Claude Loan

Free guide, October 2026 edition

Mortgage Pre-Approval Checklist: Printable File Tracker (2026)

Every document an underwriter will ask for, in the order they read it, with the window each one must cover.

- The two timing rules: documents expire, the application starts a federal clock
- Identity and household
- Income: salaried, variable, self-employed, other
- Assets and the large-deposit worksheet
- Debts and credit
- The letters lenders ask for

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Contents

Intro	How to use this guide	page 3
1	The two rules that set your timing	page 4
2	Identity and household	page 5
3	Income	page 6
4	Assets: down payment, closing costs and reserves	page 7
5	Debts and credit	page 8
6	Letters you may be asked to write	page 9
	Sources and notes	page 10

Free online: the latest edition of this guide and the plain-English guides behind it are at claude-loan.com/free-guides/mortgage-pre-approval-document-checklist/.

INTRODUCTION

How to use this guide

This checklist is the folder an underwriter will ask you to build, in the order they read it: who you are, what you earn, what you own, what you owe and anything unusual. Each item has a box to tick, the window the lender usually wants and the reason it is asked, so you can send a complete file once instead of answering the same request three times.

How to use it: print it, put it on top of a physical or digital folder, and tick each box when the document is in the folder (all pages, readable, in your name). Chapter 6 lists the letters lenders most often ask for along the way.

Windows below follow the Fannie Mae Selling Guide as published in October 2026; FHA, VA, USDA and individual lenders can ask for more. Section numbers are given so you can read the official text.

> **Important:** Claude Loan is an information publisher, not a lender or broker. A checklist does not guarantee an approval: only a lender's underwriting decides. Lenders may apply stricter rules than the ones described here.

PART 1

The two rules that set your timing

Documents expire

For all mortgage loans, Fannie Mae requires credit documents (credit reports and employment, income and asset documentation) to be no more than four months old on the note date, the day you sign (Selling Guide B1-1-03). A file that sits for weeks will need fresh paystubs and statements. Gather a current set when you apply, then refresh it monthly while you shop.

Your application starts a federal clock

Under Regulation Z, an application exists as soon as the lender has six pieces of information: your name, your income, your Social Security number to pull credit, the property address, an estimate of the property's value and the loan amount you want (12 CFR 1026.2(a)(3)(ii)). The lender must deliver or mail the Loan Estimate no later than the third business day after it receives the application (12 CFR 1026.19(e)(1)(iii)). With limited exceptions, nobody may charge you a fee in connection with the application before you have received the Loan Estimate and said you intend to proceed; the exception is a fee to obtain your credit report (12 CFR 1026.19(e)(2)(i)).

Line	Your date
Date you gave the six items	
Loan Estimate due (3rd business day after)	
Loan Estimate received	
Date you said you intend to proceed	

PART 2

Identity and household

- [ ] Government photo ID for every borrower (unexpired)
- [ ] Social Security number for every borrower
- [ ] Current address and two-year address history
- [ ] Marriage certificate, divorce decree or separation agreement if it sets support or assigns debts
- [ ] Residency documents if you are not a U.S. citizen (ask the lender which ones)

Borrower	ID checked	Address history	Notes

PART 3

Income

Salaried and hourly

Fannie Mae requires the most recent paystub to be dated no earlier than 30 days before the initial loan application date and to include all year-to-date earnings; W-2s must cover the most recent one- or two-year period depending on the income type, and the "most recent" W-2 is the one for the calendar year before the current year (Selling Guide B3-3.1-02).

- [ ] Most recent paystub(s), with year-to-date totals, dated within 30 days of the application
- [ ] W-2s for the most recent one or two years
- [ ] Name and phone of your employer's HR or payroll (for the verbal verification of employment)
- [ ] Offer letter, if you are starting a new job

Overtime, bonus, commission

- [ ] Year-to-date breakdown on the paystub, or a letter from the employer
- [ ] W-2s for two years so the lender can average the variable part

Self-employed, rental and other income

- [ ] Personal federal tax returns, all pages and schedules, for the years the lender asks
- [ ] Business returns if you own 25% or more of a business: Fannie Mae treats a 25% or greater ownership interest as self-employment (Selling Guide B3-3.5-01); ask the lender which years it needs
- [ ] Year-to-date profit and loss statement, if requested
- [ ] Leases and Schedule E for rental income
- [ ] Award letters for Social Security, pension, disability or VA benefits
- [ ] Court order and proof of receipt for child support or alimony you want counted
- [ ] Signed IRS Form 4506-C so the lender can order tax transcripts

Income source	Monthly amount	Documents in the folder

PART 4

Assets: down payment, closing costs and reserves

Bank statements usually cover the most recent two months, and the lender must evaluate any large deposit, which Fannie Mae defines as a single deposit that exceeds 50% of the total monthly qualifying income for the loan (Selling Guide B3-4.2-02).

- [ ] Bank statements, every page (including the blank ones), for each account you will use
- [ ] Retirement and brokerage statements, most recent period
- [ ] Proof of the earnest money deposit (cancelled check or transfer record)
- [ ] Gift letter signed by the donor plus proof of the transfer, if a gift is used
- [ ] Settlement statement if you are selling another home to fund this one
- [ ] An explanation and proof for every large or unusual deposit

Large-deposit worksheet

Your monthly qualifying income: _____ . Half of it: _____ . Any single deposit above that line needs a source.

Date	Account	Amount	Source	Proof in folder

PART 5

Debts and credit

- [ ] Most recent statement for each loan or card the lender sees on your report
- [ ] Statement for any debt not on the report (private loan, payment plan)
- [ ] Proof of payoff for accounts you closed recently
- [ ] Student loan payment amount (or the servicer's statement showing it)
- [ ] Bankruptcy discharge or foreclosure documents, if any, with dates

Creditor	Monthly payment	Balance	On credit report?

PART 6

Letters you may be asked to write

Underwriters ask for short signed letters when something in the file needs a reason. Keep each one factual, dated and signed, with the supporting document attached. Our free Mortgage Letter Templates pack has fill-in versions.

- [ ] **Credit inquiries:** the lender examines inquiries to see whether they represent new credit you did not disclose (Selling Guide B3-5.3-09). One line per inquiry: date, creditor, whether new credit was opened.
- [ ] **Large deposits:** date, amount, source, proof.
- [ ] **Gift letter:** signed by the donor, with amount, no-repayment statement and the donor's contact details and relationship (Selling Guide B3-4.3-04).
- [ ] **Employment gap or job change:** dates and reason.
- [ ] **Address or name differences:** why the documents differ.

> Your pre-approval letter is only as good as the file behind it. Ask the lender whether the pre-approval was underwritten (documents reviewed) or only based on what you told them, and keep that answer in your notes.

NOTES

Sources and notes

Every rule in this guide is quoted with its source as in force on the date of this edition, so you can read the official text yourself. The main sources are:

- Fannie Mae Selling Guide B1-1-03, allowable age of credit documents: https://selling-guide.fanniemae.com/sel/b1-1-03/allowable-age-credit-documents-and-federal-income-tax-returns
- Fannie Mae Selling Guide B3-3.1-02, standards for employment documentation: https://selling-guide.fanniemae.com/sel/b3-3.1-02/standards-employment-documentation
- Fannie Mae Selling Guide B3-4.2-02, depository accounts: https://selling-guide.fanniemae.com/sel/b3-4.2-02/depository-accounts
- eCFR, 12 CFR 1026.2(a)(3), definition of application: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-12/chapter-X/part-1026/subpart-A/section-1026.2

Numbers in worked examples are either taken from those sources or are assumptions stated as illustrative to show the arithmetic; illustrative interest rates are not offers. No testimonial, review or result in this guide is invented.

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