

Things You Need to Know to Pass Your Home Inspection

Nearly all buyers will hire a professional home inspector to take a closer look at their new home before closing. In some cases home inspections are done before the home goes under contract.

A home inspection covers several areas and systems within the house, but there are a few that actually worry buyers the most.... Will the roof end up leaking? Is the wiring safe? What about the plumbing? These, and others, are the questions that the buyers looking at your home will seek professional help to answer.

It is important to not wait until inspection day to assess the condition of your home and make necessary home repairs before you sell. Small problems can turn into major issues which could end up costing more in the end and possibly lower your homes value.

In most cases, you can make a reasonable pre-inspection yourself if you know what you're looking for.

Here are some of the most common items to consider when preparing for your home inspection:

1. Mold and Mildew

Mildew stains and odors scare buyers, especially now that toxic black mold is such a hot topic. Chances are you won't even get an acceptable offer if mold and mildew are present. Even if the mold in your house is the normal variety and not *stachybotrys chartarum*, it is important that you take care of it immediately. Kill the mold and mildew and fix the source of the problem.

2. Defective Plumbing

Defective plumbing can manifest itself in two different ways: leaking, and clogging. A visual inspection can detect leaking, and the inspector will check water pressure by turning on multiple faucets and flushing toilets at the same time. Appliances such as dishwashers and clothes washers may be tested, too. Leaks and clogs will be apparent during these checks. When checking the faucets if the water appears dirty when first turned on, this is a good indication that the pipes are rusting, which can result in severe water quality problems.

The home inspector may also check the septic system. During one method dyes are flushed and the inspector waits to see if the dye surfaces on the drainfield, indicating a drainage problem.

3. Damp or Wet Basement or Crawlspace

An inspector will check your walls for a powdery white mineral deposit a few inches off the floor, and will look to see if you feel secure enough to store things right on your basement floor. A mildew odor is almost impossible to eliminate, and an inspector will certainly be conscious of it. The inspector might use a meter to determine how much moisture is present in these spaces, because moisture deteriorates building materials and attracts insects.

It could cost you a few hundred dollars or several thousand, depending on the problem. You will have to weigh these figures into the calculation of what price you

want to net on your home.

4. Inadequate Wiring & Electrical

The electrical panel and circuit breaker configuration should be adequate for the needs of the house. A 125 amp electrical panel works for most homes. Individual circuits should not be overloaded. Wire should be copper or aluminum.

The inspector will look for receptacles with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFI) in bathrooms and kitchens. These receptacles have little test-reset buttons on them. The home inspector will likely make sure the receptacles are what they appear to be, and not "dummies" that aren't wired to work. Some of the grounded receptacles (with 3-pronged plugs) will be checked too.

5. Poor Heating & Cooling Systems

Insufficient insulation, and an inadequate or a poorly functioning heating system, are the most common causes of poor heating. While an adequately clean furnace, without rust on the heat exchanger, usually has life left in it, an inspector will be asking and checking to see if your furnace is over its typical life span of 15-25 yrs. For a forced air gas system, a heat exchanger will come under particular scrutiny since one that is cracked can emit deadly carbon monoxide into the home. These heat exchangers must be replaced if damaged - they cannot be repaired.

6. Roofing Problems

Water leakage through the roof can occur for a variety of reasons such as physical deterioration of the asphalt shingles (e.g. curling or splitting), or mechanical damage from a wind storm. When gutters leak and downspouts allow water to run down and through the exterior walls, this external problem becomes a major internal one.

7. Damp Attic Spaces

Aside from basement dampness, problems with ventilation, insulation and vapor barriers can cause water, moisture, mold and mildew to form in the attic. This can lead to premature wear of the roof, structure and building materials. The cost to fix this damage could easily run over \$2,500.

8. Rotting Wood

This can occur in many places (door or window frames, trim, siding, decks and fences). The building inspector will sometimes probe the wood to see if this is present - especially when wood has been freshly painted.

9. Masonry Work

Re-bricking can be costly, but, left unattended, these repairs can cause problems with water and moisture penetration into the home which in turn could lead to a chimney being clogged by fallen bricks or even a chimney which falls onto the roof. It can be costly to rebuild a chimney or to have it repainted.

10. Unsafe or Over-fused Electrical Circuit

A fire hazard is created when more amperage is drawn on the circuit than was intended. 15 amp circuits are the most common in a typical home, with larger service for large appliances such as stoves and dryers. It can cost several hundred dollars to replace your fuse panel with a circuit panel.

11. Adequate Security Features

More than a purchased security system, an inspector will look for the basic safety

features that will protect your home such as proper locks on windows and patio doors, dead bolts on the doors, smoke and even carbon monoxide detectors in every bedroom and on every level. Even though pricing will vary, these components will add to your costs. Before purchasing or installing, you should check with your local experts.

12. Structural/Foundation Problems

An inspector will certainly investigate the underlying footing and foundation of your home as structural integrity is fundamental to your home.

When you put your home on the market, you don't want any unpleasant surprises that could cost you the sale of your home. By having an understanding of these problem areas as you walk through your home, you'll be preparing yourself against potential problems in the selling process.

Before the Inspection

Do everything you can to get the house in good condition before you attempt to sell it, but don't be discouraged if the inspection report contains negative statements. Home inspectors make note of everything they see. No home is perfect.

Remember that the home inspection report is not a wish-list for buyers. Read your contract carefully--it probably states which systems should be in good working order at closing. For instance, if the roof is older, but doesn't leak, it is in good working order. If there's a leak, and fixing just the leak is possible, the roof will be in good working order.

Your contract may also state that you are under no obligation to make any repairs at all--although the buyers can then likely withdraw from the contract. Don't feel you must comply with unreasonable demands for repairs.