

FLOOR PLAN BASICS

New to house hunting? This guide will help you learn about basic housing types, real estate terms and the art of reading a floor plan.



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WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE?

Different home types & their advantages | How to read a floor plan
Floor plan worksheet | Model home tour tips | Real estate glossary



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THEY'RE NOT JUST FLOOR PLANS. THEY'RE YOUR PLANS.



As you search for your new home, you'll probably look at several, if not dozens of floor plans. It's important to understand how these drawings relate to the finished spaces you'll call home.

Be on the lookout for **Lifestyle Checkpoints** throughout this guide. These may include questions, discussion points or just information to consider as you plan your dream home.

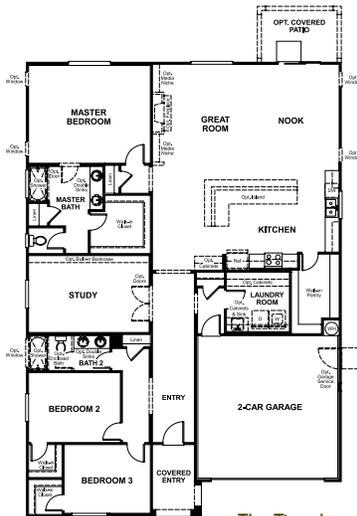
This guide was created to give you a firm grasp of floor plan fundamentals. If you're looking for something more advanced, or if you'd like to explore this topic further, consider downloading **How to Choose the Right Floor Plan**, available here: RichmondAmerican.com/AllGuides

BASIC HOME TYPES

Homes are built in a range of styles, from single-family detached to townhomes and duplexes. Here is a brief description of each type and a few Lifestyle Checkpoints to consider.



The Timothy



The Timothy

RANCH/RAMBLER

A ranch home, or rambler, is a single-story, free-standing house. It may or may not have a basement, depending on location.

✓ **Lifestyle Checkpoint:** A ranch home's easy flow from room to room and low-profile curb appeal attracts buyers of all ages and lifestyles.

However, its single-floor accessibility makes it a particularly popular choice for households with older residents or guests, or for anyone with limited mobility.

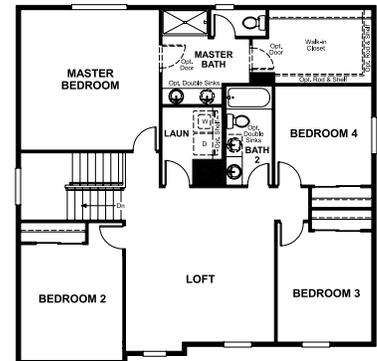
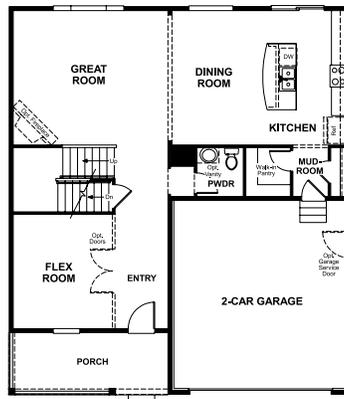
If you're considering ranch plans, you may want to look for one that has a master suite located away from the other bedrooms for added peace and privacy.

MULTI-STORY HOME

Any single-family detached home that isn't a ranch plan falls into this category. It may have two or more stories and, depending on your part of the country, it may have a basement.



The Hemingway



The Hemingway



The Kevin

ATTACHED HOME

Townhomes and duplexes are called “attached dwellings” because they share one or more walls with a separate residence. They may have multiple stories and may include a basement. Townhome communities are especially popular in urban centers and other areas where land is limited.

✓ **Lifestyle Checkpoint:** Your lawn in a townhome community may be minimal and/or commonly held and managed—a definite plus if you aren’t a fan of yard work.

If, on the other hand, you love gardening or need private, contained spaces for children or pets to play, a townhome may not be an ideal option.

Regardless of type, each home has a floor plan, which depicts the interior layout, and an elevation, which shows how a home may look from the curb.

ELEVATIONS

If you’re having a home built, you may choose how your home’s exterior will look. These exterior options are called elevations.



The Hemingway Elevation A



The Hemingway Elevation B



The Hemingway Elevation C

Above are three different elevations of the same plan, the Hemingway. As you can see, elevation differences may affect porch styles, window types, shutters, columns, siding, brick or stonework, garage doors and other architectural details that make a home distinctive.

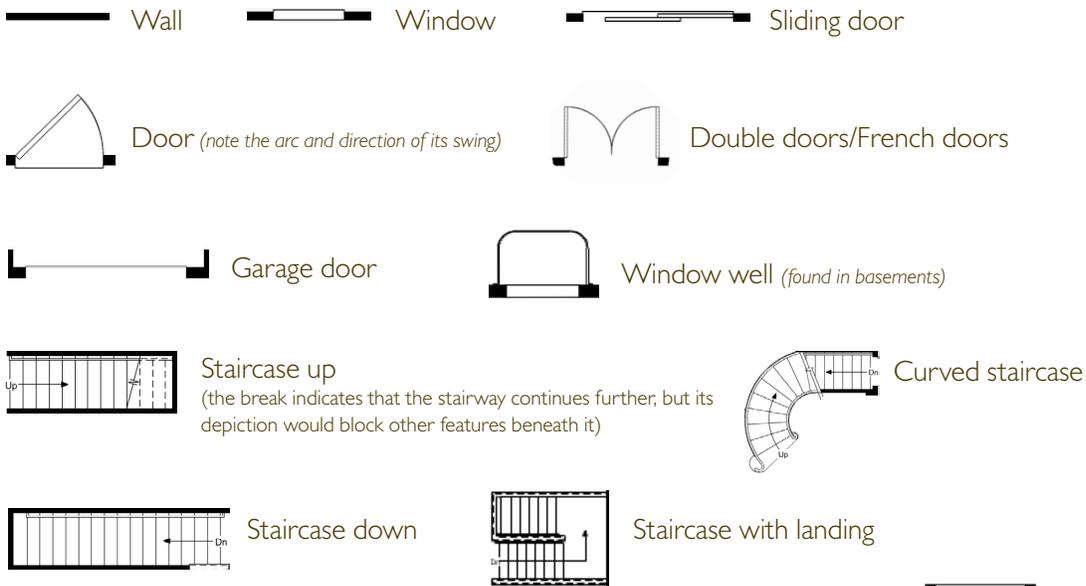
✓ **Lifestyle Checkpoint:** Your new home’s exterior should feel as much like home as your bedroom, family room or kitchen. Ask what options are available for the plan and homesite you’re eyeing. If possible, have your homebuilder show you finished examples so you’ll have a sense of how your home will look from the curb.

HOW TO READ A FLOOR PLAN

A floor plan gives you a floor-by-floor, bird's-eye view of a home's interior, as well as many of the features and options available for that home. Illustration styles vary from builder to builder, but this guide should help you identify common floor plan components.

THE BASICS

No matter how complicated the design, a floor plan can be broken down into a few basic lines and symbols: walls, windows, stairs, doors and room-specific fixtures. Once you understand the building blocks, you can break down any plan into easy-to-follow pieces.



How many of these symbols do you see in the example floor plan to the right? Notice how each room is clearly labeled so you can understand its purpose at a glance.



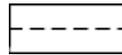
APPLIANCES & KITCHEN FIXTURES



Refrigerator



Double-basin sink



Countertop with cabinet above



Range/cooktop



Upgraded cooktop



Double oven



Dishwasher

BATHROOM PLUMBING FIXTURES



Sink



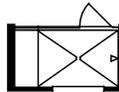
Optional sink



Toilet/commode



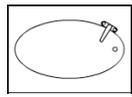
Shower



Extended shower



Bathtub with shower



Oval bathtub



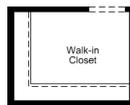
Corner bathtub

CLOSET STORAGE

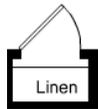
Closets come in a variety of sizes and may serve specific purposes, depending on location and configuration. Here are examples of some common closet symbols:



Closet with sliding doors



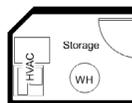
Walk-in closet/W.I.C. (a closet organizer may be an available upgrade)



Linen closet (located in or near bathrooms or laundry rooms)



Coat closet (located near an entry)



Utility closet (may house HVAC equipment and/or a water heater)



Under-stair storage

BUILT-IN FEATURES

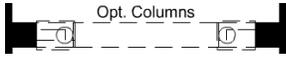
Any room in a home may offer a variety of built-in features, including a fireplace, home entertainment shelving or bookcases, decorative columns, writing desks and art niches. These are noted with symbols like the ones below.



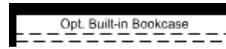
Optional media niches and an optional fireplace



Optional 3-sided fireplace



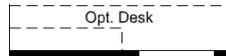
Optional decorative columns



Optional built-in bookcase



Bay window



Optional desk

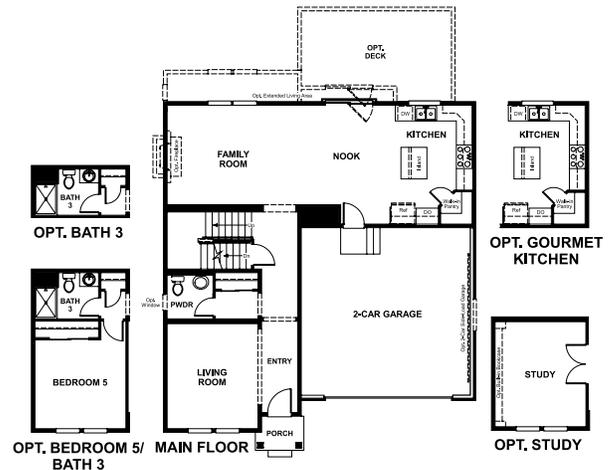
Floor plans are designed to be intuitive. Most rooms and features will be labeled, and those that aren't should be easy to guess from their context. Ask a sales associate or call a New Home Specialist at **888-500-7060** if you have questions about a specific Richmond American plan.

OPTIONS

The more options a home design has, the more complex the floor plan will be. Optional features like doors, windows, room extensions, shelves and other fixtures are often indicated with a broken line and/or an "Opt." label. Optional rooms, on the other hand, may be shown as detached rooms off to the side of the standard floor plan.

In the example to the right, you'll see an optional family room extension, an optional deck, an optional fireplace and an optional side-entry garage—all indicated by broken lines and labels.

The example plan also has multiple room options. In place of the living room and powder bath, the buyer may choose a main-floor bedroom and ¾ bath or opt for a study and decide whether to expand the powder bath into a ¾ bath independently.



Example: Alison floor plan in MD

Remember. A structural option is only an option until the building permits have been filed. Be sure to make all your major structural choices before construction begins. Adding a gourmet kitchen, a loft or a room extension may not be feasible after that point.

SECOND-FLOOR CEILING/TWO-STORY CEILING/ VOLUME CEILING

It's common to find a room with a ceiling that extends all the way through the second floor for an added feeling of spaciousness. This isn't typically noted on the main-floor plan; instead, the second-floor plan will indicate the space that is "OPEN TO BELOW:"

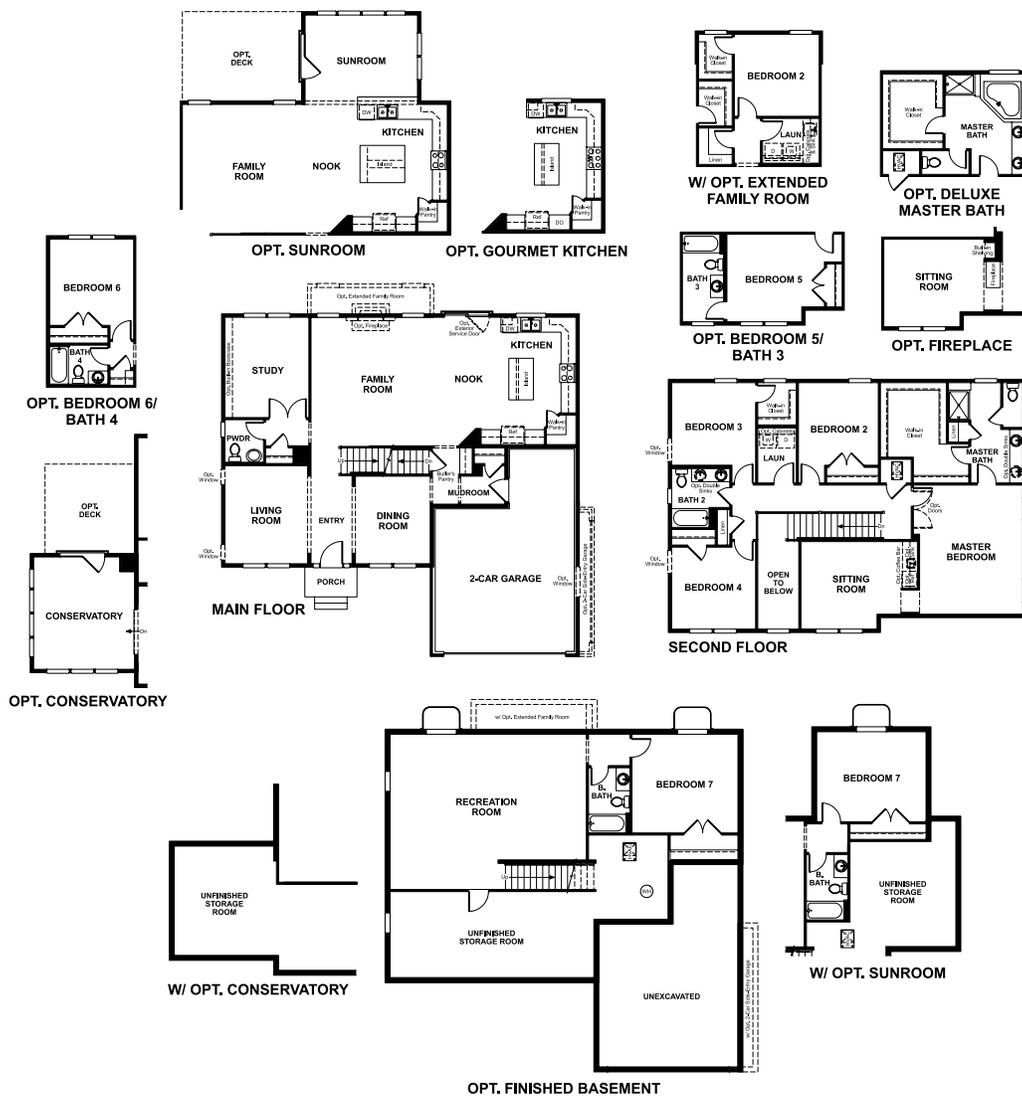


Example: Dillon floor plan in Colorado. A second floor that's open to a great room and to a foyer on the main floor.

✓ **Lifestyle Checkpoint:** If you need an additional bedroom or a loft, you may want to ask if your plan has a build-over option in lieu of two-story spaces.

TIPS FOR READING TOUGH FLOOR PLANS

- 1. Don't look at the big picture.** Start at the front door and work your way through each room individually. Fold the floor plan or use pieces of paper to cover the parts of the plan you're not currently looking at. When you're ready to move to the second floor or to the basement, start from the stairs.
- 2. Find where the options fit into the plan.** Room options are typically depicted near the rooms they're replacing. In the example plan, find the optional gourmet kitchen (see top, center). To envision how it will look within the main plan, find a part of the optional room that matches a part of the standard one, such as the walk-in pantry, and use that as a point of reference.
- 3. Discard options you aren't interested in.** Use a piece of masking tape or simply scribble out the options that don't fit your lifestyle. If you've decided against a main-floor sunroom, for example, you can cross out the basement option that goes along with it (marked "W/OPT. SUNROOM").



Example: Complex floor plan

REAL ESTATE GLOSSARY

Throughout your home search, you may run into unfamiliar real estate terms. While some home features are described differently by different builders, this glossary should help you navigate the basics.

BALCONY: A balcony is a platform that projects from the exterior of a home. It may be accessible from the master suite or from a common area, like a loft.

BASEMENT: A room or rooms located below the main floor of a home. Basements are a common home feature in many parts of the country. A basement may be full—extending throughout most of the main floor’s footprint—or partial, taking up only a portion of the space below the home. It may also be finished or unfinished. An unfinished basement has concrete slab floors, exposed floor joists in the ceiling, blanket insulation on foundation walls or exposed studs, and exposed ductwork, plumbing and wiring. In general, until a basement is finished, it is primarily useful as a storage area. A finished basement has drywall, paint, interior walls, doors, floor coverings and all the other surface details you’ll find in the rest of the home. Features of a finished basement vary, but may include a rec room, a kitchenette, a wet bar, one or more bedrooms, a bathroom and finished or unfinished storage space.

BATHROOM: A room with toilet facilities. Each finished floor of a home will typically have at least one bathroom or powder room. The size, layout and features of a bathroom vary, but a basic full bathroom generally includes a sink, a toilet and a bathtub with a shower. *NOTE: A ¾ bath includes a toilet, sink and a shower (no bathtub).*

BEDROOM: Sleeping accommodations. A home’s bedroom count is one of its defining characteristics. A room must have a closet to be considered a bedroom.

BONUS ROOM: A bonus room, or loft, is a large upstairs room that may be used for a variety of purposes—as a media or game room, a sewing room or hobby room, a home gym or a home office. A loft is typically open to the stairs; if it isn’t, then “bonus room” is the more appropriate label. In some floor plans, you may be able to select both a loft and a bonus room.

BRAIN: A tech center, also called a “brain” in some areas of the country, is a hideaway study that’s just large enough to hold a desk and a chair. It may be located on any floor of the home and may be enclosed or open to another room.

BREAKFAST NOOK: A nook is an area near the kitchen that’s intended to contain a breakfast or dinner table. You may find a nook instead of, or in addition to, a dining room.

BUTLER’S PANTRY: Unlike a regular pantry, a butler’s pantry is not intended for food storage. Instead, it’s a staging area for serving meals. Also known as a serving pantry, this feature usually includes a small counter and storage space for tableware, linens and other dining room supplies. Additional options may include a sink, wine storage and other conveniences.

CLOSET: Enclosed storage space. Closets come in a variety of sizes and may serve specific purposes, depending on location and configuration.

COAT CLOSET: A closet intended to store coats and other outer wear, usually located by the front door or garage. See *also* *Closet*.

CONSERVATORY: A room with many large windows—and sometimes glass ceilings or skylights—to let in sunlight. Unlike an enclosed porch, a conservatory, or sunroom, may be air conditioned and/or finished like the rest of the home's interior. Some builders use the terms interchangeably; others differentiate based on the room's location, orientation or available features. Consequently, you may encounter a plan with both a sunroom and a conservatory.

COURTYARD: A courtyard is an outdoor area that is enclosed on three or more sides. It is a popular entry feature, but it may also appear in the middle of a home, along a side yard or elsewhere.

DECK: A deck is typically a raised platform of wood, vinyl or a composite material. It may have many of the same options as a patio.

DELUXE BATH: It varies by market, but a Richmond American deluxe bath generally includes a separate tub and shower, a water closet and double sinks. Some homes and communities may also include a jetted, oval or garden tub, an extended shower and upgraded surfaces, like granite countertops and ceramic tile surrounds. The deluxe upgrade is usually offered for master baths, but may also be available for secondary baths, depending on the floor plan. Our luxury baths and spa baths typically have even more exciting features. Call a New Home Specialist at **888-500-7060** for more info.

DEN: Many floor plans offer a room, or rooms, that are more isolated than the main entertaining areas. These may include a study, a den, a library or a home office. Structurally, these rooms are very similar to each other. They are typically located on the main floor, and may be enclosed or open to a hall. Common options include built-in bookcases and bay windows.

DINING ROOM: A room dedicated to dining, usually dominated by a dining table. A dining room may be its own enclosed room or an area within a larger space.

ENTRYWAY: Depending on the floor plan, a home's entryway or foyer may be a hallway or a small room just inside the front door.

FAMILY ROOM: The family room, or great room, is a place to gather and talk, play games, watch movies and relax. In some homes, the great room is the primary place to entertain guests; in others, it's a casual alternative to a formal living room.

FLEX ROOM: As the name implies, a flex room is a space that may be built as one of multiple room options—typically as a study/den or as a bedroom. It may be located on any floor of the home.

FOYER: See *Entryway*.

GAME ROOM: An additional room for entertaining, often found upstairs or in the basement.

GARAGE: A structure intended for vehicle parking. Depending on the area of the country and the age of the home, your floor plan may have an attached garage, a detached garage or a carport. The first option, the attached garage, is most common in modern new homes, due to its security and shelter from the elements. Attached garages typically accommodate one to four cars, and can include extra storage or shop space.

GARDEN-LEVEL BASEMENT: Rather than windows with window wells, a garden-level basement has windows that can look out onto the ground level of the landscape outside. *See also Basement.*

GOURMET KITCHEN: An upgraded kitchen. Each builder has its own idea about what constitutes a gourmet kitchen. At Richmond American, it may include the addition of double wall ovens, a cooktop stove, a microwave and a kitchen island (if the island is an optional feature), along with the standard features and appliances. In some communities, granite countertops, tile backsplashes, stainless-steel appliances, extra square footage and other details may also be included. Call a New Home Specialist at **888-500-7060** for more info.

GREAT ROOM: *See Family room.*

GUEST SUITE: Some plans offer an additional suite for visiting or live-in parents or other guests. This suite may include a walk-in closet and a private bath, in addition to the bedroom.

HOME OFFICE: *See Den.*

IN-LAW SUITE: *See Guest suite.*

JACK-AND-JILL BATH: A bathroom is a “Jack-and-jill” bath if it is accessible via two bedrooms, with no other access from a hall or other public area. This layout is particularly popular with parents, as it allows siblings to share their own bathroom instead of a guest bath.

KITCHEN: Kitchens are available in a variety of sizes and configurations—from the traditional enclosed kitchen to a more modern style that’s open to the great room.

KITCHEN ISLAND: Some kitchens include an island, or offer an island as an optional feature. This structure serves as additional counter and cabinet space and may include a sink, a dishwasher and/or breakfast bar seating.

KITCHENETTE: A kitchenette is a room or area offering scaled-down kitchen facilities. It may include a sink, countertop, cabinets, mini fridge and microwave for simple food preparation and storage.

LAUNDRY: Some floor plans devote an entire room to laundry facilities; others provide a closet or alcove with washer and dryer connections. Depending on your plan, features and options may include cabinets, counter space, a closet and/or a sink.

LIBRARY: *See Den.*

LINEN CLOSET: A closet located in or near a bathroom or laundry, intended to store linens. *See also Closet.*

LIVING ROOM: A room for entertaining. If your floor plan has a formal living room, you will likely encounter it near the entry. It may be a separate room or it may open to a dining room or great room.

LOFT: *See Bonus room.*

MASTER BATH: A master bathroom is a private bath accessible only via the master bedroom or other parts of the master suite. Its layout and features depend on the floor plan and upgrades you’ve chosen.

MASTER SUITE: A master suite typically includes a bedroom (often the home’s largest), at least one walk-in closet and a master bath. Additional features may include a master retreat or sitting room, a fireplace, a bay window, a coffered ceiling, a deluxe bath, his-and-her walk-in closets, a coffee bar or a balcony.

MEDIA ROOM: See *Game room*.

MUDROOM: In some part of the country, a mudroom is an area between the garage and the rest of the house. It may be just a hallway or a small room with space to hang coats and store boots, umbrellas and other weather gear.

NOOK: See *Breakfast nook*.

OWNER'S SUITE: See *Master suite*.

PANTRY: A closet designed for food storage. Some are located in the kitchen, while others are positioned between the kitchen and the garage for easy grocery storage, or tucked between the kitchen and the dining room.

PATIO: A backyard patio may be covered or uncovered, enclosed or open, and ranges in size from a small square to a broad space that extends across the back of the house. If you're building a home, you may have the option to choose how large the patio will be. Features may include an outdoor kitchen, built-in gas barbeque connection, ceiling fan and lighting.

PLAYROOM: See *Game room*.

PORCH: The front porch is found at the home's main entry. It may be covered or not covered, and ranges in size from a small stoop to a wide, wraparound veranda.

PRE-PLUMBED BATH: Even if your home will have an unfinished basement, your builder may install some pre-plumbing so you don't have to do as much costly excavation to add a bath later.

REC ROOM: A recreation (rec) room is often found in the finished basement of a home. It may include options like a kitchenette or a wet bar.

SERVING PANTRY: See *Butler's pantry*.

STUDY: See *Den*.

TANDEM GARAGE: A tandem garage is one that has space for one car to park behind another. It's common for a tandem garage space to be used for storage or shop space. See also *Garage*.

TECH CENTER: See *Brain*.

TEEN ROOM: Some builders use this term to describe a room for entertaining or relaxing, typically found near a home's bedrooms. A teen room is usually open to a hallway or other room.

SUNROOM: See *Conservatory*.

UTILITY CLOSET: A closet that houses HVAC equipment and/or a water heater. See also *Closet*.

WALK-IN CLOSET/W.I.C.: A closet that is large enough to step into. See also *Closet*.

WALK-OUT BASEMENT: A walk-out basement is accessible via an exterior door without having to go through the main floor of the home. See also *Basement*.

CREATE A FLOOR PLAN WISH LIST

Now that you've had a chance to review a variety of floor plan options and consider how they fit into your lifestyle, why not take a moment to put your likes and dislikes on paper? This handy worksheet can help you prioritize the home features you need and like, so you can stay focused on what's most important to you as you browse plans and tour model homes. Not all floor plans offer all features, so be prepared to be flexible on less-important points.

Floor Plan Wish List

- Ideal number of bedrooms 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ ___ Notes: _____
- Ideal number of bathrooms 1½ 2+ 3+ ___ Notes: _____
- Garage capacity 1-car+ 2-car+ 3-car+ Notes: _____
- Type of house Ranch home (detached) Two-story (detached) Townhome/Duplex

What do you want in a floor plan?

Examples:

- Kitchen open to family room
- Laundry close to bedrooms
- Spacious garage
- Deck or patio
- Study/den

What special features are you seeking?

Examples:

- Hardwood floors
- Air conditioning
- Pantry
- Low-maintenance landscaping
- Technology package
- Energy-efficient construction

Neighborhood details:

- Ideal commute time
- Cities/communities you're considering

Under _____ mins./hrs.
1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Location needs to be close to:

- Shopping Work Freeway access _____

Other things you're looking for:

Examples:

- Quality schools
- Community pool
- Parks/playground nearby

PRINT a blank copy of this worksheet for each decision-maker in the household.

GIVE a copy of your completed worksheet to a Richmond American sales associate or New Home Specialist, and another to your real estate agent.

KEEP a copy of your completed worksheet with you as you tour model homes.

START YOUR FLOOR PLAN SEARCH

Once you've got a solid idea of what you're looking for, it's time to start shopping!

FIRST STEP: GO ONLINE

House hunting online lets you see a wide variety of houses without leaving the comfort of your home or office. It's a good way to narrow down your options before you start touring model homes and communities.

Many builders have online floor plans, and some have ways to filter their search results by the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and by square footage.

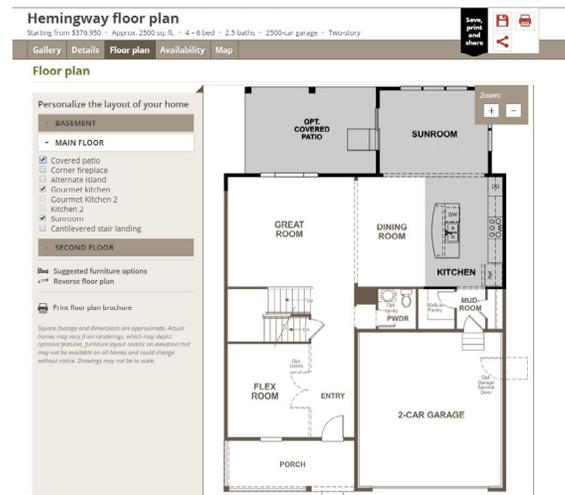
At **RichmondAmerican.com**, you can further refine your results by region or zip code, price range, number of floors, master suite location, move-in timeframe and other details. If you create a free online account, you can save, share and compare your favorite plans.

Use our interactive floor plans to see a home's various structural options, plan your furniture layout and view room dimensions. You'll also find a list of the features that are included in the base price of the home as well as optional features and upgrades.

Most of our floor plans have video tours or photography so you can see how the home will look once it's built. This can be helpful, but it's no substitute for touring a model home if you have the opportunity.



Example 1: RichmondAmerican.com search results and filter options



Example 2: Interactive floor plan

Need help with choosing a neighborhood or deciding how much house you can afford?

Check out our other free homebuyer guides at **RichmondAmerican.com/AllGuides**

SECOND STEP: TOUR MODEL HOMES

Once you've narrowed down your options, visit models of the plans you're interested in and really take your time. Pack your camera and a notepad so you can record your thoughts for later. Imagine where you would place your furniture, and bring a tape measure to make sure it will fit. Pay attention to the little things, like how far you'll have to carry your groceries from the garage, and where you'll fold your laundry. It's amazing how much you can learn from a model home tour if you know what you're looking for.

Closet space

If your current closets are already overflowing, make sure your new home offers significantly more space, especially if you're planning on growing your family.

Dining room/family room area

Consider the way you live. Will the living areas of the home accommodate your family comfortably?

Furniture arrangement

Where will you place your television and your coffee table? Does the layout of the family room accommodate the size of your couch? Can you comfortably fit a nightstand on either side of your bed?

Doorways/hallways

Measure the doorways and the hallways to see if your furniture will fit.

Electrical outlets

Are outlets conveniently located (i.e. where your end tables will sit, in media niches, etc.)? What about light switches?

Garage space

Do you need extra work or storage space in addition to parking?

Window orientation

Which side of the house gets sun during the day? Are there enough windows to let in natural light during the morning or afternoon? The way your home faces will affect which parts are in the sun or shade.

Energy efficient features

Ask questions about features like low-e windows, insulation and HVAC systems. If you're touring a Richmond American home, be sure to ask the sales associate about the Energy Wise Difference™, features designed to increase energy efficiency.²

Even if your builder doesn't have a finished model of the floor plan you want in the community you've chosen, chances are there's one at a nearby community. Any of our sales associates or New Home Specialists can direct you to the closest Richmond American model or quick move-in home that showcases a given plan. Remember, this is a chance to review not only a home's floor plan, but also your potential home builder's craftsmanship and attention to detail.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Congratulations! You've found the perfect plan. Now what? Picking the right plan is the first milestone in your exciting homebuilding journey, but it's only the beginning! Your story continues in our free guide, *How to Build Your Dream Home*, available at RichmondAmerican.com/dreamhome.

YOUR ROAD MAP FROM CONTRACT TO CLOSING

Building a home from the ground up is one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences in all of homeownership—especially when you know what to expect! This guide should help you understand the homebuilding process from start to finish. Topics include:

- Choosing a community & a homesite
- What to expect at the design center
- The loan process
- Basic construction timeline
- Home insurance & title insurance
- Closing tips & checklists
- And more!



ABOUT OUR AFFILIATES

RICHMOND AMERICAN HOMES

Richmond American has been building new homes for families since 1977. Our calling cards? Quality craftsmanship, timeless value and a personalized homebuying experience from start to finish. We understand your home is one of the most important purchases of your life and we want to get it right. Whether you're deciding on your neighborhood, your plan or your bathroom tile, it's the personal touches that make the difference. And that's what Richmond American is all about. With us, it's personal.™

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855-248-4853 | AHTECO.com

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