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Acre: A U.S. measure of land or sea equaling 4,840 square yards, or 43,560 square feet. It's roughly the size of one football field, without the end zones. (Note: Acre comes from the Anglo-Saxon aecer, meaning land, or anything sown. It was based on the amount of land that could be plowed by one man behind an ox in one day.)

Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM): A mortgage loan with payments usually lower than a fixed rate initially, but is subject to changes in interest rates. There are a variety of ARMs that can have an initial interest rate that lasts three to 10 years, adjusting annually thereafter. They are described as 3/1, 5/1, 7/1 and 10/1. A 3/1 ARM starts out with a low rate that lasts three years, then is adjusted annually. A 5/1 ARM has an introductory rate that lasts five years, and 7/1 and 10/1 ARMs have intro rates that last seven and 10 years. The monthly payment amount is usually subject to a cap.

Amortization: Repayment of a mortgage loan through regular monthly installments of principal and interest. At the end of the scheduled payments (e.g., monthly payments for 15 or 30 years), you will own your home.

Annual Percentage Rate (APR): Calculated by using a standard formula, the APR is expressed as a yearly rate (e.g., 8.107% APR) and includes the interest, points (discount and origination), mortgage insurance, and other fees. The APR on a mortgage will usually be higher than the stated interest rate because the APR includes fees and the interest rate doesn't.

Appraisal: Prepared by a qualified professional (an appraiser), it is an estimation of a property's fair market value. A lender usually requires an appraisal before loan approval to ensure that the mortgage loan amount is not more than the value of the property.

Appraiser: A qualified professional who uses his or her experience and knowledge to prepare the appraisal. An appraiser must have a state license before his or her appraisals may be used as the basis for a federally-backed mortgage.

Assessment: Value placed on real estate by governmental assessors as a basis for collecting property taxes.

Assumable mortgage: A mortgage that can be transferred from a seller to a buyer. The buyer then takes over payment of an existing loan.

Automated Underwriting System: A computerized system used to assess information provided by a borrower, plus public information about the borrower, to quickly determine whether a loan should be pre-approved.

Automated valuation models (AVM): Computer programs that use data to provide real estate market analysis and estimates of value. Real estate professionals use AVMs to support their work in determining an estimated market value of a property.