

How to search MLS

How to use the 'Search MLS Listings' function on this website

When you click on the 'Search MLS Listings' heading it will bring up a pop up window containing the MLS search function. MLS stands for Multiple Listing Service. If a Florida homeowner places a home for sale with a licensed real estate agent, the details of the property for sale will be entered into the MLS system. This means that real estate agents and buyers can search for property for sale in one central place, thus making it easy for you to find what you're looking for on one database. You can search for property in over 700 Florida cities via this software. Detailed below are what I believe are the 3 best ways I would use to start a geographical search.

You can target your area search by a number of options. You can search by city name or if you are interested in a particular part of the city and know the zip code for that area, you can search this way also.

The mapping function is particularly useful if you are interested in a specific area and do not know the zip code. The mapping software allows you draw a red band around a particular area so MLS only searches within this mapped area. To use this function simply pan out on the map to locate your area of interest and then zoom in as close as you wish to limit the map area (you can zoom in as far as street level). Once you have the area of interest on the map, hover the mouse over the top left corner of where you want the search map band to start, left click your mouse and then drag across the area to as large as you wish to form a square or rectangle around the spot of interest. Click the tick box on the left of the map to include the map in your search criteria. If you draw the map band incorrectly, simply left click on the map to erase, pan back out to re-set the map and repeat the drawing process.

Once you have the area selected, you should include your price boundaries to ensure you do not get data overload with MLS producing every home available in a particular location. This MLS search software will only return a maximum of 75 matches so you need to set some parameters to ensure you get results.

You should also select your property type; unless you are looking for undeveloped land, the 'residential' option is the main one to tick. Once you've ticked this a drop down section called 'property subtype' will offer options of various types of property you wish to view. Tick what type of properties you wish to search for.

Once you've clicked property type and property subtype, a second search criteria page will become available for you to use to narrow down your search further. You will find the tab to access this page at the top of the main search page to the right of 'General Criteria' tab marked 'Additional Criteria'. Here you can indicate if you're interested in properties with a pool and, if you are interested in waterfront property, you can be very specific about what sort of waterfront property you'd like to search for.

I find with MLS that the more specific you are from the outset, the smaller the number of matches returned which can lead to you missing something that may be of interest. My advice is to start from a broad base; include city location (zip/map if you already know which part of the city you are interested in), include price and include property type and property subtype. If you are sure that you must be waterfront and/or want a pool then go ahead and add that in at this stage. Hit submit. If you find you have more than 75 matching your wish list, then MLS will tell you to revise your criteria to reduce the number of results. You can start narrowing your search by filling in the other search option boxes such as zip code, number of bedrooms, age of building etc. Keep amending until you have a batch of results you're happy with. You can always go back and expand the search if the final results selection returned is too little.

MLS is a tool to learn and play with. The more you play with this software the more you will get proficient with it. If you find that you are disappointed with the matches to your search criteria and are not finding what you want, I would suggest you contact a buyer's real estate agent in the locale of where you are interested in. They are experts of their area and they will be able to conduct a much deeper search based on your wish list (and do a whole lot of donkey work so you don't have to!) and e-mail their findings for you to review at your leisure.