THE PRACTICE MORTGAGE

Test-drive the payment before you sign for it.

SIX STEPS · 3-6 MONTHS · NO CREDIT PULL · QUIT ANYTIME

THE IDEA

PAY LIKE A HOMEOWNER BEFORE YOU ARE ONE.

Nobody rehearses the biggest bill of their life. Most buyers guess what they can afford, sign for thirty years, and find out in real time.

This guide replaces the guess with a drill. For the next few months you'll make a mortgage-sized payment every month — except the money lands in **your own account** instead of a lender's.

Run the drill and you walk away with two things:

01 — PROOF
The payment you can actually carry — watched, not hoped.

02 — A HEAD START
Every practice dollar is already down payment and closing costs.

And if the number turns out too big? You learned it **for free**, months before it could cost you anything.

You need a checking account, one savings account (Step 3), and ten minutes a month. No credit pull. No paperwork. Quit anytime.

STEP 01 — SET YOUR TARGET

DIVIDE YOUR GROSS INCOME BY THREE.

Start with your **gross monthly income** — the paycheck number before taxes, not what lands in checking. Divide it by three and round to something clean. That's your target housing payment for this exercise.

$9,000 GROSS / 3

= $3,000 TARGET

Why a third? It's near the outer edge of what most loan programs allow for the housing piece. Your **real** ceiling depends on your debts, the property taxes, the insurance — that's underwriting's job, and we'll get there on the last page. For practice, a third is the right stress test.

PAID HOURLY, COMMISSION, OR SELF-EMPLOYED? AVERAGE YOUR LAST 3 MONTHS.

STEP 02 — FIND THE GAP

TARGET MINUS RENT = PRACTICE PAYMENT.

Subtract what you pay in rent today. What's left is the gap — the part of a mortgage payment your current life hasn't felt yet. That gap is your **practice payment**.

$3,000 TARGET − $2,200 RENT
= $800 PRACTICE PMT

Rent already at or above your target? Then you've been stress-testing a mortgage every month and calling it rent. Set a small practice payment anyway — $150 to $200, just to build the transfer habit — and skip ahead to the last page. You're closer than you think.

STEP 03 — OPEN THE FUND

ONE HIGH-YIELD ACCOUNT. DIFFERENT BANK.

03

Open a **high-yield savings account** and name it DOWN PAYMENT. Not your regular savings — high-yield accounts pay roughly ten times the average savings rate for doing exactly nothing different. Opening one takes about ten minutes online.

Put it at a **different bank** than your checking. That's not a detail, it's the mechanism: money you don't see next to your balance is money you don't spend. Don't link the debit card. Don't set up Face ID on the app. Friction is the feature.

RULES OF THE FUND

01 Money goes in on schedule.

02 Money comes out for one reason: keys.

STEP 04 — AUTOMATE IT

SET THE TRANSFER. THEN DON'T TOUCH IT.

Schedule an automatic transfer of your practice payment — first of the month, or split across paychecks if that matches how you're paid. Then treat the date like it's due, **because the real one will be**.

A mortgage doesn't care that December got expensive or that the car needed tires. That's exactly the muscle this builds. Consistency is the thing being tested here — the dollars are just the proof.

$800 / MO

CHECKING >> DOWN PAYMENT FUND

SET IT FOR THE DAY AFTER PAYDAY. YOU CAN'T MISS MONEY THAT NEVER SAT STILL.

STEP 05 — THE MONTH-END CHECK

ONE QUESTION AT THE END OF THE MONTH.

Open your checking account and answer honestly: **did everything else still clear?**

RENT · CAR · GROCERIES · CARDS · AN ACTUAL LIFE

If yes — the payment is proven. You're not hoping you can afford it anymore. You watched yourself do it.

If no — you just found your real ceiling, and it cost you nothing. Most people find theirs after closing, and it costs them the house. Lower the number and run the month again.

That's not failing the test. That's the test working.

STEP 06 — ADJUST AND REPEAT

TUNE THE NUMBER UNTIL IT'S BORING.

06

Money left over? Raise the practice payment. Came up short? Lower it. Move in **$100 steps** and give every new number a full month before you judge it.

EVERY $100/MO = ~$15,000 OF PRICE

AT TODAY'S RATES — THIS MOVES. I'LL GIVE YOU THE LIVE NUMBER.

That's why the tuning matters: finding an extra $200 a month in this drill is roughly a **$30,000 bigger budget** when it's real.

Run the loop for three to six months. You're done when the transfer stops feeling like an event — when it's just another bill that clears. Boring is the goal. **Boring means ready.**

THE TRACKER

TWELVE MONTHS.
YOU WON'T NEED ALL OF THEM.

MO	PRACTICE PMT	FUND BALANCE	COMFORTABLE?
01			
02			
03			
04			
05			
06			
07			
08			
09			
10			
11			
12			

THREE COMFORTABLE MONTHS IN A ROW? TURN THE PAGE.

THE LAST STEP

WHEN THE NUMBER IS BORING, MAKE IT OFFICIAL.

You now know something most buyers never learn until it's too late: the payment you've **proven**, not the payment you hope. Here's how to cash that in.

Most pre-approval letters are a quick credit pull and a template. Listing agents know it, which is why those letters lose in multiple-offer situations. I do it differently — before you write a single offer, I **underwrite your full file**: income, assets, credit, documented and signed off. The number you practiced becomes a number a seller can trust.

Bring me your tracker. We'll turn your practice payment into a real price range, on real programs, at a real rate — in English o en español.

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