask about discounts for multiple policies.

### **Tip: Keep Up With Regular Maintenance**

Normal wear and tear around the house is not covered by homeowner's insurance policies. If you have a leaky pipe that you put off fixing for months and then end up with severe water damage, you're out of luck. This is considered to be normal maintenance. Neglecting things until they are in disrepair and need to be replaced will not work, because under your insurance plan you are expected to keep up with regular maintenance. So the better shape you keep your home in the better off you will be. Any claims that you file should be legitimate. You can run into several problems if you file an excessive number of complaints without merit that are rejected. If you want to save on homeowners insurance, a string of bad claims is not going to help. Also, keep in mind what your deductible is and the cost of repairs/replacement. In some cases, it might be cheaper to pay out of pocket. And the more you stay on top of regular house maintenance the less often you should have to use your insurance.

### **Tip: Multiple Policy Discounts**

Most insurance companies do not limit themselves to providing one type of coverage. Many will offer life insurance, auto, dental and health as well as affordable homeowner's insurance. Rather than spreading your coverage out over several companies, find out what you would have to pay if you consolidated your insurance. You should be able to get a significant discount if you have multiple accounts with one company, like auto, life and home insurance. Take a look at [QuoteScout.com](http://QuoteScout.com) to see the benefits of using one company for your insurance needs. Some cases might prove worth it, some might not. But at least you'll know for sure rather than continuing to pay more than necessary when you could have avoided it. Whenever you update your insurance policy on your home, ask them what their rates are like for other things and if there is a financial benefit to switching them over to one company.

### **Tip: Organization Discounts**

Organize! Insurance companies often give discounts on homeowner's insurance to members of certain organizations. If you are a member of any groups like veterans organizations, non-profits, lodges, etc., you might be eligible for a discount. It never hurts to ask. There are also employers and professional organizations that offer insurance through a particular company as well. Ask your boss and see if that will lead to the cheapest homeowner's insurance choice with the best protection. Retirees are also likely to get an additional discount. This is because they are considered to be home

more often than someone working 40 hours a week. So it may be easier for them to see and prevent things like fire and smoke damage before they are severe enough to warrant filing a claim. With some insurance companies the discount could be as high as 10 percent. But even a two percent discount should not be turned down. Every penny counts.

**Tip: Rechecking Insured Valuables**

At least once a year compare the value of you insured possessions/valuables and your home against the limits on your homeowner's insurance policy. Make sure that the limits on your plan are not drastically higher than the replacement value of your property. When you check this each year, adjust the policy accordingly if necessary. That way you are not paying a higher monthly premium for a policy that provides more coverage than you actually need. Not checking your possessions against your policy limits is one major reason why people pay more than they should have to for insurance every year. It is not the job of the insurance company to do this for you, and they won't. It is up to you to keep an eye out for ways to save yourself a buck or two. Over the course of however long you own your home, that extra money each month can add up to a sizeable amount. Suddenly you will have a much more affordable homeowner's insurance policy.

**Tip: Security Systems Lower Insurance Premiums**

If you are hunting for affordable homeowner's insurance, installing an alarm system is a great place to start. For one thing, it makes your home safer and less vulnerable to break-ins and theft. When your insurance company sees that you use an alarm to protect your home, the perceived likelihood that your home may be burglarized is reduced. The less vulnerable your home appears to be, the less you will most likely have to pay for your insurance policy. For the best home insurance discounts related to security, get an alarm system that is monitored by a security company 24/7. The more visible the system is to outsiders, the better. Lawn signs, flood lights and window decals stating your home is protected by an alarm all help to deter break-ins. Insurance companies usually like this, and you'll be treated to lower premiums than you would without this system.

## Category: Shopping for Homeowners Insurance

Subcategory: Shopping for Homeowners Insurance

**Tip: Doing Your Homework**

If you are investing in the stock market you don't just throw money at a company and hope it comes back to you with a profit, right? Well think of buying homeowner's insurance in the same way. You want to do your research, not just about prospective

insurance providers, but about industry issues, too. This is where the Insurance Information Institute can be a big help. Here you will find, among other things, listings for companies that conduct research and provide ratings and analyses for a myriad of insurance providers. You can find out how financially stable they are, what their track record is when it comes to customer service, satisfaction and complaints, and much more. You will also be able to track news stories, press releases and the latest studies and surveys relating to the insurance industry. All this will help you be better prepared to analyze free insurance quotes and be able to tell exactly what benefits each offer will provide you with. Knowledge is power, right?

### **Tip: State-By-State Insurance Info**

Homeowner's insurance is regulated by state governments, so the issues facing one person may be different than those facing someone in another state. This is one reason why the Insurance Information Institute has added a state-by-state selection of PDF files to its website at [iii.org](http://iii.org), that provide many of the facts and figures related to insurance that you need to know. Do you know what a hard market is? In the insurance industry, a hard market is considered a seller's market, meaning that insurance is both expensive and in short supply. This can happen for any number of reasons. Since not every company is licensed to provide insurance in every state, your area will have a certain number of options to choose from. The fewer options there are could lead to a hard market because an insurer might not offer the policy you want or they might be limiting the number of plans they offer in your area. So do you live in a hard market? Are you about to move into one? Once you know what is going on in your market you can get started shopping for homeowner's insurance.

### **Tip: Territorial Ratings & Insurance**

Territorial rating is a classification used by insurance companies to assess risk based on geographical location. For example, if you live in an urban environment with high crime rates, the provider might assume that you are at higher risk to have your property damaged or stolen. If you live in an area that is known for having a significant number of earthquakes each year, your territorial rating might be worse than others. Territorial ratings are generally better in rural areas where there is a smaller perceived threat of accident, theft or vandalism. So an urban area with a high crime rate will most likely bring with it higher insurance rates than a rural area with low crime that does not have a history of being hit by natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes. When you start shopping for homeowner's insurance, ask prospective providers what they say your territorial rating is and how they came to that conclusion. If you have any questions about their assessment, contact your state's Department of Insurance.

### **Tip: The High Cost of Cheap Homeowners Insurance**

Most people consider buying insurance little more than a necessary evil, but there is

often a high cost associated with the purchase of cheap homeowners insurance. Learn how to save money while still getting the right coverage by avoiding these common pitfalls: Fly-by-Night Companies. Work with a reputable insurance provider with a good rating of at least a B or above. Avoid companies with a rating below B, but don't assume a more recognized name is automatically better. Many small insurance companies have great financials, so take the time to compare by contacting the insurance rating firms below: A.M. Best Company (908) 439-2200 Fitch Inc. (800) 753-4824 Moody's Investor Service (212) 553-0377 Standard & Poor's (212) 438-2000. Inadequate Assistance. While every insurance company provides some level of assistance, service can be inconsistent or simply inconvenient when working with some low-cost providers. Check the satisfaction rating of the company prior to making a final decision to determine if they provide adequate assistance and timely response in the event of a claim. Inability to Provide Higher Risk Coverage. Many homeowners enjoy the convenience of having all policies in one place, which isn't always possible with some providers. If you have high-risk properties, rental real estate or other hard-to-cover needs, be sure to ask in advance whether or not they are able and willing to write different types of policies.

## Category: Types of Homeowners Insurance Coverage Policies

Subcategory: Types of Homeowners Insurance Coverage Policies

### **Tip: Extended & Guaranteed Replacement Cost Coverage**

If your home needs to be completely rebuilt after a natural disaster, the last thing you want to hear is that your insurance won't cover the full cost. So how can you avoid this? Well, there are two options available to people who want to sidestep this problem: extended and guaranteed replacement cost coverage. These types of homeowners insurance policies account for inflation, changes in property values, and cost of construction materials and labor at the time of rebuilding. Extended replacement cost coverage will pay up to a preset amount above the policy limit to rebuild a damaged or destroyed home. Usually it is not more than 120 to 125 percent. Guaranteed replacement cost coverage has no limits, so you will not be held to a specific preset figure. These policies are primarily beneficial to victims of major natural disasters like earthquakes or hurricanes because the sudden increase in labor and materials can drive prices up.

### **Tip: Liability Coverage**

Liability insurance, part of your home insurance coverage, insures you for any bodily injuries or property damages another person may suffer while on your property. This is a type of coverage that you usually have to add to a basic homeowners insurance policy that typically just covers your own home and property. People who often have guests

over, have their children's friends in the house often or are spending large amounts of time remodeling their home are likely to purchase liability coverage. If someone injures themselves while on your property and your deductible is considerably less than their medical expenses, filing a claim would probably be a good idea. If, on the other hand, your deductible is \$1,000 and the injury is merely a sprained ankle that required an emergency room visit, some pain medication and a co-pay, it would probably just be easier to pay for these out of pocket.

### **Tip: Taxes & Types of Homeowners Insurance**

Taxes and homeowners insurance could very well be among the most dreaded topics encountered by most homeowners, and are often of special concern for new homeowners. This year, thanks to generous tax incentives designed to help new buyers become first-time homeowners, there is more reason than ever to understand how taxes and insurance will impact the bottom line. Fortunately, it is possible to reduce the sting associated with each simply by learning how the types of homeowners insurance are likely to impact your annual taxes. Mortgage payments are deductible, but fire and/or homeowners premiums are not if the home is your primary residence. Mortgage insurance premiums are deductible, but title insurance and mortgage payment protection insurance is not. Home insurance premiums for investment properties are deductible, but on a pro-rated basis depending upon the ratio of personal versus rental and/or other investment usage. Special situations, such as home office, second home, room rental or other unusual situations may also allow for partial deductions of homeowners insurance premiums based upon the percentage of use.

## **Category: Understanding the Basics of Homeowners Insurance**

Subcategory: Understanding the Basics of Homeowners Insurance

### **Tip: Decoding Home Insurance Quotes**

The first step to decoding home insurance quotes is to understand the basics about policy types. It's easy with these standard classifications: HO-1: This is a basic policy that provides protection for fire, lightning, hail, windstorm, explosion, riot, damage to your home from a vehicle or aircraft, smoke, vandalism, theft or volcano. The important consideration when buying HO-1 insurance is to fully understand what is not covered so you aren't caught unprepared in the event of a loss. HO-2: The HO-2 policy provides protection for everything listed in HO-1 plus falling objects, damage due to the weight of ice, accidental flooding due to broken pipes or other items in the home, freezing of household systems or appliances, damage due to artificial current and other perils excluding flood, earthquakes, war, and others. HO-3: A comprehensive policy, this will cover everything except those items specifically mentioned in the policy itself. It is a

common choice for the homeowner desiring full protection. HO-4: Also known as renters insurance, this policy only covers possessions. It's a good extension policy for those with children away at college. HO-6: Comparable to the HO-2 policy, this is designed with the unique needs of condo owners. HO-8: An alternative policy designed specifically for those with older homes. Replacement value may not be available on an HO-8 policy, but the premiums tend to be more affordable.

### **Tip: Get Valuables Professionally Appraised**

Understanding homeowner's insurance is important for your own protection. Many policies will include insurance for personal possessions in your home, but do you know exactly what is covered? It is a good idea to find out. Make sure you know everything that is covered under your policy. You also want to have valuables like jewelry appraised and documented by a professional and then give that information to your insurance provider promptly. This way you are not struggling to prove the value of an item if you have to file a claim later on. Here are a couple things you should double check to make sure you are insured for: Jewelry Artwork such as paintings, sculptures, etc. Expensive electronic equipment like computers, home media devices, etc. If you find that currently under your homeowners insurance plan some of these items are not covered, you should be able to add endorsements to your policy that will add them to your coverage.

### **Tip: Homeowners Insurance or Extended Product Warranty?**

Many people turn down extended warranty plans on purchases because they have homeowner's insurance and believe that the item will be covered under that. Often times it may be, but not always. That is why it is important to know exactly what type of coverage you have for certain possessions and what is being offered in an extended warranty at the time of purchase. If the manufacturer or retailer is offering technical support as well as replacement or repairs, it may be worth it. You have to judge for yourself if there is a likelihood that you will need technical support with the product. You also should consider the homeowner's insurance deductible on your plan versus the cost of an extended warranty or service plan. In some cases your typical homeowner's insurance will provide you with the coverage you need. In other instances it might be better to get the added protection of a product service plan.

### **Tip: The Importance of Accuracy & Honesty in Your Claims**

Honesty is the best policy, right? So when it comes time to file any paperwork regarding homeowner's insurance, be truthful and as accurate as possible. It's like the Golden Rule of homeowner's insurance basics. If you provide false information when filing a claim it can be grounds for your provider to cancel your policy. If you provide false information when purchasing homeowner's insurance and the company discovers this at a later date, it can also be grounds for terminating your coverage. Needless to say,

these are situations that no one wants to have to deal with. They can cause you much difficulty financially and make it difficult to get insurance in the future. If a contractor gives you a price quote, don't tell your insurance company it is more than the figure quoted. Don't provide false documents to try and get a few extra bucks. And don't try and "pad the bill" and misrepresent the value of damaged or lost property as more than it actually is.

**Tip: What To Do If Your Policy Will Not Be Renewed**

Companies have the right to choose not to renew your insurance policy once it expires. Depending on your state, they must notify you within a certain time period before the current policy ends to let you know why. Sometimes a company simply chooses to reduce the number of policies they provide in given area. Other times it could be due to the company discontinuing a particular type of insurance policy. If this happens to you, don't waste time. Once you know your current coverage will not be renewed, start getting home insurance quotes from other companies. You want to make sure that you have a new plan in place before the existing one expires so there is not time in between during which you are not covered. You can start by using a reliable site like [QuoteScout.com](http://QuoteScout.com) to get a wide variety of homeowner's insurance quotes online. The faster you act the better your chances of finding a new policy in time are. You don't want to rush at the last minute and then settle for a less-than-ideal policy because you were going to be without insurance.