

How Sellers can prepare for a Buyer's property inspection



The perfect home simply doesn't exist. Why? Well, in a brand new home, the contractor often is not aware of everything his subcontractors do, and government building and code inspectors do not have the time or the budget to inspect everything in every home, so they usually just do a spot-check of newly constructed homes. A home that has been lived in usually has damage that occurred from simply living in it, or additions or remodeling that weren't permitted. That's why Buyers need a professional property inspection.

The purpose of a property inspection is to document the overall condition of the property at the time of the inspection and to ensure that its major systems and components (electrical, plumbing, water heater, heating and cooling, etc.) are installed correctly and working properly. The property inspection is not a warranty since the property inspector is only there for a couple of hours and never saw the home or its systems being built, so he has no idea about any quality control processes. While some items identified during a property inspection might seem like minor items individually, collectively they could add up to major headaches involving both time and money. If Sellers know what to look for, they can resolve many minor items before the Buyer's property inspector ever arrives.

Following is my "checklist" of items often found during the course of a home inspection. Completing repairs before the Buyer's property inspection helps ensure that escrow goes more smoothly. A pre-listing inspection can be shorter than a Buyer's inspection because descriptions of the house might be omitted, and noting things like a hole in a screen window, or a loose door hinge, are not major items, all things considered. Collectively, though, they could cause a prospective Buyer to say, "No, thanks. Too many problems."

**REAL ESTATE
SOLUTIONS**

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OUTSIDE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Check that doorbells work.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for missing roof shingles.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for loose/damaged/clogged gutters/downspouts.<input type="checkbox"/> Check attic ventilation and condition of vent screens.<input type="checkbox"/> Check to see if there is standing water, especially near the foundation, after irrigation or rainfall.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for cracks in foundation walls.<input type="checkbox"/> Check structure (including attic and foundation crawl space) for pests (termites, wasps, spiders, nests, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Check exterior weatherproofing (stain, paint, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Check for any wood in direct contact with soil, including fences and gates.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for loose wiring (electric, cable, phone) and poor wire terminations.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for holes and damage to siding, doors, windows, and trim so that structure is weatherproof.<input type="checkbox"/> Check condition of fences or gates (leaning, damaged). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Check that any exterior outlets are weatherproofed and not in permanent use for any landscape lighting.<input type="checkbox"/> Check condition of landscape components (retaining walls, landscaper timbers, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Check for overgrown vegetation, especially in walkways; growing on siding, roof, chimney, fences, or in gutters; or too close to utility lines.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for trip hazards in walkways, driveways, and stairways (deterioration, vegetation, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Check for loose, missing, or rusted guardrails and handrails at stairways, decks, balconies, and porches.<input type="checkbox"/> Check that landscape lighting/irrigation systems work, and that sprinklers don't spray on fences or buildings.<input type="checkbox"/> Check condition of pool and spa, and related equipment and utilities.<input type="checkbox"/> Check that ponds, fountains, and waterfalls, and related utilities, work properly and are protected from children. |
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PLUMBING

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Check that seismic straps are on the water heater.<input type="checkbox"/> Check that stoppers work in bathtubs and sinks.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for clogged drains.<input type="checkbox"/> Check that toilet seat bolts and screws are tight.<input type="checkbox"/> Check that faucets don't drip or leak around the base.<input type="checkbox"/> Check stop action on faucet handles.<input type="checkbox"/> Check condition of caulk/grout in bathtubs/showers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Check insulation on water pipes in foundation crawl space and attic.<input type="checkbox"/> Check for safe and easy access to water shutoff valves (street curb, water heater, sinks, toilets, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Check for safe and easy access to any gas shutoff valves (meter, furnace, water heater, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> Check for loose toilets and loose toilet tanks. |
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ELECTRICAL

- Check for safe and easy access to electric panels and main circuit breaker.
- Check that ceiling fans work on all speeds.
- Check for burned out lights, including ceiling fans.
- Check for damaged or loose outlets and light switches, including covers for outlets and switches.
- Check for unplugged appliances, and unplug anything that is unnecessary to facilitate outlet testing by the Buyer's property inspector.
- Remove extension cords and outlet multipliers.

- Check that outlets work.
- Check for outdated two-prong outlets and upgrade them to three-prong outlets.
- Check for properly working GFCI outlets in kitchen, bathrooms, garage, and exterior.
- Check that exhaust fans work in kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry area.
- Check that any electrical junction boxes have covers.



INSIDE

- Check condition of towel holders and tissue holders.
- Check condition of bathtubs, showers, and shower doors, and replace old shower curtains.
- Check that safety seal shows on floor-to-ceiling windows and glass doors.
- Check that carbon monoxide alarms work.
- Check that smoke alarms work, and that they are present on each floor of multi-story houses.
- Check for loose kitchen and bathroom countertops.
- Check ease of operation for doors (including closet doors and cabinet doors), drawers, and windows, including windows nailed or painted shut.
- Check for missing, loose, or damaged hardware on doors (including closet doors and cabinet doors), drawers (stops and guides), and windows.
- Check for loose glass panes in windows and doors, as well as glass with holes or cracks in them.

- Check that latches/locks work on doors (including closet doors and cabinet doors), drawers, and windows.
- Check for damage to screen windows.
- Remove excessive storage (closets, attic, garage).
- Check for damage to walls and ceilings that need to be patched and painted.
- Check for moisture stains on ceilings and walls; around doors and windows; near sinks, toilets, bathtubs, and showers; and near the dishwasher.
- Check for loose, missing, or damaged guardrails and handrails in stairways.
- Check for loose, broken or missing baseboards and door and window moldings.
- Check for cracked tiles or deteriorated grouting in kitchen and bathrooms.
- Check that kitchen appliances work.
- Check that an anti-tip device is installed on the range.

MISCELLANEOUS



- Let dogs and cats vacation for a few hours with a family member, friend, or at a pet spa. Check that other pets (birds, snakes, rodents, etc.) are caged.

- Certain items should be inspected annually due to

their inherently dangerous nature. These include gas-using appliances, pool/spa equipment, roof, and the fireplace and chimney. If they have not been inspected within the last 12 months, having it done now can make escrow go more smoothly.

- Check that filters are in place and clean (kitchen range hood, heating/cooling, bathroom fans, etc.)
- Check for soot, cobwebs, and wildlife in the fireplace and lower areas of the chimney.
- The Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA) recommends that the fireplace and chimney undergo a Level II inspection any time real estate ownership is transferred, and I recommend having that done prior to the Buyer's inspection.

- Check that the fireplace damper opens/closes easily.
- Check for manufacturer installation guides, operating instructions, or user guides that you can provide to the buyer, especially for kitchen appliances; heating and cooling system; water heater; security, irrigation, fire suppression, central cleaning, and water modification systems; water well; and septic system.
- Many property inspectors exclude inspection and testing of some specialized systems, such as security and irrigation systems. Once you get the Buyer's inspection report, note what the Inspector did and did not do or could and could not do. Offer to meet with the Buyer to demonstrate how those systems are operated and maintained, and provide the contact information for any companies that regularly service the systems.
- Check for receipts and warranty papers for any work done on the property, particularly for inspections and work done to prepare the property for sale.
- Contact Russel Ray, Property Consultant, at 619.341.0173 for a pre-listing inspection to determine major problems. Identifying them now can make escrow go more smoothly.**