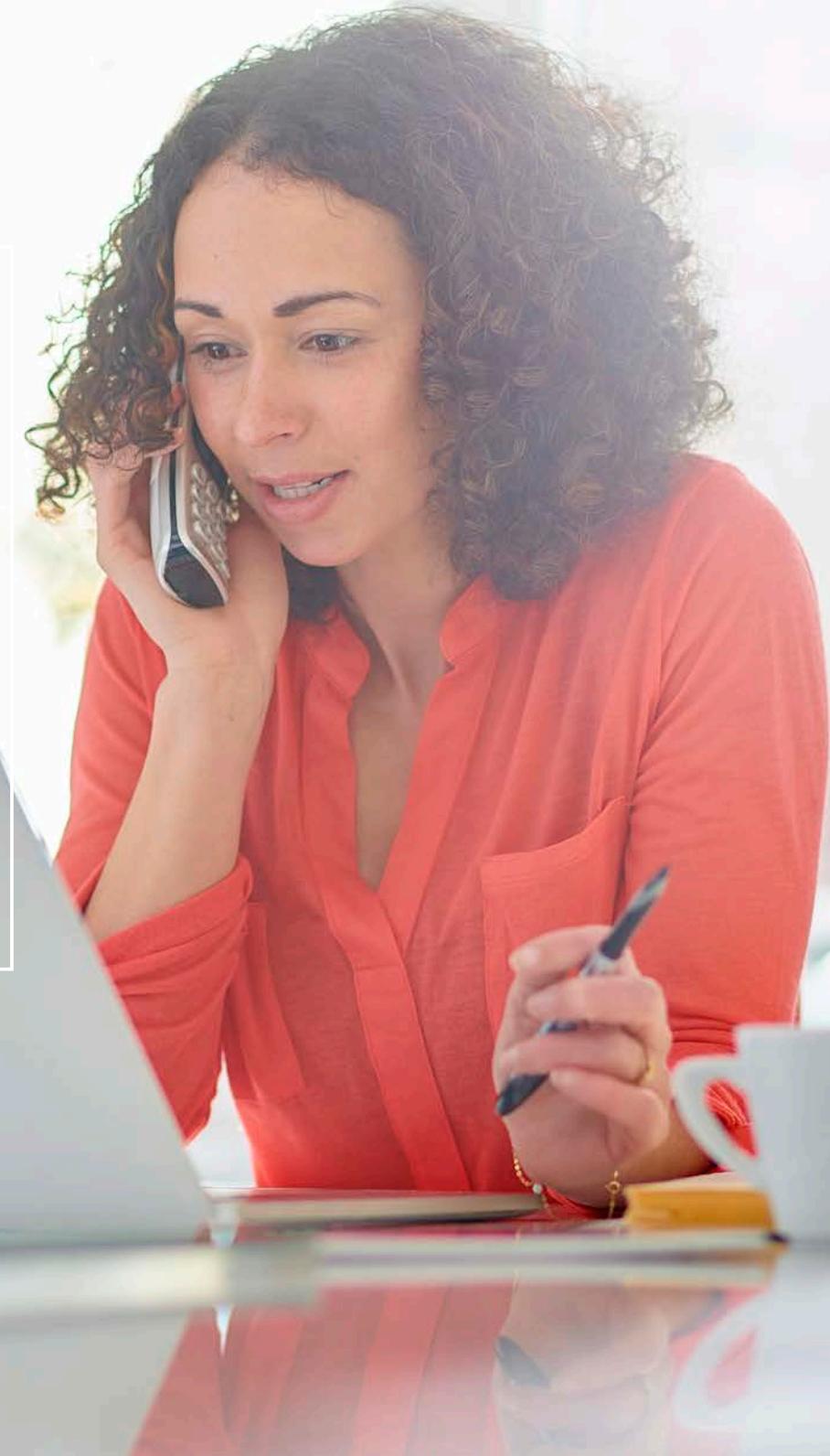




Agent Safety:

HOW TO KEEP SAFE
WORKING IN THE
REAL ESTATE SPACE

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH





Every September, the industry recognizes National REALTOR® Safety Month to create agent awareness around staying out of harm's way. We worked together to create this ebook with the Beverly Carter Foundation to help students and agents stay safe while on and off the job.



Who was Beverly Carter?



On September 25th 2014, Beverly Carter went about her day just like any other. Being a real estate agent, it was normal for her to meet a relocating couple to see a house at 6 PM. What wasn't normal was what happened next.

What Happened Next

The couple wasn't looking to buy a home. Instead, they had a sinister plot to kidnap Beverly and ask for a ransom. When that didn't go as planned, what started as a kidnapping turned to murder. Although Beverly had followed many industry-standard safety protocols, it wasn't enough. Her untimely murder catapulted a national conversation about safety to the forefront of real estate organizations.

SHE WAS "A WOMAN THAT WORKED ALONE— A RICH BROKER."

- Beverly's Murderer-

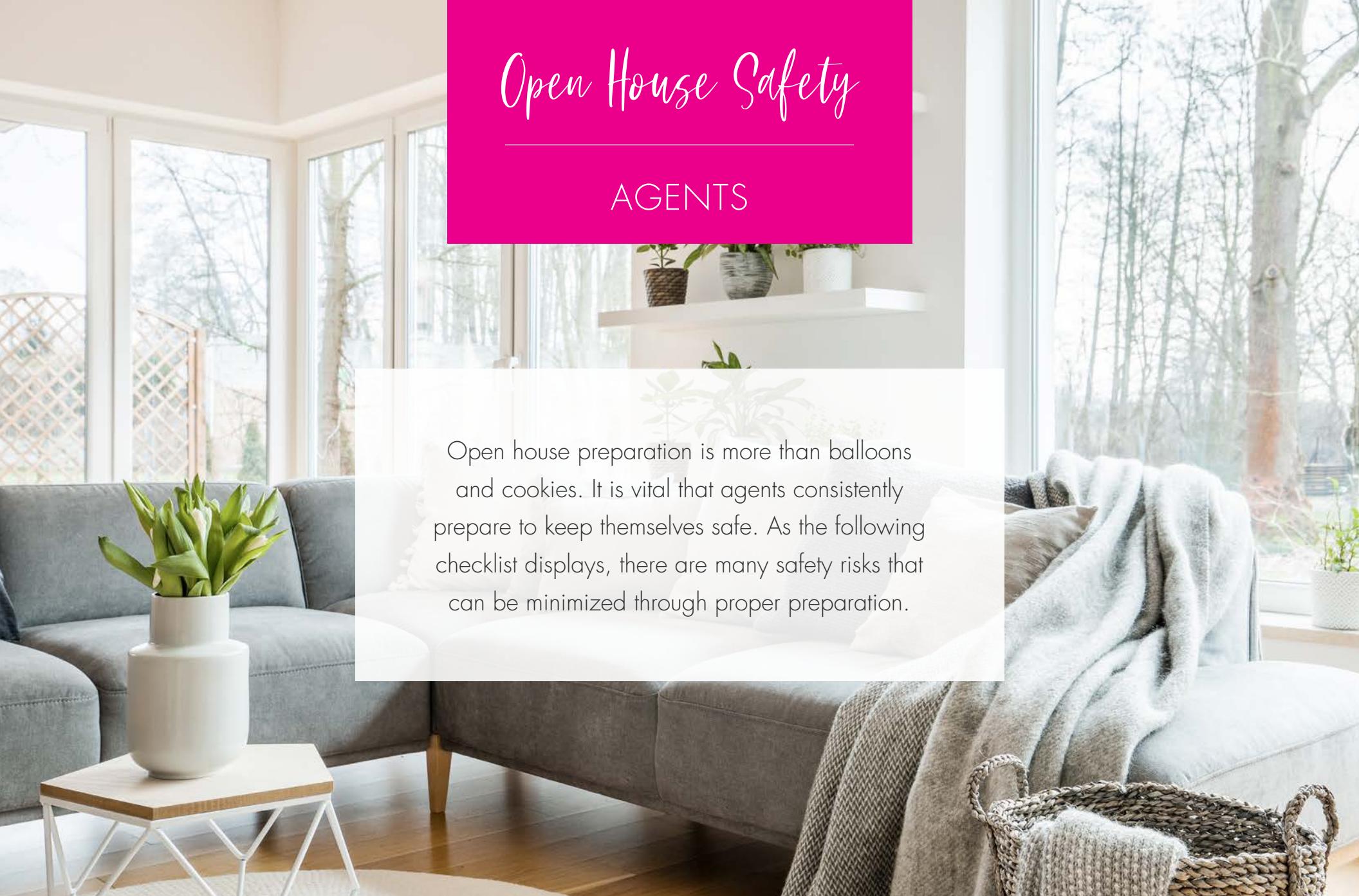
How to Keep Safe

Follow along as we go through what you need to know in order to stay safe as an agent in the real estate industry.

Open House Safety

AGENTS

Open house preparation is more than balloons and cookies. It is vital that agents consistently prepare to keep themselves safe. As the following checklist displays, there are many safety risks that can be minimized through proper preparation.



BEFORE YOUR OPEN HOUSE

PREPARE THE SELLERS: Remind the sellers to put their valuables in a secure place. This includes electronics, prescription drugs, jewelry, and firearms.

ASSESS THE MARKETING: Does the property description or photographs make this property appealing for criminals? Does it identify that the home is vacant, rural, or full of luxurious items or electronics?

FIND A BUDDY: Industry affiliates, such as mortgage or title reps, are often very willing to join you for an open house. If not, do you have a willing family member, friend, or another agent who could tag along?

MEET THE NEIGHBORS: This takes a little time, but it is well worth the effort. Neighbors are interested in the home for sale, and it will be great for them to know you'll be there. They can supply additional neighborhood info that helps you promote the area, too. Plus, familiarity builds trust – and you may gain a client in return.

USE A CLOUD-BASED CAMERA: Consider adding a cloud-based camera. Simply knowing a property is under surveillance can be a deterrent to crime.

ASSESS THE PHYSICAL LAYOUT OF THE PROPERTY: Knowing all potential home exits, the backyard, and any potential safety concerns is crucial.

VISIT THE NEARBY POLICE AND FIRE STATIONS: Invite them over to the open house, and let them know that you'll have refreshments!

RESOURCES

Wooten, A. (2009). *The Real Estate Guide to Safety: Unleashing the Power of YOU*. S.A.F.E. Publishing.

DURING YOUR OPEN HOUSE



Avoid certain rooms while touring the home with clients. This will help you avoid entrapment risks in rooms such as attics, basements, and those with tight quarters.

Adding a decorative ring of bells to the handles of your entrances can be an easy way to alert you of activity within the home.

If possible, evaluate and **make quick notes of every prospect**, including their vehicle and physical description. This can also be a helpful resource to remember their name, too.

Check in regularly. If alone, call the office or a friend consistently throughout the day.

Request that **all visitors sign in a guestbook** or roster and enter and leave through one door only, except when escorted to the backyard, garage, etc.

RESOURCES

Wooten, A. (2009). *The Real Estate Guide to Safety: Unleashing the Power of YOU*. S.A.F.E. Publishing.



Open House Safety

AGENTS

AFTER YOUR OPEN HOUSE

CLOSING WITH A BUDDY. If it wasn't possible for a buddy to join you for the full open house, ensure that you have someone with you during closing. This time presents several risks for criminals to take advantage of the situation.

SECURE THE HOME. Ensure that all windows and doors are locked. Don't simply check those that you unlocked.

EXPRESS GRATITUDE. Follow-up with any neighbors, police, or fire department that stopped by.

RESOURCES

Wooten, A. (2009). *The Real Estate Guide to Safety: Unleashing the Power of YOU.* S.A.F.E. Publishing.

Open House Safety

SELLER'S SAFETY

There's a lot to think about when selling a property, but it's important to consider your personal safety at all times. The selling process can involve a number of complete strangers looking around your home and this is not without risk. However, by taking the following precautions you can improve your safety.

ITEMS TO REMOVE CHECKLIST



Remember to remove the following from site or easy access:

- Keys
- Credit cards
- Jewelry
- Movable electronics
- Prescriptions from medicine cabinets and bedside tables
- Firearms, knives (including blocks in the kitchen), and other weapons
- Bills, invoices, credit card statements, and any other identifying information
- Family photos
- Calendars or indicators of your personal schedule

Open House Safety

SELLER'S SAFETY

OPEN HOUSES

Request that all visitors sign in a guestbook or roster and enter and leave through **one door only**, except when escorted to the backyard, garage, etc. However, the agent should personally have quick and easy access to all your exits.

After an open house, **check all the windows and doors** to make sure they are locked.



HANDLING UNEXPECTED VISITORS



If a potential viewer shows up at your doorstep without an appointment, do not let them into the property, even if they claim to have previously viewed the property with an agent.

However, you don't want to offend a potential buyer. Politely make an excuse not to let them in, and ask them to call their agent to make an appointment for another time.

Furthermore, when you list your home with a real estate agent, a buyer's agent doesn't usually show up at your house unannounced. They normally contact your agent first. If they insist, contact the agent's office to confirm their involvement with that particular real estate agency.

Agents on the Road

SAFETY FIRST

You may be at your most vulnerable when traveling or on the road. Following these “Safety First” tips can limit your exposure, helping keep you free from harm while staving off potential predators or unexpected dangers.

CREATE AN EMERGENCY PLAN: If disaster strikes, you might not have time to search for numbers for local police or ambulance services. Make sure to write down and laminate your itinerary. Keep this on your person as well as email it to friends and family so they know your whereabouts.

STAY IN CONTACT: When making last-second schedule changes, text or call contacts regarding your updated plans. The last thing you want is for no one to know where you are, especially if it's an impromptu decision that took you there.

LOCK UP YOUR VALUABLES: Traveling with anything extremely valuable is usually a bad idea. Your job is to minimize the easy opportunities for theft. Make sure to have your credentials on you at all times, as theft of these items is common at conferences.



DON'T SHARE TOO MUCH WITH STRANGERS: If you're ever tempted to make your itinerary more public on social media, just remember it can be a roadmap of your movements. Also, don't share too many details about your travel plans or accommodation details with people you've just met.

GET TRAVEL INSURANCE: You never think you need it until you do. If you're really worried about the safety of yourself and your gear while you travel, good travel insurance could help set your mind at ease.

LEARN BASIC SELF-DEFENSE: You don't need black-belt skills, but joining a few self-defense classes or even spending time on YouTube is a worthwhile investment in your personal safety.

PROJECT SITUATIONAL AWARENESS: Did you know that a majority of human communication is based on non-verbal body language? This projection of confidence can prevent you from becoming a target. Keep your head up, stay alert, and remain aware of your surroundings.

TRAVEL IN NUMBERS: The more people around you, the more eyeballs are on your valuables – and the more legs are available for running after thieves.

STAY (RELATIVELY) SOBER: Especially important when combining alcohol offered at an event with jet lag and/or lack of sleep due to a rigorous schedule. This is another reason having a travel buddy is a great benefit.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS: Your body might be sensing signs of danger before your brain is fully aware of it.

HOTEL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Book rooms that are not at the end of the hall or by a stairwell; rooms near elevators are preferable.
- Make yourself known to hotel staff by presenting your business card upon check-in, so the hotel person acknowledges who you are, and to the guest services team who will remember your face and look out for you as a solo traveler.
- Stay safe in the hotel by packing a door stop alarm. This will prevent unwanted intruders, including hotel workers who have access to your hotel room's key card.
- Don't open the door for just anyone.

KEEP YOUR PHONE CHARGED: Keep your smartphone charged. It's not just a business necessity, but also a smart safety precaution.

Safety Apps vs. Personal Security Systems

The “Safety App” is one powerful technology tool, but it’s a relatively new phenomenon. As such, there are broad sets of features and capabilities that differentiate this from personal security systems. Just to note, personal security systems are far more robust and can mean the difference between life and death in the most extreme scenarios.

Safety Apps vs. Personal Security Systems

SAFETY APP CHECKLIST

Our goal here is to provide a quick checklist of questions you should consider when choosing an app technology for your own safety or the safety of others:

1. DOES IT WORK IF THE PHONE IS DISABLED/ DESTROYED?

Almost all safety apps rely on the phone to do all the work. A quick test of any app is to arm it and put it in airplane mode and wait to see if any alerts are sent. It is absolutely critical that the system works when the phone is offline or even destroyed.

2. DOES IT REQUIRE THE USER TO INTERACT DURING AN EMERGENCY?

Many safety apps require the user to push a button or interact in some way with their phone for help to be alerted. But in real-world emergencies, people are rarely able to access their phone and interact with an app. The standard approach is to arm the system and start a countdown timer. If not activated, the alarm will sound and authorities will be called.

3. CAN THE SYSTEM BE DISARMED WITHOUT A PASSCODE?

Safety apps can be easily disarmed without requiring any kind of authentication. Ideally, this is a PIN or password and not a fingerprint. Bad guys have access to your fingers, whether you want them to or not.

4. CAN PHOTOS BE STORED REMOTELY AND SECURELY?

The ideal scenario is to publicly store photos/videos that are not also editable – by either the user or an attacker. This allows for much greater short-term security, but also provides forensic follow-up by investigators at a later date without destroying the chain of evidence. Make sure the app doesn't just store the photos on your phone, as that can easily be hacked.

5. DOES IT HAVE PANIC FUNCTIONALITY FOR 911?

Many safety apps do not have a "Panic Button". Without the ability to immediately dial 911, you could easily end up with a situation where no first responders are alerted in a timely fashion. Having this on the app is crucial.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink coat over a white t-shirt and white pants, is smiling and holding a folder or binder in her hands. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or hallway.

"THE WHOLE MISSION IS TO PROVIDE
RESOURCES AT EVERY LEVEL (AT NO COST)
TO DO MY PART IN MAKING SURE
THAT WHAT HAPPENED TO MY MOM
NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN."

- Carl Carter, Jr.



SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IS EVERYTHING

As a final point, whether it's smartphone technology or following a checklist, situational awareness is critical. Technology and safety precautions can certainly enhance safety. However, every situation is different and will require you to act on your feet while using the resources provided.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BEVERLY CARTER FOUNDATION?

Visit their website at BeverlyCarterFoundation.org and find out how you can help with promoting agent safety awareness.



Beverly Carter FOUNDATION

ABOUT

The Beverly Carter Foundation (BCF) is a completely independent not-for-profit foundation dedicated to the ideal that every agent goes home safe every day by providing science-based research, information, consulting, training, and support at little or no charge to every MLS, association, brokerage, and agent.

About Us

Founded in 2005, The CE Shop has become the leading provider of online real estate education through an encyclopedic knowledge of the real estate industry.

Our ever-expanding course catalog of Pre-Licensing, Exam Prep, Post-Licensing, and Continuing Education products are trusted throughout the industry and offer agents across the country the education they rely on.

With courses available in all 50 states and D.C., we're driven by a desire to constantly improve, both for ourselves and our students.

