How to Get the Best Remortgage Rate: An Honest, No-Nonsense Guide for Homeowners

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Remortgaging isn't glamorous – there's no ribbon cutting, no new keys, no fancy Instagram moment. But it's one of the smartest financial moves most homeowners ever make.

Done right, it can save you thousands.
Done badly – or left too late – it can quietly drain hundreds from your account each month.

So, how do you actually get the *best* remortgage rate? Not just a good one, but the right one for your situation?
The truth is, it's part timing, part legwork, and part knowing how lenders think.

Let's strip it back to basics.

Why Getting a Good Remortgage Rate Matters More Than You Think

Let's start with the obvious: your mortgage is probably your biggest monthly outgoing. Even a small change in rate has a big impact.

Here's a simple example:

Mortgage Balance	Rate	Monthly Payment (25-year term)	Annual Difference
£200,000	6.0%	£1,289	–
£200,000	5.5%	£1,226	£756 less per year
£200,000	5.0%	£1,170	£1,428 less per year

That’s nearly **£1,500 a year saved** just by shaving half a percent off your deal. It’s not about hunting unicorns – it’s about understanding what drives those rates and how to position yourself to get the best.

Step 1: Start Early – Don’t Wait for the Panic Letter

Most lenders let you lock in a new deal up to **six months before** your current one ends.

If you leave it too late, you risk being rolled onto the **Standard Variable Rate (SVR)** – the expensive “default” rate lenders apply when your fixed or tracker term ends. SVRs can be two, three, even four percent higher than current deals.

In other words, waiting can cost you more in one month than you’d save in a year by being patient.

Starting early gives you options, breathing room, and access to the best rates before they change. Mortgage pricing moves like the weather – unpredictable and rarely in your favour if you wait too long.

Step 2: Understand What Lenders Look For

Lenders aren’t mystical beings. They all want the same thing – a borrower who’ll pay on time and not pose a risk.

That means three main factors determine what rate you’re offered:

Factor	Why It Matters
Loan-to-Value (LTV)	The lower your LTV, the better your rate. Someone with 60% LTV gets cheaper deals than 85%.
Credit Score	Missed payments or high credit card balances can push you into higher-rate brackets.

Factor	Why It Matters
Affordability	Lenders assess your income and expenses to make sure the payments are sustainable.

If you can improve any of these before you apply, you'll open the door to cheaper products.

For instance – pay down a chunk of your mortgage to nudge your LTV under 75%. That single move could unlock an entirely new set of rates.

Step 3: Check Your Credit Before They Do

This one's boring but vital.
A single missed mobile bill or old default can cause trouble – even if it's ancient history.

Check your file with all three UK agencies: **Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion**. Each holds slightly different data.

Things to fix or tidy before applying:

- Make sure addresses are consistent everywhere.
- Pay down high card balances (keep them below 30% of your limit).
- Register to vote if you're not already.
- Clear any lingering payday loans or short-term credit.

You don't need a perfect score – just a tidy, stable profile that tells the lender, "I'm sensible, predictable, and low risk."

Step 4: Decide Whether to Stay or Switch

There are two ways to remortgage: **stay with your current lender** (a *product transfer*) or **switch to a new one**.

The difference in rate between the two can be tiny or massive, depending on the market.

Option	Time to Complete	Pros	Cons
Stay with current lender	1–2 weeks	Fast, easy, minimal paperwork	Limited to their range, not always the best rate
Switch to new lender	4–8 weeks	Access to whole market, potentially lower rate	More paperwork, full application, valuation required

If your lender's deal is competitive, staying might be fine. But don't assume it is. Loyalty doesn't count for much in banking – new customers often get better rates than long-term ones.

In my experience, it's almost always worth comparing what else is out there, even if you end up staying put.

Step 5: Compare Properly – Not Just Headline Rates

Here's where most people go wrong.
They look at a rate, see "4.99% fixed," and think job done.

But not all mortgage deals are created equal.
You need to check the **total cost**, including fees, incentives, and flexibility.

Type	Description
Product fee	Many lenders charge £999 or more. A "free" deal might be cheaper overall even with a slightly higher rate.
Cashback	Some lenders offer £250–£500 back on completion – handy, but not worth taking a worse rate for.
Free legals or valuation	Saves time and hassle, but check the quality – "free" legal firms can be painfully slow.

Type	Description
Overpayment flexibility	If you plan to pay more each month, this feature can save years of interest.

When you add it all up, a 0.1% cheaper rate might not be cheaper at all once the fees are factored in.

Step 6: Know the Best Time to Lock In

Rates move constantly – sometimes daily.
In 2023–2024, the average two-year fixed jumped more than a full percentage point in just six weeks. That’s how volatile things can be.

You don’t need to time the market perfectly, but you *can* protect yourself from rate rises.
Once your lender issues a **mortgage offer**, that rate is locked for a set period (usually 3–6 months).

So even if rates rise tomorrow, your offer stays safe.
If rates drop, some lenders let you switch to the new lower rate before completion. It’s worth asking.

Step 7: Keep Your Paperwork Laser-Sharp

Want to know what really causes delays? Paperwork.

Missing payslips, unclear bank statements, unverified IDs – all of it grinds progress to a halt.
Before applying, have everything ready:

Document	Why They Need It
Last 3 months’ payslips or accounts	Proves income stability
Last 3 months’ bank statements	Shows spending and financial conduct

Document	Why They Need It
Proof of ID and address	Compliance and anti-fraud
Mortgage statement	Confirms current balance and repayment history

If you’re self-employed, you’ll also need SA302s and tax year overviews from HMRC. Getting these in order before you apply can shave weeks off the process.

Step 8: Factor in Fees (They Can Cancel Out “Good” Rates)

People often fixate on the rate and forget about fees.
But those fees can quickly turn a “bargain” into a dud.

Here’s a simple illustration:

Deal	Rate	Fee	Monthly	Total over 2 years
Deal A	5.09%	£999	£1,189	£29,536
Deal B	5.29%	£0	£1,211	£29,064

So even though Deal A *looks* cheaper, Deal B wins overall.
Always run the numbers for the entire deal period, not just the monthly payment.

Step 9: Consider Whether to Fix or Track

Ah, the big question: fixed or variable?

There’s no one-size-fits-all answer, but here’s the gist:

Type	Pros	Cons
Fixed rate	Stability, predictable payments	Early repayment charges, less flexibility

Type	Pros	Cons
Tracker / variable	May fall if interest rates drop	Can rise if rates increase

If you’re risk-averse or on a tight budget, a fixed rate gives peace of mind.
If you’ve got financial cushion and don’t mind a bit of fluctuation, a tracker can save money – particularly if you expect base rates to fall soon.

What I find useful is asking yourself: *Would I sleep better knowing my payment won’t change for five years?*
If the answer’s yes, go fixed.

Step 10: Don’t Go It Alone (Unless You Love Reading Fine Print)

Mortgage comparison sites are a good starting point – but they don’t show the full market.
Some of the best rates are *broker-exclusive*.

A good broker doesn’t just compare rates; they know lender quirks, turnaround times, and credit score sweet spots. They can also tell you when staying put is the smarter move.

If you want to understand the process in more depth – including how brokers find and secure the best deals – take a look at remortgage advice. It explains the whole process from a practical, no-nonsense angle.

Step 11: Timing the Switch to Avoid Overlap

Once you’ve chosen your deal, the timing needs to be spot-on.
If you complete too early, you might trigger **early repayment charges** on your existing deal.
If you’re too late, you’ll spend time on the SVR – and that’s where the real money leak happens.

The trick is to aim for completion **on or just after** your current deal ends.
A good solicitor or broker can coordinate the dates perfectly.

Step 12: Keep an Eye on Future Flexibility

Sometimes the best rate today isn't the best decision long term.

Think about what's coming next:

- Are you planning to move in the next couple of years?
- Might you want to overpay or clear the mortgage early?
- Do you need portability (to take the deal with you if you move)?

A slightly higher rate with flexible terms can easily beat a rigid low-rate deal in the long run.

I've seen people chase a cheap five-year fix, then pay thousands in early exit penalties a year later when they decide to relocate.
Short-term saving, long-term pain.

Quick Recap: The Best Remortgage Rate Formula

Getting the best remortgage rate isn't luck – it's preparation.

Here's the formula in a nutshell:

Step	Action	Why It Matters
1	Start early	Avoid SVR, access best deals
2	Check credit and tidy up	Better risk profile = better rate
3	Reduce your LTV	Lower loan = cheaper rate bracket
4	Compare total costs	Headline rate alone can mislead
5	Lock in at the right moment	Protects against rate rises
6	Use a broker	Access to whole market and hidden deals

Follow that, and you’ll almost always end up with a deal that makes financial sense – not just looks good on paper.

Common Myths About Remortgage Rates

Let’s clear a few up.

“You always get a better deal with your own bank.”
Not necessarily. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. They might not even offer their best products to existing customers.

“I should wait until my deal ends.”
No. Start looking up to six months before – you can secure a new rate that kicks in when the old one finishes.

“Switching lenders is too much hassle.”
It used to be, but now most lenders handle the process seamlessly. With free legals and digital ID checks, it’s rarely painful.

“Smaller lenders aren’t safe.”
All UK lenders are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. So safety isn’t an issue – rates and service are what matter.

Final Thoughts

The best remortgage rate isn’t necessarily the *lowest number on a screen* – it’s the one that fits your life.

It keeps your payments comfortable, gives you flexibility if plans change, and doesn’t sting you with hidden fees.

And yes, sometimes the difference between a decent deal and a brilliant one comes down to a few hours of effort – checking credit, getting quotes, and comparing like for like.

But that effort compounds.
Because saving £80 a month now means £960 a year – and tens of thousands over the lifetime of your mortgage.

Not bad for an afternoon’s work.

Note: The information in this guide was correct at the time of publication but is subject to change.