

I'll take that one

One night after dinner I asked my son, "Do you want cake or a marshmallow treat for dessert?" With just two choices, his response was almost immediate. I can make a very fast decision when it comes to choosing what I will wear on any particular day, because there are a very limited number of things that are clean and ironed.

When it comes to things like purchasing a new car, a computer, new flooring for the house, a cell phone, the perfect paint color for the bedroom or what kind of light bulb will make me look youngest, the choices get harder and I have to do a little research. I start with all the options, then toss out those that don't suit my needs, then toss out the ones that don't suit my budget, then toss out those that don't suit my taste. That usually leaves me with just a couple of options, from which I can now choose fairly quickly.

Have you ever heard a kid say, "There's NOTHING on TV!," even though they have 150 cable channels from which to choose? When the

whining starts at home, my husband and I have threatened our boys with a weekend of "Mom and Dad' Childhood TV," when there were three channels, two of which came in clearly. Limited choices mean easier choices.

Choosing a house is a completely different ballgame. There are so many styles, sizes, ages, areas, prices and amenities, it can become overwhelming and, in fact, paralyzing. According to the Knoxville Area Association of Realtors Web site, 7,371 residential properties in the coverage area were available for sale in the months of April, May and June of this year, not to mention the 764 condos available.

With the Internet at our fingertips, homebuyers are shopping online for property. There are multiple photos and detailed descriptions of the homes that are available. Through the technology of online databases available to the public, you can enter certain criteria . . . three bedrooms,



CLAUDIA STALLINGS
Homework

two baths, located in Timbuktu . . . and your choices come up instantly. You can look at homes for sale in magazines, in the newspaper and in the neighborhood. Lots of choices. Maybe too many choices.

So how do you find that needle in the haystack? This is where the expertise of your Realtor comes into

play. Agents have access to the Multiple Listing Service database. Through a search process, we can target properties precisely. Do you like a certain subdivision or even a certain street? How about houses with level yards, vinyl siding or fireplaces? Do you want a ranch-style house, a two-story or a split foyer? Do you want a house that is less than 5 years old or more than 50 years old? Do you want lakefront property or is lakeview OK? Did you know that Knoxville alone is divided into something like 24 more specific areas?

Tell your Realtor what you want, and the weeding out of properties that don't suit your needs, budget or

tastes begins immediately. Lose the baggage of all those extra choices, and you will probably be in a better position to find exactly what you are looking for in less time and with fewer headaches.

Agents also have databases in their brains from all the homes they tour with their companies and with other clients. If we know what you want and we have seen it personally or come across it while conducting other business, a match may be just a conversation away.

Choosing a home is hard enough. Make the process of finding a home easier by calling your Realtor before you begin.

Claudia Stallings is a real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Wallace & Wallace REALTORS®. She is a seniors real estate specialist and has 15 years of experience in advertising, marketing and promotion. She is a member of the Knoxville Area Association of REALTORS®, the Tennessee Association of REALTORS® and the National Association of REALTORS®. She can be contacted at 865-966-1111, via e-mail at LetMeDoYourHOMEWork@charter.net or on the Web at www.LetMeDoYourHOMEWork.com.