

A Guide to Your Homeowners Policy

Insurance policies are usually divided into four or five main sections or categories by what is covered and the maximum amounts the insurer will pay in the event of a loss. Typically there's Coverage A, (Structure), B (Other structures; garages, outbuildings), C (Contents) and D (Loss of Use/Additional Living Expenses). Here's a basic summary of the main types of coverage in a typical homeowner's policy.

Your declaration page (often called a "dec" page) states your name and address, policy number, dollar amounts of coverages and "endorsement" codes. You can think of your dec page as the body of a car. The wording inside is the engine, the parts, the wheels, etc. Your dec page states the dollar amounts/limits for your main coverage categories, but what you see is not always what you've got. There are extensions, limits and exclusions for certain items. For example, many policies contain a "sub-limit" for valuable papers, computer equipment and jewelry.

You'll need to do some math and piecing together to figure out what your policy limits actually are. Don't rely solely on your insurer's calculations.

[Use our tips and the sample declaration page in this PDF to figure out what's in your policy and how to collect what you're owed.](#)

Special note for California: There is a [Residential Property Insurance Disclosure law](#) that requires insurers to provide every customer with a [form](#) that alerts you to the specific types of coverage you have bought, plus the ones you *could* have bought.