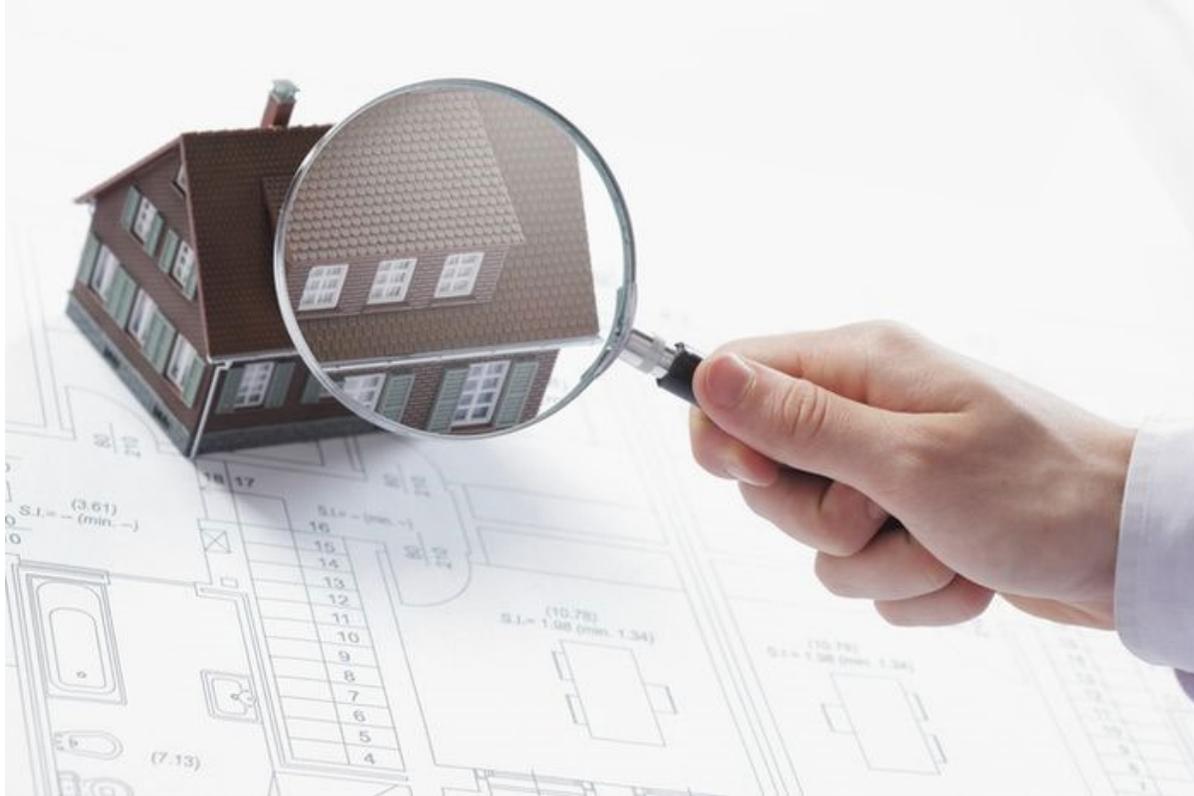


A BUYER'S GUIDE TO HOME INSPECTION



A home inspection isn't a step homebuyers should skip. Foregoing the home inspection could cost buyers lots of money later. You wouldn't want to buy a \$300,000 house and later discover a huge defect that will cost thousands of dollars to repair. A home inspection is like the doctor's checkup you get covering major systems and diagnosing problems. Many states require sellers to provide buyers with property condition disclosure forms, but it's a good idea to hire an independent home inspector because the property disclosure form only cover the recollection of the work they have had performed. Any and everything about the home that the homeowner doesn't know about is yours to deal with and repair.

HOME INSPECTION BASICS

A home inspection is a detailed report prepared by a home inspector about the condition of home systems, deterioration, safety issues, and recommendations. The inspection could take between 2 and 3.5 hours and may cost between \$325 and \$700. Many buyers attend home inspections so they can better understand the issues, ask questions, and learn more about the house and its major systems.

THE WHY OF HOME INSPECTIONS

Buyers often order home inspections to ensure the major systems are in good condition and that there are no serious, expensive defects. Sellers might order a pre-listing inspection to identify major problems that need to be fixed before the house is put on the market. Common in most sales contracts, a home inspection contingency makes a sales conditional upon the outcome of the home inspection report. A home inspection is also a good way to identify repairs to request and to learn about the elements and systems of a house.

ELEMENTS OF A HOME INSPECTION

The home inspector will examine major elements of a house, ensuring proper operation of systems, observing the condition, and noting safety issues and damage. A typical home inspection report will cover:

1. **The roof:** Type of roof, plumbing and heating penetrations, aging, mold, and damage.
2. **The exterior:** Driveway, walkways, steps, doors, decks, siding and landscaping among other elements.
3. **The Garage:** garage door, windows, wall, ceiling and floors.
4. **The structure:** Foundation and framing. The inspector determines whether the foundation and framing are sound and the building skeleton can withstand the elements.
5. **The interior:** Windows and doors; ceilings, walls, and floors; attic and basement.
6. **Plumbing system:** Water supply, water heating, and drainage.
7. **Electrical systems:** Service entrance wires, breakers and fuses, and control panels.
8. **Heat and Cooling system:** Furnace, air conditioner, duct work, drainage pans and ventilation/insulation

The inspector may also look for signs that one system has damaged another system such as walls or ceilings. Home inspectors are not specialists, but they may recommend corrective actions. Other types of inspections may be necessary as well, such as a roof inspection, electrical inspection, termite inspection and a radon inspection.

WHAT'S NOT COVERED?

Home inspectors won't necessarily consider all possible issues because their inspection standard is primarily focused on do the various components and systems in the house and do they operate normally or do they need repair or replacement. Specialists may be needed for:

- Pests
- Rodents
- Lead
- Mold
- Radon
- Formaldehyde
- Asbestos

READING A HOME INSPECTION REPORT

The home inspection report comes in different forms, such as a checklist, rating system, narrative or a narrative combined with other types. The checklist, divided into areas of the house, is used during the inspection to compile the necessary information. A typical home inspection report will likely contain:

- A Table of Contents
- Summary of important issues.
- Introduction outlining important definitions, date, type and age of the building, weather, and people present during the inspection.
- Component sections (Roof, Exterior, Interior, etc.) listing the items the inspector observed, styles and materials, comments, recommendations, and photos, and or videos.
- Summary of discoveries, defects, and areas that require further investigation.

HOME INSPECTION TIPS FOR BUYERS

Tips for real estate buyers regarding home inspections include:

- Buyers can hire their own inspectors, or depend on their agents to recommend one.
- Buyers often accompany the inspector during the inspection.
- Ask questions.
- Note things like major defects, how systems work, and where the electrical panels and shutoffs are located.
- Remember: Some inspectors may be more thorough than others. Two inspectors could look at the same house and note different defects.

- Don't assume everything in an inspection must be fixed. A report may note serious defects as well as small things like a missing doorbell.
- Seriously consider all of the summary recommendation the home inspector note in his report. Call contractors for more detailed professional inspections and estimates on necessary repairs.
- Use the findings to negotiate with the seller about pre-closing repairs and price reductions.

Buying a house is one of the biggest financial transactions for most people. Doesn't it make sense that buyers would want to learn as much as they can about the health, safety, and condition of the property before making a big decision? After closing, all the condition problems are the buyer's responsibility.