Should I rent or buy?

Renting and buying aren't opposites - they're two different ways to pay for shelter, each with its own costs, and both are legitimate depending on your situation.

YOUR CHECKLIST

- [ ] I've built the full ownership cost, not just principal and interest
- [ ] I've compared that full cost to my actual rent, not a rough guess
- [ ] I know my realistic minimum hold period for a home I'd buy
- [ ] I've run the break-even math in the rent vs. buy calculator
- [ ] I've estimated closing costs and selling costs for my market
- [ ] I know what my down payment could be worth if invested instead
- [ ] I've been honest about whether I'd actually invest the difference if renting
- [ ] I've checked my local price-to-rent ratio, not just national averages
- [ ] I've estimated my real tax situation against the 2025 standard deduction
- [ ] I have a savings cushion left over under either the rent or buy scenario

WATCH OUT FOR

- Comparing rent directly to principal and interest
- Assuming a three-year stay is long enough to profit
- Believing the mortgage interest deduction guarantees a tax benefit