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**Home Owner
Interest deduction!**

If you have a mortgage on your home, the loan is probably "fully amortized." This means a portion of your monthly payment actually repays the debt and another portion pays the interest. After a scheduled period of time your mortgage is paid off.

If you itemize deductions using a Schedule A, the interest portion of your mortgage payment is usually tax deductible.



There are conditions. The first condition is that your primary residence or a second home must be collateral for the loan.

Defining "Home" - Your home can be a house, co-op, condominium, mobile home, trailer, or even a houseboat. For trailers and houseboats, one requirement is that the home must have sleeping, cooking, and toilet facilities.

Even a rental can be considered a second home, provided you live in it either fourteen days out of the year or at least ten percent of the number of days you rent it for, whichever is greater.



Stolen Wallet Pointers

The next time you order checks have only your first name initial and last name put on them. If someone takes your check book they will not know if you sign your checks with just your initial or your first name, but your bank will know how you sign your checks.

Never have your SS# printed on your checks. You can add it if it is necessary. But if you have it printed, anyone can get it.

Photocopy both sides of everything in your wallet. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.

If your wallet is stolen, the thieves can damage your name and credit by purchasing expensive merchandise, apply for credit, request credit line increases, change your personal DMV information, and more, all within just a few days.

Here's some critical information to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know.

Have the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call.

File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen, this proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an

investigation (if there ever is one).

But here's what is perhaps most important: Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and Social Security number. The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit.

The numbers are:

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285

Explain (formerly TRW)
1-888-397-3742

Trains Union: 1-800-680-7289

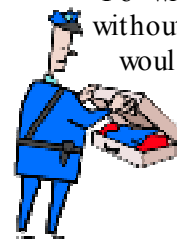
Social Security Administration
(fraud line): 1-800-269-0271



IDIOT SIGHTING

I was at the airport, checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked, "Has anyone put any-thing in your baggage without your knowledge?"

To which I replied, "If it was without my knowledge, how would I know?" He smiled knowingly and nodded, "That's why we ask."



Real Property vs. Personal Property

When selling or buying a home, you need to think ahead about what you are actually selling along with the property and the house.

The general rule is, "if it is attached to the structure or the ground, it is real property and stays with the house."

This confuses some people, especially when selling their first house.

For example, as a renter you may have been used to removing your curtains and taking them with you when you move. Since they are probably "attached" to the wall in some manner, the buyer may assume all window coverings are staying with the house.

This can cause a disagreement. Disagreements in real estate spread like viruses, moving from minor issues to more major issues. Emotions rule and logic melts away like a scoop of vanilla ice cream on a black asphalt playground in August. It can become an ugly sticky mess.

Disagreements have the potential to become "problems" -- except that in real estate, problems don't exist. We have "challenges" instead.

If your Realtor refers to something as a "challenge" -- you may have a problem. So if you want to take your curtains with you, put it in the contract. Don't "assume" anything... because buyers and sellers can argue about the silliest things.

Believe it or not, there is a story about how a deal fell apart because the buyer wanted the sellers to leave the welcome mat. It must have been a *really nice* welcome mat. Normally, sellers are free to take their welcome mat with them when they move.

Another incident involved the gas logs in the fireplace. The sellers wanted to take them and the buyers wanted them left with the house. Normally, gas logs stay with the fireplace. Real wooden logs you are free to take with

you when you move. Chandeliers are another common argument point.

The point is that you need to think about these things in advance. If you have to unscrew a screw, claw out a nail, detach anything from the interior or exterior structure, or uproot anything from the ground -- and you want to take it with you when you move -- put it in the contract. That way there are no possible misunderstandings later.

It doesn't hurt to go through the house "room by room" with your agent so that all possible challenges are handled in advance.



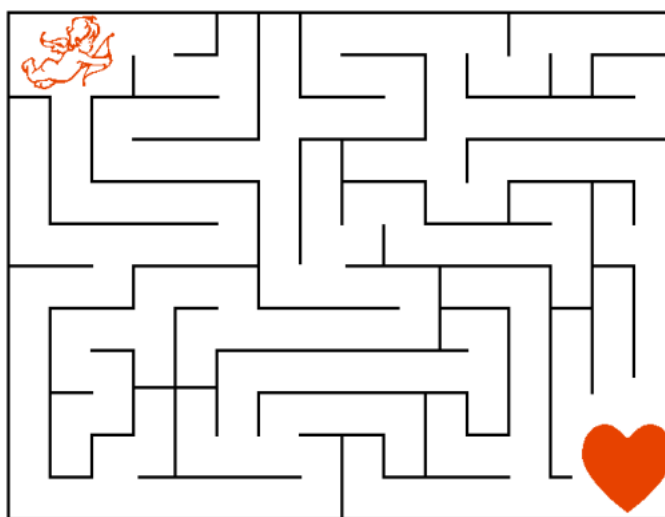
FOG DRIVING TIPS

Drive with lights on LOW beam. High beams will reflect off the fog, creating a "white wall" effect. Reduce your speed - and watch your speedometer. Fog creates a visual illusion of slow motion when you may actually be speeding.



Avoid crossing traffic lanes. Travel with the driver's window partially open. Listen for traffic. Watch for CHP pace cars to guide you. If your car is disabled or you can't continue, pull well onto the shoulder and turn off lights. Move away from your vehicle.

Consider postponing your trip until the fog lifts.



Stop credit card fraud

Many folks have written with perfectly plausible explanations about why merchants take my phone number on a credit card charge. What these fail to address, however, is that if I'm perpetrating a fraud in the use of this credit card, I'm not about to give out a correct phone number. They make no effort to validate the phone number before I leave, so

what they're doing is collecting the phone numbers of a bunch of honest people.

Now then... Why are they collecting the phone numbers of a bunch of honest people?

I once asked why you are asked for your phone number when using your charge cards. The clerk explained that thieves have been caught because they stupidly put down THEIR home phone number, not the phone number of the person who "owned" the card.

IDIOT'S AT WORK

I was signing the receipt for my credit card purchase when the clerk noticed I had never signed the back of the credit card. She informed me that she could not complete the transaction unless the card was signed.



When I asked why, she explained that it was necessary to compare the signatures. So I signed the credit card in front of her. She carefully compared the signature to the one I had just signed on the receipt. As luck would have it, they matched.