

Buying an HDB Resale Flat in 2026: From HFE Letter to Key Collection

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Buying an HDB resale flat is not one transaction but a chain of decisions with different deadlines. In 2026, the safest way to approach it is to work backwards from the point at which money becomes difficult to recover: exercising the Option to Purchase (OTP). Before that point, buyers should know what HDB says they may buy, what financing is actually available and how much cash is needed if the agreed price exceeds HDBâ??s valuation.

This guide turns the official HDB resale process into a practical sequence. It reflects the published rules checked on 15 July 2026; the HDB Flat Portal, your HFE outcome and your conveyancing documents govern your own purchase.

The HDB resale process at a glance

1. Obtain a valid HDB Flat Eligibility (HFE) letter and settle financing.
2. Shortlist a flat and carry out physical, financial and eligibility checks.
3. Negotiate the price, then receive HDBâ??s prescribed OTP from the seller.
4. Request a valuation if CPF savings or a housing loan will be used.
5. Exercise the OTP within its 21-day option period.
6. Buyer and seller submit their resale application portions.
7. Review HDBâ??s documents, endorse them and make the required payments.
8. Inspect the flat, complete the transaction and collect the keys.

1. Get the HFE letter before negotiating seriously

A valid HFE letter is required before a seller grants an OTP. It tells the household about its eligibility to buy, receive CPF housing grants and take an HDB housing loan. If a bank loan is intended, obtain a valid Letter of Offer before exercising the OTP. An indicative calculator result or verbal indication is not the same thing.

Keep the intended buying household consistent with the HFE application. A change in occupiers, marital status or ownership plan can affect the outcome and may require fresh checks. Buyers comparing loan structures can use our separate 2026 HDB housing loan guide, while the CPF home-purchase planner helps stress-test the monthly budget.

Checks worth completing before the OTP

- **Eligibility:** Confirm the flat type, ethnic integration and Singapore Permanent Resident quota position, ownership structure and any applicable conditions in the HFE letter.
- **Lease:** Check the remaining lease and whether it can support the intended CPF usage and loan tenure.
- **Condition:** Inspect for leaks, unauthorised works, window condition, noise at different times and costly items that may need replacement.
- **Money:** Reserve funds for the deposit, buyerâ??s stamp duty, legal costs, valuation-related cash, renovation and an emergency buffer.
- **Timeline:** Agree whether the seller needs a temporary extension of stay and obtain advice on how that affects possession and risk.

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2. Understand the OTP before paying the option fee

Only HDBâ??s prescribed OTP may be used. Under the published OTP process, the buyer pays an option fee negotiated between S$1 and S$1,000 when the seller grants the option. The option period is 21 calendar days and ends at 4pm on the expiry date.

To exercise the option, the buyer signs the acceptance section and pays the exercise fee. The option fee and exercise fee together cannot exceed S$5,000, and that total forms part of the purchase price. It is not a cap on the buyerâ??s total exposure after exercise: the OTP becomes binding, and failure to complete may lead to forfeited payments, contractual remedies or other loss beyond S$5,000. A buyer facing a possible default should obtain transaction-specific legal advice. Do not transfer money merely because an agent says a unit is popular; read the OTP, verify the seller and flat details, and ensure the agreed price and dates are correct.

3. Request HDBâ??s value promptly

If CPF savings or a housing loan will fund the purchase, the buyer must submit a Request for Value by the next working day after the OTP is granted. HDB will provide the value before the buyer has to decide whether to exercise. This is a decision point, not an administrative afterthought.

If the agreed price is above HDBâ??s value, the difference is cash over valuation and cannot be covered by CPF savings or the housing loan. For example, if the agreed price is S$620,000 and HDBâ??s value is S$600,000, the S$20,000 difference needs cash, in addition to any other cash expenses. A valuation below expectation may therefore change the maximum sensible exercise fee or justify walking away before exercise.

4. Exercise only when the funding stack is complete

Before exercising, put the whole purchase on one page: purchase price, HDB value, CPF available for housing, confirmed loan, grants reflected in the HFE outcome, cash deposit, stamp duty, legal fees and renovation reserve. Treat uncertain funds as zero until confirmed. A buyer using a financial institution loan should already hold the valid Letter of Offer required for exercise.

The OTP cannot simply be rewritten after exercise to repair an unaffordable deal. If conditions are unclear, seek conveyancing or HDB guidance before the 4pm deadline rather than after it.

5. Coordinate the resale application

After exercise, buyer and seller each submit their portion of the resale application through the HDB Flat Portal. They may submit in either order, but the second portion must reach HDB within seven calendar days of the first. Both parties must also comply with the submission timing agreed in the OTP. If the second portion is late, the application may lapse and both sides may have to start again.

The HDB application guidance says a complete resale application is generally accepted within 28 working days. HDB may ask for more information, so watch the portal and email rather than assuming silence means approval. After acceptance, the resale documents are generally ready for endorsement in about three weeks. Check the financial plan, names, shares, grants and loan figures before all parties endorse.

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6. Prepare for completion, not just approval

Completion is generally scheduled about eight weeks after HDB accepts the complete application. Before then, pay the required balance and stamp duty, arrange fire insurance if taking an HDB loan, and conduct the pre-completion inspection. Confirm that the flat is vacant as agreed, the condition is materially consistent with the sale and agreed fixtures remain.

For a buyer represented by HDBâ??s solicitor, attendance at completion is generally required in person. Buyers taking an HDB loan sign the mortgage documents. At the appointment, the transfer is completed and the keys are handed over. Buyer and seller should also settle the apportionment of property tax and the first service and conservancy charges according to the completion documents. HDBâ??s completion page contains the current appointment checklist.

A practical countdown

Milestone	Published timing	Buyerâ??s control
Before OTP	Valid HFE required	Complete eligibility, loan and flat checks
After OTP grant	Request value by next working day if using CPF or a loan	Submit immediately and retain confirmation
Option period	21 calendar days, expiring at 4pm	Decide only after valuation and financing are clear
Resale application	Both portions within seven calendar days of each other	Agree who submits first and on what date

Milestone	Published timing	Buyerâ??s control
HDB acceptance	Generally within 28 working days for a complete application	Answer document requests quickly
Completion	Generally about eight weeks after acceptance	Prepare cash, insurance, inspection and attendance

The most important discipline is to separate reversible decisions from irreversible ones. Viewing another flat is reversible. Granting the seller more time to answer questions may be inconvenient. Exercising an OTP without confirmed financing can be expensive. A written deadline sheet shared by the buyers, agent and solicitor reduces the chance that a promising purchase turns into a preventable procedural failure.

Add a financing cross-check before the seller grants the OTP

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HDBâ??s resale pages control the transaction sequence. The CPF Boardâ??s HFE letter explainer, updated 15 May 2026, independently states that a resale buyer needs the HFE letter before obtaining an Option to Purchase and that the letter is valid for nine months. This turns â??get financing readyâ?• into a dated control: save the HFE issue and expiry dates, the grant and loan amounts, and the household facts used.

Handoff	Evidence	Stop condition
Planning to OTP	Valid HFE letter and approved loan route	Letter expired or household facts changed
OTP to Request for Value	Option Date and request receipt	Request deadline not safely met
Exercise to resale applications	Exercised OTP and both submissions	Buyer and seller dates do not align
Approval to completion	HDB approval, payment statement and appointment	Funds or required documents remain unresolved

LBRD expiry-buffer calculation

If an HFE letter expires in 45 days and the buyer expects 21 days for an OTP period plus time for valuation and application work, the letter has little room for a failed negotiation or missing document. The useful calculation is expiry date minus the latest date each gated step can safely start. This is a planning buffer, not an extension of HDBâ??s rules; renew or clarify the HFE position before commitment if the margin is thin.

Sources rechecked 20 July 2026: HDBâ??s resale overview, OTP, application and completion pages; CPF Boardâ??s HFE explainer.

Date Created
15/07/2026
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