



A clear, impartial guide to

# Property auctions



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# Introduction

Property auctions have become increasingly popular with both buyers and sellers – whether they're owners, occupiers, developers or investors.

## About RICS

RICS is the largest organisation for professionals working in property, land and construction worldwide.

**If you're thinking of buying or selling a property at auction, it may be in your interests to make sure the auctioneer is an RICS member.**

This guide aims to tell you more about the auction process from both a buyer and seller's point of view, and what you can expect.

If you're selling a property at auction, you may want to use an auctioneer who is an RICS member. If you're looking to buy a property at auction, an RICS member can ensure the investment you make is a sound one.

Using the services of RICS members offers real peace of mind because:

- they give you clear, impartial and expert advice
- they have strict rules of conduct to protect you – including appropriate insurance
- RICS members have to update their skills and knowledge throughout their careers, so you can rely on their expertise
- you are further protected by their formal complaints service and access to independent redress, for example through an Ombudsman scheme.

# Buying at auction

## Advantages of buying at auction

Buying at auction has become a more popular method of purchase in recent years. The main advantages are:

- certainty, control and transparency – as a buyer, you are in control, deciding when to bid and how high you wish to go. A purchaser is able to buy the property at a price that was achieved competitively against other bidders in a transparent process, and if your bid is successful, then the property is yours on completion. The seller cannot withdraw

- it is possible to buy properties quickly. If you are well organised, properly advised and have the requisite financial resources, you can exchange contracts in a matter of days. If the auctioneer is following RICS Common Auction Conditions, completion will be 20 working days after the auction
- you may find properties are on offer with attractive low guide prices, although the eventual sale price will be determined by the level of competition in the room.

## Before the auction

As a potential buyer, your first step is to get a copy of the catalogue from the auctioneer. This contains the 'lots' (properties) to be auctioned. You may want to view the property you plan to bid on before auction.

Always deal with the auctioneer direct – this way you can be sure you have the most accurate and up-to-date information. If you're viewing online, make sure you're looking at the auctioneer's official website, not one of the many listing sites that have no connection with them.

Look through the following general information:

- the Important Notice to Bidders
- the Memorandum of Sale
- the general conditions of sale (many auctioneers already use RICS Common Auction Conditions, which you can download free from our website at [www.rics.org/cac](http://www.rics.org/cac)).

Try to get hold of the specific information relating to the lot (or lots) you're thinking of buying. From the seller's solicitor you need:

- the legal pack, which contains documents such as the title information, searches and leasehold documents
- any special conditions of sale.



From the auctioneer you need:

- the guide price, which can change throughout the marketing period. It's worth checking what the auctioneer defines as the guide price too – for instance, they may call it 'the seller's minimum price expectation'
- any addendum, which you can get before or at the auction – this tells you about any additions or amendments to the catalogue that have come up and might affect the sale of the property
- confirmation of all of the auctioneer's fees ahead of the auction.

It's worth keeping in regular contact with the auctioneer so you know about any additions or amendments to the catalogue that have come up and might affect the sale of the property.

Before you decide whether or not you should bid, make sure the information you've been given about the property is correct – it's worth getting professional advice and both a valuation and an appropriate survey before you buy [see the free RICS guide Home surveys for further information, available at [www.rics.org/homesurveys](http://www.rics.org/homesurveys)].

Finally, you need to arrange finance – both for the exchange (normally a 10% deposit) and completion. If the auctioneer is following RICS Common Auction Conditions, completion will be 20 working days after the auction.

Once you've decided to bid, tell the auctioneer you're interested in the property and keep in regular contact.

Next, you need to find out what the auctioneer's procedures are for the following:

- proxy, internet or telephone bidding (if you or your solicitor or agent can't attend the auction)
- signing the Memorandum of Sale, and responsibility for insurance on the property from and including the auction day. Generally, insurance on the property is up to the buyer as soon as the hammer falls
- paying the deposit
- VAT – the auctioneer will ask the seller whether or not the sale is subject to VAT. If so, you need to know the impact of VAT on the deposit and completion amounts
- checking your ID
- pre-registration.

## The immediate run-up to the auction

On the morning of the auction (or last thing on the day prior to the auction) it is worth calling the auctioneers and checking that the property you wish to bid for has not been withdrawn or already sold. This may save an unnecessary journey and related travel cost.



## Auction day

Make sure you arrive at the auction in time to check the addendum for any changes relating to the lot you want. Also, listen out for any announcements about the lot in the auctioneer's opening remarks.

## When the lot is sold

Before the hammer goes down, the auctioneer points to the highest bidder and states the final amount bid. Once the hammer falls, there is a binding contract, which is subject to the conditions of sale.

If you're the buyer, a member of the auction team will then approach you to get the information they need to complete the Memorandum of Sale and other relevant documentation. They'll also ask you to pay the deposit and supply your ID.

## When the lot is unsold

If a lot doesn't reach its reserve price, the auctioneer says it hasn't been sold and doesn't bring down the hammer.

If this happens with your prospective lot, make sure you leave your contact details with the auction team so you can find out about any post-auction sale.

If you are still unclear about anything then contact the auctioneers who should be able to provide you with further information.

# Selling at auction

## The advantages of selling at auction are:

- certainty – properties are not sold ‘subject to contract’ in the same way as through a traditional estate agency sale method. The successful bidder is legally obliged to complete the sale once the gavel falls
- good marketing exposure – many auctioneers advertise in national, local and trade press
- speed – sale is relatively quick and completion usually takes place 20 working days after the auction if the auctioneer is using RICS Common Auction Conditions, which you can download from our website at [www.rics.org/cac](http://www.rics.org/cac)

## Before the auction

If you want to sell a property at auction, first ask the auctioneer’s advice about its saleability, and what they would recommend as the guide and reserve prices.

Once you’ve checked the date and venue of the proposed auction, ask the auctioneer for details of the terms of appointment. You need to agree these before the auctioneer does anything.

Auctioneers have to follow a number of statutory regulations including the Estate Agents Act 1979. RICS members must also follow the RICS Rules of Conduct.

The terms of appointment will include:

- their commission if the property sells at auction, or if it’s withdrawn or sold before the auction, or sold after the auction
- any extra charges and whether you’re liable for them.

The terms of appointment will also include the auctioneer’s right to:

- end or change the appointment
- instruct your solicitor to prepare the legal pack and special conditions of sale, and to attend the auction
- act on your behalf in the auction room, including signing the Memorandum of Sale
- manage things in the auction room, including the bidding increments
- sell the property at the reserve price or above.

You also have to agree procedures for the following with the auctioneer:

- amendments to the reserve and guide price
- putting up sale boards at the property
- exclusive advertising, including cost
- inspections by potential buyers
- proxy, internet and telephone bidding
- identifying the successful bidder, getting the deposit cheque and signing the Memorandum of Sale
- dealing with any unsold lots.

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The terms of appointment will include a warranty that the information you've supplied, or has been supplied on your behalf, is accurate. You also need to be aware of any disclaimers.

In most cases, the auctioneer will be your sole agent. However, if you want to take on an associate auctioneer, they'll need to agree their respective responsibilities, duties and fees with the auctioneer.

Both you and your solicitor need to see the auctioneer's general conditions of sale. These are often RICS Common Auction Conditions, see [www.rics.org/cac](http://www.rics.org/cac)

Anti-money laundering regulations mean the auctioneer has to carry out money laundering checks, including proof of identity and address, as soon as they can.

## Auction particulars

The next step is preparing the auction particulars. These may form part of your auction contract, and include any plans or photos of the property, which must be as up-to-date as possible. The particulars must be factual and accurate, complying with the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991.

You need to liaise with your solicitor to make sure you've revealed anything that could affect the sale of the property to the auctioneer – for instance public health notices, local land charges, major arrears of rent or service charge, or disputes.

While the auction properties are being advertised, the auctioneer should tell you about the level of interest in your property and let you know if you get any prior offers, unless their terms of appointment state otherwise.

## Auction day

### If the lot is sold

Even though you'll probably be at the auction, when the hammer comes down it signifies a binding contract, and it's the auctioneer or clerk who signs and exchanges the Memorandum of Sale with the buyer and collects the deposit.

If the auctioneer is using the RICS Common Auction Conditions, completion will be 20 working days after the auction.

### If the lot is unsold

If the lot doesn't reach your reserve price, you need to know what the auctioneer's procedure is for dealing with unsold lots.



## Useful links

Here are some useful contact numbers and website addresses:

RICS

[www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)

Essential Information Group

[www.eigroup.co.uk](http://www.eigroup.co.uk)

Focus

[www.focusnet.co.uk](http://www.focusnet.co.uk)

Investment Property Databank

[www.ipd.com](http://www.ipd.com)

Property Mall

[www.propertymall.com](http://www.propertymall.com)

Which?

[www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk)

HM Revenue & Customs

[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

Land Registry

[www.landregistry.gov.uk](http://www.landregistry.gov.uk)

Council of Mortgage Lenders

[www.cml.org.uk](http://www.cml.org.uk)

Law Society

[www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)

The Law Society of Scotland

[www.lawscot.org.uk](http://www.lawscot.org.uk)

Registers of Scotland

[www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk)



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# Free RICS guides

RICS has a range of free guides available for the property issues listed here.

## **Development issues**

Compulsory purchase  
Home extensions

## **Home hazards**

Dilapidations  
Flooding  
Japanese knotweed  
Subsidence

## **Neighbour issues**

Boundary disputes  
Party walls  
Right to light

## **Residential**

Buying a home  
Buying and selling art and antiques at auction  
Home surveys  
Letting a property  
Property auctions  
Renting a property  
Selling a home

## Further information

We hope this guide is useful to you. If you'd like to know more about property auctions, or how RICS can help, please contact us.

### Visit our website

[rics.org/consumerguides](https://www.rics.org/consumerguides)

alternatively email

[contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org) or call the RICS Contact Centre **02476 868 555**

### Consumer helplines

RICS offers telephone helplines giving you 30 minutes of free advice on:

- Boundary disputes
- Party walls
- Compulsory purchase.

Just call **02476 868 555** and you will be put in touch with an RICS member local to you, willing to provide a free 30 minute initial consultation. Lines are open

**0830 –1730 [GMT], Monday to Friday.**

## Find a Surveyor

Contact us if you want to find independent, impartial advice from a qualified professional with good local knowledge.

Look out for firms that are 'Regulated by RICS'. Estate agents and surveying firms that are regulated by RICS are easy to spot as they use 'Regulated by RICS' on their stationery and promotional material.

To find an RICS firm in your area visit

[www.ricsfirms.com](https://www.ricsfirms.com)

alternatively email

[contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org) or call the RICS Contact Centre **02476 868 555**



## Advancing standards in land, property and construction.

RICS is the **world's leading qualification** when it comes to professional standards in land, property and construction.

In a world where more and more people, governments, banks and commercial organisations demand greater certainty of **professional standards and ethics**, attaining RICS status is the recognised **mark of property professionalism**.

Over **100 000 property professionals** working in the major established and emerging economies of the world have already recognised the importance of securing RICS status by becoming members.

RICS is an **independent** professional body originally established in the UK by Royal Charter. Since 1868, RICS has been committed to setting and upholding the **highest standards of excellence and integrity** – providing **impartial, authoritative advice** on key issues affecting businesses and society.

RICS is a **regulator** of both its individual members and firms enabling it to **maintain the highest standards** and providing the basis for **unparalleled client confidence** in the sector.

RICS has a worldwide network. For further information simply contact the relevant RICS office or our Contact Centre.

### RICS HQ

Parliament Square, London SW1P 3AD  
United Kingdom

### Worldwide media enquiries:

e [pressoffice@rics.org](mailto:pressoffice@rics.org)

### Contact Centre:

e [contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)  
t +44 [0]24 7686 8555  
f +44 [0]20 7334 3811

### United Kingdom

Parliament Square  
London SW1P 3AD  
United Kingdom  
t +44 [0]24 7686 8555  
f +44 [0]20 7334 3811  
[contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)

### Europe

(excluding United Kingdom and Ireland)  
Rue Ducale 67  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
t +32 2 733 10 19  
f +32 2 742 97 48  
[rics europe@rics.org](mailto:rics europe@rics.org)

### Asia

Room 2203  
Hopewell Centre  
183 Queen's Road East  
Wanchai  
Hong Kong  
t +852 2537 7117  
f +852 2537 2756  
[ricsasia@rics.org](mailto:ricsasia@rics.org)

### Americas

One Grand Central Place  
60 East 42nd Street  
Suite 2810  
New York 10165 – 2811  
USA  
t +1 212 847 7400  
f +1 212 847 7401  
[ricsamericas@rics.org](mailto:ricsamericas@rics.org)

### South America

Rua Maranhão,  
584 – cj 104  
São Paulo – SP  
Brasil  
t +55 11 3562 9989  
f +55 11 3562 9999  
[ricsbrasil@rics.org](mailto:ricsbrasil@rics.org)

### Africa

P0 Box 3400  
Witkoppen 2068  
South Africa  
t +27 11 467 2857  
f +27 86 514 0655  
[ricsafrica@rics.org](mailto:ricsafrica@rics.org)

### Ireland

38 Merrion Square  
Dublin 2  
Ireland  
t +353 1 644 5500  
f +353 1 661 1797  
[ricsireland@rics.org](mailto:ricsireland@rics.org)

### Oceania

Suite 2, Level 16  
1 Castlereagh Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000  
Australia  
t +61 2 9216 2333  
f +61 2 9232 5591  
[info@rics.org.au](mailto:info@rics.org.au)

### Middle East

Office G14, Block 3  
Knowledge Village  
Dubai  
United Arab Emirates  
t +971 4 375 3074  
f +971 4 427 2498  
[ricsmenea@rics.org](mailto:ricsmenea@rics.org)

### India

48 & 49 Centrum Plaza  
Sector Road  
Sector 53,  
Gurgaon – 122002  
India  
t +91 124 459 5400  
f +91 124 459 5402  
[ricsindia@rics.org](mailto:ricsindia@rics.org)